The Nightmare of Paternity: Responses to James Joyce in 20th-Century Russian Literature

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Slavic Languages and Literature)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

2016

Date of final oral examination: 5/13/2016

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Acknowledgments

In a project of this scale, the list of interlocutors one acquires along the way is quite extensive, and though each contribution is not necessarily equal, they are all necessary, and I appreciate each and every one.

I would like to thank my advisor, David Bethea. Throughout the writing of this dissertation, he has provided invaluable support, optimism, perspective, and advocacy. I also wish to thank my other committee members: Alexander Dolinin, Andrew Reynolds, Irina Shevelenko, and Richard Begam. Likewise, David Danaher and Karen Evans-Romaine offered kind encouragement and useful insights.

The editors and anonymous reviewers at *The Slavic and East European Journal* provided generous feedback that helped improve the first chapter, a version of which appeared in issue 58.4 (2014). James McSpadden, who granted me access to Zhitomirsky's partial translation of *Ulysses* when all else failed, deserves my special gratitude.

For their help, which took many forms, I am indebted to my friends and colleagues Zachary Rewinski, Sergey Karpukhin, Anna Borovskaya, Sarah Kapp, Melissa Warner, Megan Kennedy, Ilona Sotnikova, Adam Lieberman, Thomas Tabatowski, and Jesse Stavis.

Others who contributed welcome suggestions and demanding questions, whether at conferences or electronically, include Tim Langen, Gennady Barabtarlo, Eliot Borenstein, Ann Komaromi, Rebecca Stanton, and Ron Meyer.

For their patience and endless support, my greatest thanks goes to my wife, Jenny Jalack, and my daughter, Lucia, to whom this project is dedicated and without whom it could never have come to be. If writing about fatherhood isn't a humbling enough experience, then becoming a father in the process certainly is. For that, I am most grateful.

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Abstract

This study explicates James Joyce's impact upon Russian literature through close readings of texts by Yury Olesha, Vladimir Nabokov, Andrei Bitov, and Sasha Sokolov. While it takes into account each writer's respective biographical, historical, and cultural contexts, a set of shared themes, in particular artistic identity, generational conflicts, and the influence of the past, unites their responses.

Chapter 1 shows that Russian writers began responding to Joyce early. It uncovers the Joycean subtexts in Olesha's *Envy*, where the author suggests the difficulty for a Soviet writer like him to pursue Stephen Dedalus's project of choosing a lineage. Chapter 2 demonstrates how Nabokov's protagonist in *The Gift* recovers his father by linking him with Pushkin, thus reflecting an inversion of Stephen's *Hamlet* theory in *Ulysses*.

Late to the modernist experiment, the younger Bitov, the subject of chapter 3, recognizes that Soviet policies disrupted literature's natural progression, resulting in a sense of belatedness. *Pushkin House*'s Joycean subtext spotlights how Bitov's hero attempts to rewrite his past but falters due to a distorted historical perspective. On a more abstracted level, the author-narrator, however, escapes the inability to overtake his predecessors, including Joyce, by stepping outside the bounds of hierarchies. Continuing the course of chapter 3, the fourth chapter focuses on Sokolov and *A School for Fools*. Unlike the previous figures, Sokolov most strongly references Joyce *both* in themes and style. Furthermore, in this text an even more advanced dissolution of Joyce's project takes place; the search for a father fades away as Sokolov reveals the relativity of all cultural values, including literary lineage.

Through these case studies, this dissertation reconsiders a central narrative of 20th-century Russian literature: to use Joseph Brodsky's phrase, the "Gorgon-like stare of history."

This fascination with history, whether personal, national, or cultural, appears in connection with Joyce in works by a wide array of writers. Joyce's art stood as an alternative that had ramifications on how an author might conceive of his role and identity in literary history; he showed how an individual may reshuffle narratives to fashion a new past.

Introduction

> Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.
>
> – Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artists as a Young Man*

When James Joyce met Russian playwright Vsevolod Vishnevsky in Paris in 1936, the Irish writer mentioned he had heard that his books were banned in the Soviet Union.[1] Vishnevsky was pleased to report that *Ulysses* had been translated "earlier than in many other countries," suggesting that the Soviets openly accepted Joyce (quoted in Genieva, *"Russkaia odisseia"* 38).[2] Vishnevsky did not lie about the translation, which was published in 1925, but he, a champion of Joyce's art, exaggerates.[3] At the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, Karl Radek led the rabid attack on Joyce that began in the early thirties and characterized much of Joyce criticism for the next several decades: "A pile of dung in which worms swarm, photographed with a cinema apparatus through a microscope — that's Joyce" (quoted in Genieva, *"Russkaia odisseia"* 95). By 1934 Joyce had already become for many an emblem of decadent "Formalism" and "Naturalism."

On the other hand, some figures from this same time immediately recognized Joyce's genius. Boris Poplavsky, the young émigré writer, delivered a lecture (1930) on Joyce and Proust in which he proclaimed his profound admiration for Joyce in no uncertain terms:

> Everything taken together creates an absolutely stunning document, something so real, so alive, so diverse, and so truthful that it seems to us that if it were necessary to send to

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[1] A slightly modified Library of Congress transliteration system is used throughout the present study. For the sake of readability and consistency, names ending in –ii (Dostoevskii) are rendered as –y (Dostoevsky) within the main body; in the bibliography and in clear references to the bibliography, those names retain the –ii spelling. Three other notable exceptions are Olesha's first name, which has been transliterated as Yury in place of Iurii, Fyodor in place of Fedor when referring to Nabokov's protagonist from *The Gift*, and Gogol without the straight apostrophe.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Russian are my own.

[3] This early translation of *Ulysses* by V. Zhitomirsky in fact consisted only of several fragments from a handful of chapters. It was preceded by excerpts in French and Spanish (1924) and published the same year as selections in German. Vishnevsky's role in the debates surrounding Joyce in the Soviet Union will be examined further in chapter 1.

> Mars or God knows where a single sample of earthly life or, facing the destruction of European civilization, to preserve a single book for posterity through the ages or space, in order to provide an inkling about the dead civilization, perhaps it would be best to leave Joyce's *Ulysses*.
>
> Все вместе создает совершенно ошеломляющий документ, нечто столь реальное, столь живое, столь разнообразное и столь правдивое, что кажется нам, если бы была необходимость послать на Марс или вообще куда-нибудь к черту на кулички единственный образчик земной жизни или по разрушении европейской цивилизации единственную книгу сохранить на память, чтоб через века или пространства дать представление о ней, погибшей, следовало бы, может быть, оставить именно «Улисса» Джойса. ("Po povodu…" 173-4)

Statements such as these two reveal the complexities of the oftentimes contradictory positions Joyce has occupied in Russian culture since the mid-1920s. Radek and Poplavsky's statements stand at opposite maximalist extremes, reflecting the wide range of emotions and strong opinions Joyce's texts elicited from Russian readers of different artistic and ideological camps.[4]

Before becoming anathema to the Soviet regime in the 1930s, however, Joyce was widely discussed, if not widely read. Afterward his art turned into a forbidden fruit that was to be enjoyed only in secret until the publication of the Viktor Khinkis-Sergei Khoruzhy translation of *Ulysses*.[5] The subject of Joyce in Russian literature has been largely ignored, one suspects, precisely because he was *persona non grata* for decades in the Soviet Union. It would seem that if one were prohibited from speaking or writing about Joyce publicly, then opportunities to respond creatively to him would be limited as well.

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[4] Such opinions, of course, were not unique to Soviet readers. *Ulysses*, it will be recalled, was essentially banned in the United States from 1921 to 1933 on charges of obscenity that were eventually struck down by Judge John M. Woolsey. For a history of the novel's publication history, see Kevin Birmingham's *The Most Dangerous Book: The Battle for James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (2014).

[5] Khinkis began his translation of *Ulysses* in 1970. He worked on it for 11 years, referring to the project as "penal servitude" (Tall, "Behind" 184). In his will Khinkis bequeathed to Khoruzhy, a physicist by training, translations of the first six chapters and the task of completing the translation at any cost. Khoruzhy managed to complete his version by 1986 as intended, and several excerpts were published by *Literaturnaia ucheba* in 1988. *Inostrannaia literatura* then published the novel in its entirety with notes by Ekaterina Genieva in 1989. Khoruzhy's wide-ranging "'Uliss' v russkom zerkale" covers topics such as his own translation of the novel and the theme "Joyce in Russia."

Nevertheless, Joyce managed to become a symbol for a branch of Western literature that attracted numerous writers in the Soviet Union and Russian émigré communities.[6] What they appreciated in his texts varied widely: a radical approach to literary language, new forms and devices, the ability to transform one's experience as a budding artist into a national epic, the zenith (or nadir) of Western literature that could in some measure change Russian literature as well. Even amid these various points of emphasis, overlap can be observed. Indeed, the combination of these commonalities and differences speaks to the ways in which Russians crafted a personal version of Joyce ("my Joyce") for themselves while responding to similar concerns, history and paternity foremost among them, in the process.

This dissertation explores the topic of Joyce's impact on Russian literature. Though an exhaustive analysis of all authors who responded to Joyce in their creative writings lies beyond the scope of this, and likely any, study, by choosing key figures and texts from the broad twentieth century, the evolution of his position in Russian literature can be demonstrated. Each chapter will consist of a primary case study devoted to a single author: Yury Olesha, Vladimir Nabokov, Andrei Bitov, and Sasha Sokolov. The selection of these four writers in particular is not arbitrary. In addition to including Joycean subtexts in their writings, they all have explicitly spoken or written about Joyce in interviews, essays, and other paratexts. They offer a relatively neat, traceable line of influence even among one another. Nabokov's discriminating taste gave Olesha and Sokolov high marks, despite their status as "Soviet writers,"[7] and both Bitov and

[6] The fascination was mutual. As Neil Cornwell writes, Joyce read a wide range of Russian writers: Lev Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, Mikhail Lermontov, Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol, Petr Kropotkin, and Aleksandr Ostrovsky (*James* 26). Though his admiration for each varied (he consistently ranked Tolstoy far above Turgenev and Pushkin, for example), this appreciation of Russian literature carried great weight. Following his brother Stanislaus's lead, Joyce came to "equate Ireland in some way with Russia: empires, backwardness, injustice, incompetence" (38).

[7] Cf. "Thus Ilf and Petrov, Zoshchenko, and Olesha managed to publish some absolutely first-rate fiction under that standard of complete independence, since these characters, plots, and themes could not be

Sokolov have expressed their appreciation for their predecessors' art. As a whole, Olesha, Nabokov, Bitov, and Sokolov can all be said to belong to a tradition that in many respects can be traced back to Joyce and that keeps their art open to his aesthetics and ideas. Moreover, including two writers from the pre-war period and two from the post-war period better conveys the development of Joyce's literary reception in Russia. For approximately twenty years after his death in 1941, Joyce was a phantom. Partly with the work of writers such as Bitov and Sokolov his influence came into the open once again. Nabokov's place as an émigré writer adds a further nuance to this scheme. Sokolov, too, might be considered in this light, although his first novel, *A School for Fools* (*Shkola dlia durakov*) was completed in Soviet Russia.

It is very important to note that the presence of Joyce in these writers' works does not erase what came before him. He existed within a broader context, both national and international, and, therefore, his impact is not more definitive than that of other figures who influenced our chosen writers, such as Andrei Bely or the Russian Formalists. He is part of a landscape of past authors and efforts. Nonetheless, Joyce and his art stood as a significant alternative both in literature and in life for Russian writers. His successful project to alter his past and, thus, his future through art, as exemplified by Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, appealed to them for different reasons. In the following four chapters, we focus on why they were drawn to this theme, along with related ones such as cultural lineages and history, in their readings of Joyce. The latter's art served as an impetus for their literary experiments, but it also functioned as a mirror by which their anxieties and goals can be seen through the ways they read and responded to such a major figure of world literature. Simultaneously, this analysis will offer one approach to the general narrative of Joyce's reception in Russian literature. That is, while each of the four writers

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treated as political ones" (*Strong Opinions* 87). See Brown and Grayson for comparisons of Nabokov and Olesha.

responded to Joyce in his own individual manner, the sum of their methods reveal common concerns among them all. This subject raises the issue of cultural values and, more importantly, the manner in which these values shifted throughout the twentieth century in the Soviet Union and Russian emigration.

CONTEXTS (PREVIOUS LITERATURE)

Contrary to what might be expected, the number of studies on the subjects of Joyce in Russia and Joyce and Russian literature is surprisingly small given his reputation. They generally address single authors and only rarely in any great depth; many of these individual studies will be referenced below within the contexts of this dissertation's four case studies.[8]

What has been treated with far greater acumen is the history of the critical response to Joyce in the Soviet Union and among émigré communities, a topic in some ways tangential but nonetheless relevant to our focus here. A series of articles by Emily Tall describe, *inter alia*: the development of critics' responses to Joyce since the 1960s (1980), Khinkis' work on his translation of *Ulysses* (1980), the Joyce centenary in the Soviet Union (1984), the eventual publication of *Ulysses* in Russian (1990), correspondence between Slavic translators of Joyce (1990), and the overall reception of Joyce in Russia (2004). Ludmilla Voitkovska (1990) has also analyzed the trajectory of Russian translations of Joyce and the critical response to *Ulysses*. Finally, the two-volume *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe* (2004) provides models for this sort of study with chapters on Joyce's reception in many countries, including one by Tall on his Russian reception. Others address translations (Finnish, Swedish, and French) and Joyce's impact on various national literatures (Czech, Romanian, Polish, French, Spanish, and Irish).

[8] A few intriguing recent examples that take up authors *not* addressed in the present dissertation include Gracheva (on Aleksei Remizov), Pestereva (on Oleg Chukhontsev), and Poltavtseva (on Andrei Platonov).

The widest survey of Joyce's place in Russian culture by far is Neil Cornwell's excellent *James Joyce and the Russians* (1992). Cornwell divides his study into three unequal parts, each devoted to different, though related, subjects: 1. Joyce's connections to Russian culture and people in his life and work (in the form of allusions, references, etc.), 2. three brief comparisons of Joyce with Andrei Bely, Vladimir Nabokov, and Sergei Eisenstein, and 3. a lengthier chronicle of Soviet and to a lesser extent émigré critics' writings on Joyce. The second part of his book resembles the present study most closely and certainly lays a foundational model, but a more in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of Joyce in Russian literature deserves to be undertaken. Cornwell himself suggests that "the exact nature of the impact of Joyce on Pasternak, as no doubt on many other Russian writers, clearly requires further elucidation and should not be exaggerated. This would really require a separate study in itself" (*James* 62). While some of his own comparisons are tenuous,[9] Cornwell's point remains valid: Russian writers have engaged Joyce's work in ways heretofore underexplored. This, then, is our starting point.[10] The four chapters that follow provide insights into the Russian *literary* response to Joyce, thus filling a major gap in the history of Russian letters. So as not to repeat Cornwell's efforts, brief accounts of Joyce's critical reception, buttressed by references to existing secondary literature, will be woven throughout each chapter. This approach is particularly appropriate given that this study aims to contextualize each writer's reading of Joyce within his personal, cultural, and historical circumstances. Using Cornwell's work as a frame, we demonstrate that Joyce's

[9] Cornwell, for example, writes that the "portrayal of reality as such through coincidence in the daily round, the patterning of events, character and detail, what Nabokov termed 'synchronicity' in his *Ulysses* lecture, all this brand of Joycean technique is *in certain respects not unlike* what Pasternak was doing, *on an expanded scale* in time and space, in *Doctor Zhivago*" (62, my italics).

[10] In a follow-up article, "More on Joyce and Russia," Cornwell reiterates that topics "such as [Joyce's] impact upon Russian culture and his reception and publishing history in Soviet and now post-Soviet Russia, comprise an advancing feast" (175-6). This dissertation is therefore one part of Cornwell's proposed literary meal.

impact on Russian literature goes far beyond the picture painted by a study of the critical reception.

Another major recent contribution to the topic of Joyce in Russia, is Ekaterina Genieva's *"Russkaia odisseia" Dzheimsa Dzhoisa* (2005), an annotated collection of statements by Russian figures with an extensive bibliography of further accounts as well as studies of Joyce completed by Russian scholars. In both of their introductions to the volume, Genieva and Iuliia Roznatovskaia suggest possible sources to probe for Joyce's influence, including Mikhail Zoshchenko, Anna Akhmatova, Valentin Kataev, and Leonid Dobychin. This volume, both explicitly and implicitly, suggests that Joyce entered the Russian cultural consciousness early and has remained there ever since. It also demonstrates the remarkable breadth of meaning that Russians have ascribed to the image of Joyce as well as his texts, not to mention simply the *number* of individuals who commented on Joyce in one form or another, whether in fiction or memoir. This dissertation hones in on a few of those threads by examining a series of major writers and illuminates the trends that in fact unite them.

Though our focus will remain on Russian literary responses to Joyce, we will turn to Joyce scholarship on relevant themes—fathers and sons, history, intertextuality, style, and so forth—to provide a more comprehensive comparison of the works at hand. Indeed, this dissertation considers the connections between, say, Nabokov and Joyce to be a dialogue between texts, rather than a monologic exchange of meaning from a single text to another. In revealing how Joyce impacted others, we might also shed some new light on *his* writings. That is, recognizing how Nabokov read Joyce, for example, can change how we read him.

WHO'S AFRAID OF INFLUENCE: METHODOLOGIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In his essay "Intertextualities," Heinrich Plett describes two approaches to intertextuality, a topic central to our discussion. According to him, the synchronic perspective "claims that all texts possess a simultaneous existence. This entails the leveling of all temporal differences; history is suspended in favour of the co-presence of the past" (25).[11] "Such an attitude," he continues, "suits the creative artist, not the discerning scholar." In essence, he argues that while all texts may be productively and creatively compared with one another to find, for example, transhistorical linkages, intertextuality as practiced by his "discerning scholar" instead takes into consideration the temporality of a text, its place within a history that cannot be ignored.

While ultimately it may not be important who read what and when in a study of this sort,[12] our approach will be grounded by the evidence of each writer's contact with Joyce, whether firsthand or secondhand. We do not wish simply to read *Ulysses* "next to" *Envy*, as it were, but instead to explicate a not yet fully explored connection, one that tells us something about Olesha's novel that would otherwise remain obscured. For that reason, we follow what Plett calls the diachronic perspective, which "proposes the historian (of literature, art, music, dance) as intertextualist. Being more of a traditionalist than a progressive he does not hunt after sounds in a diffuse echo chamber but rather prefers well-ordered 'archives' (Foucault) of meticulously researched intertextualities" (26-7). Indeed, perhaps more "traditional" than not, we view each Joycean subtext as one layer in a given work that can then be used to explain with greater clarity the general thematics of the text if analyzed *responsibly*. The individual parts

[11] As we will see, none other than Sokolov has advanced this provocative viewpoint.
[12] Joyce, it will be shown, pervaded the "air" of the Soviet literary scene. Many authors became familiar with his texts and ideas in roundabout ways.

(intertextual allusions, parallels, echoes, etc.) will shed light on the whole (a given novel's "meanings").

However, this second view as portrayed by Plett ignores "the socio-cultural context." To counter this inclination, each chapter contextualizes a given writer's literary response to Joyce within the circumstances of where and when he wrote it. Olesha's dialogue with Joyce was, naturally, influenced by the culture of the NEP period in which the author found himself, and this finds its reflection within *Envy*. Likewise, Nabokov's experience as an émigré who had lost his home dictates that his understanding of Joyce's ideas be markedly different, just as Bitov's and Sokolov's must necessarily be so as well given their status as self-described "belated" writers.

While we will consider some theoretical approaches to intertextuality below and throughout the following chapters, this dissertation is nonetheless based largely on formal close readings that reveal how the particularities with which each of the four chosen authors responded creatively to Joyce speak to matters fundamental to their respective worldviews, aesthetics, and contexts (personal, historical, cultural, political, and so on, as the case may be). Furthermore, through these readings, we simultaneously present fresh insights into these writers' texts and elucidate the many facets of a central narrative in twentieth-century Russian literature: to use Joseph Brodsky's term, the "Gorgon-like stare of history" (*Less than One* 271). This fascination with, and frequently fear of, history, whether personal, national, or literary, is by and large the primary point of reference in Joyce's writing that these authors take up in their quest to overcome various kinds of temporal and paternal structures.

It stands to note that Julia Kristeva, in a recapitulation of her notion of intertextuality, emphasizes that, as she understands it, the term "has always been about introducing history into structuralism" (*Portable* 446). Citing Mallarmé's interest in anarchy and Proust's in the Dreyfus

Affair, she goes on to suggest that "by showing how much the inside of the text is indebted to its outside, interpretation reveals the inauthenticity of the writing subject: the writer is a subject in process, a carnival, a polyphony without possible reconciliation, a permanent revolt." For her, then, intertextuality is an "intersection of texts" that exposes the nuances of each component to the careful reader. It is not simply about identifying sources but rather about exploring the shapes that these intersections, collisions, and polyphonic dialogues take within a cultural artifact. Indeed, Kristeva emphasizes this view in her original essay on intertextuality, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966):

> By introducing the *status of the word* as a minimal structural unit, Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them. […] The only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure. (36)

In other words, Kristevan intertextuality describes the process by which authors insert themselves into other texts within a historical or social context. As will be shown throughout the chapters that follow, this sort of insertion-dialogue describes how our chosen writers engage with Joyce and with the circumstances around them.

Such engagement, of course, can take many forms. According to Harold Bloom's model, influence involves something of a Freudian clash between predecessor and novice. While it would not be productive to subscribe wholesale to such a reductive (and, within the Russian context, potentially inappropriate) system, Bloom does shrewdly perceive the nature of influence—or intertextuality. It would be easy to see in Nabokov's efforts to wrest primacy from his forefathers, for example, something of a Bloomian Oedipal conflict.[13] Perhaps even more

[13] Bloom has in effect revised ("swerved") against himself more recently when he stated that he now "define[s] influence simply as *literary love, tempered by defense*. The defenses vary from poet to poet.

pertinent is Bitov's sense of belatedness that runs throughout *Pushkin House* as he attempts to come to terms with literary history and to find a resolution that does not involve combating the past through literature. We address precisely these kinds of issues below, while keeping in mind Bloom's suggestion that "influence-anxiety does not so much concern the forerunner but rather is an anxiety achieved in and by the story, novel, play, poem, or essay" (*Influence* xxiii). The tensions found in and between texts, then, should be the focal points of an intertextual study according to Bloom.

To effect this kind of analysis, Bloom proposes six "revisionary ratios" by which authors "misread" their forebears (14). These vary from the "clinamen" (a swerve away from the original text) to the "apophrades" (a text that makes the original feel like a copy).[14] Arcane as these terms may be, they may still help conceptualize the ways in which authors transform, indeed misread, Joycean models. We see this in the way Nabokov's *Gift* "corrects" *Ulysses*'s Shakespeare theory and in the way Sokolov's *School for Fools* capitalizes on Joyce's stylistic innovations to transform the Russian literary tradition. Bloom stresses that the "revisionary relationship between poems, as manifested in tropes, images, diction, syntax, grammar, metric, [and] poetic stance" plays the greatest role (*Anatomy* 6). While our analysis will not focus on poetry, the same principle applies: The relationship between Joyce's texts and those of the select Russian figures

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But the overwhelming presence of love is vital to understanding how great literature works" (*Anatomy* 8). Indeed, a deep appreciation for Joyce, his texts, or his methods marks all of the texts considered below.

[14] Mary Orr provides a reconceptualization of Bloom's scheme in terms of dance that is as ironic as it is useful: "The first is a sidestep away from the precursor's footwork. The second is a leap invented by the precursor but used as a different dance step by the newcomer. The third is a flat-flooted jump to claim independence as a dancer from the precursor's dance tradition. The fourth describes a dance movement so quintessentially anchored in dance that the precursor's use of it seems amateur. The fifth is a dance movement of withdrawal of movement as dance, leaving the sixth a dance movement that so retranslates the precursor's most original dance step that this appears derivative" (69).

can be quite productively examined in terms of images, motifs, themes, diction, and tropes that the descendants borrow and alter.

A similar impulse to catalogue the countless ways authors rewrite others' texts lies at the heart of Gérard Genette's *Palimpsests*. Detailing the various kinds of "transtextuality," Genette pays closest attention to what he terms "hypertextuality," that is, his famous "text in the second degree":

> a text derived from another preexistent text. This derivation can be of a descriptive or intellectual kind, where a metatext […] "speaks" about a second text […]. It may yet be of another kind such as text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it. (5)

He goes on to detail an entire litany of forms of parody, pastiche, and other perversions of texts in far greater detail than necessary for our purposes.[15] And yet Genette's emphasis on the tensions between hyper- and hypotexts is key to understanding the relationships between Joyce's texts, *Ulysses* foremost among them, and the Russian novels:

> Every hypertext, even a pastiche, can be read for itself without becoming perceptibly 'aggramatical'; it is invested with a meaning that is autonomous and thus in some manner sufficient. But sufficient does not mean exhaustive. In every hypertext there is an *ambiguity* that Riffaterre denies to intertextual reading […] Quite evidently there are various degrees in that ambiguity: *Ulysses* can be read more easily without references to the *Odyssey* than can a pastiche without referring to its model, and there is room between those two poles for every possible gradation; hypertextuality is more or less mandatory, more or less optional according to each hypertext. (397-8)

This understanding of hypertextuality leads him to suggest that a "hypertext thus always stands to *gain* by having its hypertextual status perceived" (398). So while nothing dictates that we must read *The Gift* as a hypertext of *Ulysses*, its hypotext, the former's thematics come into even greater clarity when done so. We can view *The Gift* as a kind of translation, so to speak, of

[15] Genette seems to echo Bloom when he writes, "What might come closest to an isolated pragmatic transformation would be one inspired by the minimal intent of *correcting* possible errors or deficiencies in the hypotext, with a view to improving its effectiveness and its reception" (312).

Ulysses, a project that was proposed but never fulfilled by Nabokov. Likewise, grasping Olesha's hypertextual play in *Envy* with regard to *Ulysses* helps the reader understand Olesha's "*palimpsestuous*" writing, that is, his tendency to coat his stories with elements from other writers' works (399). As Genette playfully puts it, "one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together."

Michael Riffaterre, to whom Genette directs some of his comments, provides slightly different summations of hypertextuality and intertextuality. The latter, he suggests, consists of "a structured network of text-generated constraints on the reader's perceptions" as opposed to hypertextuality's "reader-generated loose web of free association" (781). Going further, he calls intertextuality "a system of difficulties to be reckoned with, of limitations in our freedom of choice, of exclusions" that the reader confronts in making associations between various parts of a text and its allusive referents. One could argue that Riffaterre's stress on the "constraints" of intertextuality in fact does injustice to the creative drives lying behind it. Nonetheless, his form of intertextuality does in fact rightly highlight the reader's need[16] to "hypothesize, rebuild, or just wonder" in order to make sense of the many connections between intertexts. John Hollander describes a similar process by which the careful reader "must have some kind of access to an earlier voice, and to its cave of resonant signification, analogous to that of the author of the later text" (65). Over time, such resonances may be lost: "a scholarly recovery of the context would restore the allusion, by revealing an intent as well as by showing means" (65-6). This sort of literary (re-)construction lies at the heart of Bitov's *Pushkin House*, a novel that makes no secret of its intertextual sources and construction. As readers, we are tasked with uniting the disparate

[16] Or is it the burden?

parts of Bitov's novel in order to position it within broader contexts of Russian and world literatures.[17]

Roland Barthes's (in)famous formulation regarding the "death of the Author," too, heralds this "birth of the reader" (148). The text, in the Barthian reader's hands, becomes "multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation." Of course, Barthes owes much to Kristeva for such a formulation, but, as Orr notes, "the reader is not the absent mediator-translator as in Kristeva, but body of mediation or medium for the text's effect or, more important for Barthes, affect to come into play" (34). Intertextuality, for Barthes, is a playful exchange of meanings that the reader facilitates in a joyful process of recognition. It follows then that later novels such as *Pushkin House* and Sokolov's *A School for Fools* foreground such a ludic brand of intertextuality.[18] They both may be read without reference to their antecedents, but the reader's recognition of them, including Joyce, provides added weight to the works, one that resonates across linguistic, cultural, and historical boundaries.

Moving beyond the reader's responsibilities, the *effects* of intertextuality upon the works involved is a related subject taken up by a number of theorists. Hollander offers the interesting insight that "rebounds of intertextual echo generally, then, distort the original voice in order to interpret it" (111). Moreover, whereas in a physical echo "the anterior source has a stronger presence and authenticity, the figurative echoes of allusion arise from the later, present text" and

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[17] Orr states that Riffaterre makes intertextuality into "a heuristic-hermeneutic grid where the reader traces threads in its web to find not a minotaur in the labyrinth of meaning, but resolution of consistent patterns" (39).

[18] Manfred Pfister claims that "[p]ostmodernist intertextuality within a framework of poststructuralist theory means that here intertextuality is not just used as one device amongst others, but is foregrounded, displayed, thematized and theorized as a central constructional principle" (214). It would be difficult to find a novel more obviously "intertextual" than Bitov's.

have claims to priority over the former (62). This consequence can be seen in the way *Ulysses* makes itself the equal of Homer's *Odyssey* and in the manner Olesha's heroes accentuate particular character traits of their precursors in Joyce's novel.[19]

The diverse approaches to intertextuality described above only scratch the surface of how one may penetrate the connections between works of literature. Here, we will use a select combination, believing that no one theory or system can do justice to the wide range of intertextual networks that Russian writers developed with regard to Joyce. At the heart of this study, close readings supplemented by theoretical considerations serve to demonstrate how and, more importantly, why they engage Joyce's texts in fascinating, multifaceted ways.

Before proceeding, however, it would be worth considering Orr's description of influence, a term, perhaps the elephant in the room, that can feel outdated or misguided:

> As opposed to the hierarchal, astral, Bloomian paradigm, the pertinent model for influence here is 'that which flows into', a tributary that forms a mightier river by its confluences, or the main stream that comprises many contributors. Influence as baton to be passed on thus understands the 'situatedness' of texts not as a synchronic system or electronic network, but as a complex process of human (inter)cultural activity in spaces and times including those of subsequent readers. Texts are the productions of multiple agencies and a plethora of intentions, from pleasure to instruction, exemplification to enlightenment. The contexts of influence and the influences of context are therefore the 'how' and 'why' questions any text will variously address, even if it is concerned primarily with form or a language game. […] Thus, the reader is the transmitter and interpreter of a work as cultural artefact that has relevance to real worlds but is not a mere video recording of them. (84)

This notion of intertextuality or influence comes closest to the kind of analysis undertaken in the chapters to come. It takes into consideration all aspects of a text's creation—the author, the reader, the cultural and historical contexts—and stresses the connections and tensions between them all. It moreover paints an accurate picture of the ways *Ulysses*, for example, spreads its

[19] While Wolfgang Müller's "interfigurality" does not quite describe Olesha's use of Joyce's characters as models (as opposed to wholesale borrowings along the lines of Henry Fielding's *Shamela*), it does present insights into the way Olesha transforms and distorts them.

"influence" in various directions, diverted into different streams by each writer's divergent interpretation of its messages, as well as by his contexts. If a text is comprised of many such sources, then it seems logical that its functions or purposes would be manifold, from pleasure to enlightenment. Finally, Orr's definition places an accent on the reader's role as co-creator in interpretation. This facet of influence-intertextuality has a two-fold quality, as Nabokov's reading of *Ulysses* comes into contact with the subsequent reader-critic's interpretation of *his* response to Joyce. So whether traditional or otherwise, the analyses that follow aim to provide a more substantive understanding of the myriad ways a group of Russian writers read, misread, or transformed Joycean models.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

While the particular points of analysis are partly determined by the nature of the respective writer's reading of Joyce, all four chapters follow a similar structure. First, details regarding each author's access to Joyce, his own statements on the Irish luminary, and the (oftentimes limited) previous scholarship concerning these connections are recounted. Once this background has been adequately described, we turn to close readings of the major novels as concerns their intertextual and thematic connections to Joyce.

Chapter 1 is devoted to Olesha's use of *Ulysses* as both a subtext and a counter-discourse throughout his short novel, *Envy* (*Zavist'*) (1927). It serves in part to demonstrate that Joyce's impact on Russian writers began early, even just a few years after the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922. As Olesha's work represents one of the earliest examples of a conscious literary response to Joyce, it is particularly important to construct an accurate picture of his contact with *Ulysses*, limited as it may have been compared to other writers such as Nabokov and even Bitov. This picture is composed of a series of public and private statements that reveal Olesha's complex and

seemingly contradictory attitude toward Joyce. In his prose, on the other hand, he inscribed a stable subtextual response to Joyce at various levels including character, theme, image, and plot. Olesha builds direct parallels and inversions of various elements from Joyce's novel in order to counter the idea that the gifted, creative artist may rewrite his past by selecting a literary forefather and in effect become his own father. This project, exemplified by Stephen in *Ulysses*, Olesha intimates, was simply not possible under the changing Soviet system. Although his hero, Nikolai Kavalerov, attempts to pursue a similar path, cultural-historical forces around him, compounded by his own personal limitations, prevent his success. So while Olesha valued Joyce's project, one that aligned with his values of individualism and Western art, *Envy* serves as a counter response to many of *Ulysses*'s basic modernist premises.

The second chapter focuses on Nabokov's *Gift* (*Dar*) (1935-7, 1952). Although scholarship on Nabokov and Joyce, at least in comparison with the other three subjects of this dissertation, has been far more thorough, many more points of contact remain to be explicated fully. One such area concerns the manner in which Nabokov's protagonist, Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, follows the Joycean model of electing a literary forefather in order to change his lineage. While Stephen does so to alter his paternity, Fyodor metaphorically merges Pushkin with his deceased father in his writing to recover a lost past: that of the Russian literature and culture he left behind. Moreover, in this chapter we explore connections between the two protagonists that have not been addressed adequately, sometimes not at all. Finally, by reading *The Gift* and *Bend Sinister*, particularly their second and seventh chapters respectively, alongside *Ulysses*, Nabokov's dialogic stance toward Joyce comes into better focus. Nabokov's aims as a writer without father, without country, and without cultural ties, too, become clearer. For Nabokov, unlike Joyce, the need to retain a link to the father as a potent force that binds his own

personal past to cultural history remained vital. Nabokov's treatment of Stephen's theory in *Bend Sinister* then is not only an artistic critique of Joyce's aesthetics and loose interpretations, but also a personal statement. A diachronic approach to Nabokov's relationship to Joyce reveals both his core and developing strong opinions.

Chapter 3 skips ahead two decades—through the dark times in which Joyce's name was not spoken in the USSR—to address both the covert and overt Joycean subtexts of Bitov's *Pushkin House* (*Pushkinskii dom*) (1964-71). Although Bitov includes several explicit references to Joyce and his texts throughout the novel, scholars have been slow to follow up on these links. In addition to such clear allusions, Bitov moreover includes components that strongly recall Joyce. For example, a large portion of the narrative concerns Leva Odoevtsev's efforts to grapple with his personal lineage and with literary history along lines reminiscent of Stephen's in *Ulysses*. He furthermore elects "second" fathers and grandfathers in an effort to change his paternity, but to no avail. A more thorough investigation of the Joycean subtext in *Pushkin House* demonstrates Bitov's two-pronged method. On the one hand, through Leva's experience, he shows how a sense of belatedness cannot be overcome by warring with the past. This approach, given the context of mid-century Soviet Russia, only exacerbates Leva's dependence on a system based largely on hate and betrayal. On the other hand, Bitov uses his novel, and in particular its extended conversation with *Ulysses*, to demonstrate how a writer can escape the self-imposed limitations that come with comparing himself with predecessors—a form of Zeno's paradox—by disentangling himself from the race with history. In this new epoch, the past, Bitov reveals, cannot be changed, only the present. Bitov weaves various references to *Ulysses* throughout the novel to highlight just this aesthetic problem: Leva's Dedalus-like endeavor to locate a literary and filial father breaks down, producing a new model for emulation itself when

the author comes to the realization that the same goals that Joyce could set for himself are no longer applicable.

Continuing the course of chapter 3, the fourth chapter focuses on another contemporary writer, Sasha Sokolov, and his novel *A School for Fools* (1976). Unlike the other chapters, though, this one analyzes more closely a case of *stylistic* impact. It is worth commenting that this situation may be the case for a number of largely simple reasons, foremost among them accessibility to Joyce's original texts. If Russian writers had limited access to *Ulysses* for much of the mid-century, then naturally they may not be able to adapt Joyce's language to their own writings in the way that other authors and literatures could. Futhermore, the case of Nabokov, who could read *Ulysses* with ease, both in terms of acquiring the book and comprehending its content, also exemplifies the differences between writers of his time and their descendents. With some significant exceptions, for reasons such as these ones, Joyce's impact remained largely on the levels of theme, plot, characters, and so on until Sokolov. While Sokolov's style has previously been identified as "Joycean" by a number of scholars, no prolonged study of this connection exists. As such, our two primary goals involve determining which stylistic devices Sokolov drew from Joyce, why he did so, and how he transformed them and, secondly, to explicate the related and quite strong thematic connections between *A School for Fools*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*: time, the search for identity, fathers and sons, and writing and language. Sokolov furthermore points out how cultural values have become entirely relative by challenging Joyce's project even more so than Bitov. In *A School for Fools*, he uses many Joycean tropes, images, and devices, and yet his hero opts to turn down all literary forefathers and, it might be said, even the question of paternity. He instead merges with the narrator, transforming the search

for a father into a disappearance into style or texture. Sokolov inserts "himself" into the fabric of his novel in order to assert his own place in the history of literary values.

In the concluding chapter, as we consider the evolution of responses to Joyce over the course of the twentieth century, we also note how some post-Soviet writers have addressed Joyce's presence in Russian literature as well. With the publication of the Khinkis-Khoruzhy translation in 1989, readers were finally given the opportunity to read the full novel in Russian. Mikhail Shishkin has been compared to Joyce on occasion, and he himself has commented on the role of Joyce in Russian literature in general. Shishkin states in an interview that he believes it is important for Russian writers to understand Western literature, yet he was surprised when he finally read Joyce that he had already imbibed some Joycean lessons via other writers who accessed him earlier (quoted in Ivanov n. pag.). This statement raises a fascinating, if tangled, issue: the transfer of intertextual links through writers, a form of literary inheritance. As Shishkin directly notes, Russian writers with their limited access to Joyce at various points likely absorbed elements from the Irish writer through intermediaries, even some from the Russian canon. Recalling the early debates on Joyce from the 1930s, others, such as Viktor Pelevin, mock Joyce's ubiquity, as in his *Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (*Sviashchennaia kniga oborotnia*) (2004). The publication of the Russian *Ulysses* clearly reverberated throughout Russia, though never uniformly. Briefly considering these two perspectives, that is, Shishkin's engagement and Pelevin's aversion, we conclude our analysis of Joyce's impact on Russian literature by reflecting on how writers all the way to the present day have repeatedly responded to his texts, taken up some of his primary themes (fatherhood, history, literary heritage), and viewed him as either a welcome foreign contributor to their national tradition or an influence best worth ignoring.

Taken as a whole, these four case studies and supplementary concluding remarks serve to demonstrate the major scope of Joyce's impact upon Russian literature. His work speaks to issues central to many writers' texts. As seen in the brief chapter précis above, the selected Russian authors, like many of their peers, all consistently if not obsessively write about fatherhood throughout their fiction. This phenomenon might be explained with reference to Edward Said's theory of filial/affilial relationships: "One very strong three-part pattern, for example, originates in a large group of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, in which the failure of the generative impulse—the failure of the capacity to produce or generate children—is portrayed in such a way as to stand for a general condition afflicting society and culture together, to say nothing of individual men and women" (16). Olesha, Nabokov, Bitov, and Sokolov all take up precisely this theme throughout their respective works. While some are less concerned with their heroes' physical inability to reproduce heirs, they all demonstrate the many complications that arise when one attempts to defy biology or history in order to change the past. For instance, Olesha's *Envy*, as Eliot Borenstein has shown, exhibits many facets of this anxiety.[20]

Indeed, the clash of the individual with a history far beyond his comprehension lies at the heart of the four studies. As Hayden White suggests, "The historical past, therefore, is, like our various personal pasts, at best a myth, justifying our gamble on a specific future, and at worst a lie, a retrospective rationalization of what we have in fact become through our choices" (123). History, a term here understood quite broadly, takes center stage in Joyce's *Ulysses*. It should not come as a surprise that *Envy*, *The Gift*, *Pushkin House*, and *A School for Fools* likewise probe the depths of history, whether it be personal, national, or cultural. The protagonists of these major

[20] See Borenstein's *Men without Women* (pp. 125-90).

Russian novels explore what it means to be a figure within or without history. Following White's formulation, their authors imply that it is "only by disenthralling human intelligence from the sense of history that men will be able to confront creatively the problems of the present" (123). Again, we note this pressing need to overcome the barriers of Stephen's looming nightmare of history in order to engage productively and organically with the present moment throughout *The Gift* and *Pushkin House*. Nabokov and Bitov's solutions—if there can ever be a solution to such an enduring problem—diverge dramatically and reflect their particular circumstances, but they share a reliance on Joycean prototypes.[21]

These prototypes, it might be argued, speak to a more general mythologizing trend in twentieth-century literature. The mythic method of Joyce's novel is well known, and it perhaps plays a role in Olesha's *Envy* and Sokolov's *A School for Fools* in particular. Extrapolating from these techniques, we can see how, as Eleazar Meletinsky notes, "[l]iterary mythification is dominated by the idea of an eternal, cyclical repetition of mythological prototypes under different 'masks', which means that literary and mythological protagonists can play various roles and be replaced by a variety of characters" (xix). While the writers under examination in this dissertation create protagonists remarkably singular and memorable for their talents and idiosyncrasies, a broader myth of the "artist as a young man" that frequently combines with more classical myths can be discerned in their texts. Such overlap speaks to the desire in all five writers to carve out a space for themselves in literary history.

[21] White critiques how "[w]hen historians try to relate their 'findings' about the 'facts' in what they call an 'artistic' manner, they uniformly eschew the techniques of literary representation which Joyce, Yeats, and Ibsen have contributed to modern culture. There have been no significant attempts at surrealistic, expressionistic, or existentialist historiography in this century (except by novelists and poets themselves) for all of the vaunted 'artistry' of the historians of modern times" (127).

These themes, then, serve as some of the central threads of the discussion that follows. In the tensions between, on the one hand, the various polyphonic dialogues with Joyce that these writers cultivate, and, on the other hand, the unities among them, we find a portrait of an impact as fascinating as it is significant and multifaceted. For to ignore Joyce's place in Russian twentieth-century literature is to exclude a major story of world literary history.

Chapter 1 — Yury Olesha: An Envy for World Culture

So begin the pursuits for a father, for a motherland, for a profession, for a talisman that can turn out to be glory or power.

Так начинаются поиски: отца, родины, профессии, талисмана, который может оказаться славой или властью.

– Olesha, "I Look into the Past"

INTRODUCTION

Speaking at the 1936 General Meeting of the Moscow Union of Soviet Writers, Yury Olesha presented James Joyce as a negative and foreign literary model, exemplifying the need to struggle against Formalism and Naturalism. His speech was reproduced in the 20 March edition of *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary gazette) and included the following remarks:

> The artist should say to man: "Yes, yes, yes," but Joyce says: "No, no, no." "Everything is bad on Earth," says Joyce. And thus, all his brilliance is of no use to me. […] In order to understand what is Formalism and what is Naturalism, and why these phenomena are hostile to us, I give you an example from Joyce. This writer said: "Cheese is the corpse of milk." Look, comrades, how terrible. The writer of the West saw the death of milk. He said that milk can be dead. Is it well said? It is well said. It is said correctly, but we don't want such correctness. We want neither Naturalism, nor formalist tricks, but artistic dialectical truth. And from the point of view of this truth, milk can never be a corpse; it flows from the mother's breast into the child's mouth, and therefore it is immortal.
>
> Художник должен говорить человеку: «Да, да, да», а Джойс говорит: «Нет, нет, нет». «Все плохо на земле», — говорит Джойс. И поэтому вся его гениальность для меня не нужна […] Чтобы понять, что такое формализм и что такое натурализм, и почему эти явления враждебны нам, я приведу пример из Джойса. Этот писатель сказал: «Сыр — это труп молока». Вот, товарищи, как страшно. Писатель Запада увидел смерть молока. Сказал, что молоко может быть мертвым. Хорошо это сказано? Хорошо. Это сказано правильно, но мы не хотим такой правильности. Мы хотим не натурализма, не формальных ухищрений, а художественной диалектической правды. А с точки зрения этой правды молоко никогда не может быть трупом, оно течет из груди матери в уста ребенка и поэтому оно бессмертно. ("Velikoe narodnoe iskusstvo" 3)[22]

A version of this chapter previously appeared in *The Slavic and East European Journal* 58.4.

[22] All translations from the Russian are my own. Citations from *Ulysses* refer to Joyce 1986. Those from *Envy* refer to Olesha 1965. Olesha here quotes Leopold Bloom's thought from episode 6 ("Hades") in *Ulysses*: "A corpse is meat gone bad. Well and what's cheese? Corpse of milk" (94).

Olesha's comments align with the trend in Soviet criticism from the early 1930s on to denounce Joyce's perceived pessimism, Freudianism, and non-progressive vision of history (Cornwell, *James* 115). As any deviation from state-mandated Socialist Realism was by this time considered counterrevolutionary and artistically suspect, it was inevitable that Joyce would eventually face such condemnation. Olesha, who declared in his speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 that he had renounced his individualist "beggar theme"[23] and committed his art to the new cause, thus proactively chose to contribute to this body of criticism (*Povesti* 427-30). By reproaching Joyce early and publicly, he could align himself with the "correct" critical point of view and potentially avoid greater troubles in the future (Sarnov 146).

This appears to be the case at first glance, anyway. Examined more closely, Olesha's speech reveals itself as highly contrived and not without certain contradictions. In the process of covering his own modernist tracks by damning Joyce's "formalistic" technique and allegedly pessimistic worldview, he alludes to *Ulysses*'s famous lyrical conclusion: "[…] and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes" (644). Olesha's statements quoted above thus begin with an obvious lie: Joyce's finale undoubtedly ends with a positive affirmation ("yes, yes, yes"). It stands as an instructive contrast to Olesha's own cynical ending to his novel *Envy*, which finds its protagonists resigned to their undesirable

[23] In this 1934 speech, Olesha relates how he had once envisioned a story about a beggar, who crosses a marvelous threshold into a fertile land that returns his youth to him. The reason why he never completed the tale, Olesha claims, was because it would be superfluous given the tremendous changes in the social and political fabric of Russia. His desire for youth and its fresh vision became outmoded since a new life was now available to all. Olesha concludes by stating that he has personally set himself the task of writing texts in which characters will solve contemporary moral issues, that he has chosen to focus on the new generation, and that he "did not become the beggar" (*Povesti* 427-30).

fates. Olesha here allegedly proclaims "No!" to Joyce by appropriating Molly's soliloquy for his own purposes, and he argues that Soviet literature now requires something other than negation, namely "artistic dialectical truth." He then goes on to mix metaphors by juxtaposing the milk-corpse-cheese with his own image of a mother's milk offered to a child, an apparently optimistic symbol of immortality. Such an unconvincing and odd juxtaposition raises a host of questions: Just how sincere was Olesha in his speech? Why does he lie about Joyce's "pessimism"? Was he truly abasing himself, or did he expect his audience to see some other meaning through the subterfuge?

Another coded layer, in our view, exists within Olesha's speech, one that may be read as a call to admire the depth and novelty of vision that Joyce brought to world literature. Despite his diatribe to the contrary, Olesha implicitly champions Joyce's creative artistry by recognizing the milk-corpse metaphor as strong, if decadent. His comments thus represent a subtle form of doublespeak, a way in which he simultaneously acknowledges and criticizes Joyce while remaining non-committal. Tellingly, Olesha was indeed never arrested unlike so many of his peers, a controversial point in Olesha's biography. Maintaining an ambivalent stance arguably provided not only safety but also an indirect means to promote Joyce's art to the extent that it was possible. Despite the many ambiguities contained within the speech, it unquestionably raises the issue of Olesha's complicated relationship with Joyce and the manner in which he responded to *Ulysses* through his own fiction.

In writing the extremely ambiguous and challenging *Envy*, Olesha drew on his interpretation of Joyce's text as well as reviews of the much-debated author, who at this time became a common subject of conversation among writers even in Soviet Russia. Joyce's impact on *Envy* exceeds sporadic allusions to *Ulysses*; Olesha, in fact, establishes a sustained literary

response by which he addresses ideas central to his worldview and situation within a Soviet cultural climate that was becoming increasingly hostile toward modernistic experimentation. We will first recount the degree to which Olesha was familiar with Joyce based on his own statements and the general availability of Joyce's work in Russia. Next we will enumerate and analyze the similarities between *Envy* and *Ulysses* at various important levels including character, plot, and theme. Given the nature of this study, which examines a more *immediate* reception of Joyce, some degree of (responsible) speculation will be involved. Individually some of these connections may appear coincidental. However, taking into account such details collectively, it becomes clear that the works resonate quite strongly with one another in a variety of critical ways. Finally, we will conclude by considering the impact of Joyce on Olesha's novel as a whole. In re-reading *Envy* through the lens of *Ulysses*, we come to better understand the former's thematic concerns. The parallels—and reversals—that Olesha features throughout his text can best be understood as the response from one writer, who attempts to conceptualize the issues facing his generation in a radically new period of his history, to the work of another writer who faced analogous concerns in different conditions. In particular, these correspondences and differences develop a conversation concerning one of Joyce's primary themes: father-son conflict and Stephen Dedalus's related project of choosing his own artistic lineage to overcome paternal legacies. Olesha, in turn, addresses this same problem and with his references to *Ulysses* suggests the difficulty, or even the impossibility, for a Soviet writer like him to pursue Stephen's path during this period of transition toward an ever more regimented way of life. Though Kavalerov engages in a similar undertaking as Dedalus, the cultural-historical circumstances around him, exacerbated by his own considerable ambivalence, prevent his success. Examining

Envy in light of *Ulysses* thus helps reveal another layer to the tragic dilemmas presented in Olesha's fiction and his own trying position in Soviet literary life of the era.

POINTS OF CONTACT

The more general Soviet interest in Joyce, of which Olesha became an early active participant, can be traced back to at least 1923. In the second issue of his journal *Sovremennyi zapad* (Contemporary West), Evgeny Zamiatin wrote a column discussing *Ulysses*'s overall strengths, use of Shakespearean subtexts, and attention to sexuality. Neil Cornwell suggests that this article likely "initiated an interest in Joyce among the modernist-inclined writers and intelligentsia in Russia" (*James* 89). Moreover, Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour has closely explicated Zamiatin's influence as artist and thinker on Olesha, as have other scholars (*Invisible* 141).[24] Copies of *Ulysses* found their way to Russia during these years. Cornwell, for example, cites Noel Riley Fitch's account of Ivy Litvinov's (née Low) visit to Sylvia Beach in Paris sometime in 1926-7 and her excitement at the thought of bringing Joyce to Russia (*James* 14).[25] This cultural exchange is essential to a comparative study of Olesha and Joyce. It must be borne in mind that this was a time when "the frontiers which separated Russia from Western Europe were still permeable" (Beaujour, *Invisible* 131).

Ulysses's early partial appearance in translation provides evidence of such permeability in the Soviet Union. The history of the novel's translation constitutes a protracted and elaborate

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[24] Nils Åke Nilsson also comments: "It is hard to believe that Oleša did not become acquainted with Zamjatin's articles and reviews when he came to Moscow from Odessa at the beginning of the 1920's to start his career as a writer. […] [N]obody who cared for the technique of prose (and Oleša was certainly one who did care) could fail to overlook or disregard Zamjatin's views" (268).

[25] Fitch has written extensively on the expatriate community that gathered in Paris. Litvinov, who had some personal contact with Joyce, was an English writer and the wife of Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov. Beach owned the Shakespeare and Company bookshop in Paris and published the first book edition of *Ulysses* in 1922.

tale, one that has been traced at length in articles by Emily Tall and Ludmilla Voitkovska, as well as in Cornwell's valuable *James Joyce and the Russians*. The first known Russian publication of Joyce is V. Zhitomirsky's 1925 translation of several fragments from *Ulysses* in the Moscow almanac *Novinki Zapada* (Novelties of the West).[26] These fragments, all with gaps even *within* chapters, are drawn from "Telemachus" (episode 1), "Aeolus" (7), "Cyclops" (12), "Ithaca" (17), and "Penelope" (18). Additionally, a foreword by E. L. Lann provides an overview of the entire novel and a brief critical introduction to Joyce's life, art, and reputation.[27] Having moved to Moscow in 1922, Olesha would certainly have had access to this volume.

Even before his 1936 speech with its negative comments, Olesha made several other statements regarding his Irish contemporary, often in reply to others' opinions or as part of a greater debate concerning Western literature. For example, one of Joyce's most outspoken proponents in the 1930s, Vsevolod Vishnevsky, responded to a series of three negative articles by D. S. Mirsky[28] with his own "*Znat' zapad!*" (Know the West!) in 1933. Defending Joyce, Vishnevsky emphatically repeats the need to understand Western literature and hails him as one of its greatest representatives. For support he includes statements by major artists and critics,

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[26] Zhitomirsky's translation was followed a year later by a translation of "The Sisters," an incomplete edition of *Dubliners* and a separate version of "Eveline" in 1927, further *Ulysses* fragments in 1929, and several poems in 1932. For a complete translation history, see Genieva 2005.

[27] While this is not the place to evaluate at length the quality of the translation, it should be noted, however, that Zhitomirsky at times drops or alters lines. Nonetheless, he ably conveys the numerous styles found in *Ulysses*, for example the scientific catechism of "Ithaca" and Molly's stream-of-consciousness soliloquy, including its famous conclusion. These partial translations, along with the foreword that introduces them, provide an impression of a novel constantly in motion and without a grounded point-of-view. Olesha would have found in *Ulysses* a satisfying model for displaying varied perspectives. This is not to say that *Envy* should be considered as formally innovative as *Ulysses*. *Envy* can instead be viewed as a microcosm of such bold modernist experimentation filtered through a different cultural-literary context.

[28] Mirsky himself published highly complimentary remarks about *Ulysses* while in emigration in the 1928 Parisian annual *Versty* (Versts). Having converted to Marxism, however, he requested a pardon from Soviet authorities via Maxim Gorky, returned to Moscow, and attempted to make up for his past critical "transgressions" abroad. He perished in a labor camp in 1939.

including the following from Olesha: "I consider the current of Joyce and Dos Passos innovative. True, I haven't read *Ulysses*, but V. Stenich,[29] who is now translating this book, gave me a keen impression of it" (94).[30] The question of what exactly Olesha meant by his "not having read" *Ulysses* remains unclear, as is often the case with him.[31] Did he mean he had not read Joyce in English, or was he protecting himself against possible accusations of overestimating decadent Western literature? In spite of his evasive answer, he had surely followed the controversy surrounding the book for the last ten years and read translations, published or not, available to him.[32]

By all accounts, *Ulysses* pervaded the air of the time. A memoir of Olesha by Lev Nikulin recounts a conversation he had with Olesha, Mirsky, Mikhail Zoshchenko, and Valentin Stenich in which Joyce and Dos Passos's names appear. Olesha challenges Zoshchenko's claim that Stenich is translating Dos Passos, suggesting that he makes it all up as he goes along, and

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[29] Valentin Stenich, an editor at the *Mysl'* publishing house, oversaw E. N. Fetodova's 1927 translation of *Dubliners* and himself translated the "Hades" episode from *Ulysses* (entitled "Pokhorony Patrika Dignema") in 1934. Stenich managed to publish translations of two more episodes the following year before the tide turned completely against Joyce. He met Olesha in 1928, and they became close friends. Incidentally, Stenich was also well acquainted with Leonid Dobychin, whose *The City of N* (*Gorod En*) has often been compared to *Dubliners*. According to Vladimir Bakhtin, Dobychin not only discussed *Dubliners* with Stenich but likely even read the collection because of their acquaintance (41).

[30] For some commentary on these debates regarding Joyce, Dos Passos, Proust, and other modernist writers by figures including Stenich and Mirsky, see Gal'tsova and Günther (pp. 97-100).

[31] The Russian Joyce scholar Ekaterina Genieva on the contrary attributes a very thorough knowledge of the Irish writer to Olesha, even suggesting he may have translated *Ulysses*. Without offering any evidence whatsoever, she makes the following cryptic statement: "I think that a lot in the stories about Joyce belong to the realm of myth. But proving that is difficult, because far from all archives are open and no one can say with certainty whether or not Yury Olesha translated *Ulysses*" (*"Russkaia odisseia"* 6). It is generally believed, however, that Olesha was not fluent in English.

[32] While the culture of 1920s Soviet Russia contributed to Olesha's awareness and subsequent adaptation-transformation of Joycean motifs, his interest in European literature ran much deeper. According to Andrew Barratt, Olesha was a self-consciously intertextual author who "follow[ed] the new trends in Europe with considerable attention" and "utilized motifs drawn from his reading of other writers" (7-8). Comments such as this one align with Olesha's belief that "a writer's work is to some degree like a settling of accounts with the impressions that the writer receives in the course of his entire life… But also with the impressions received from literature" (quoted in Pertsov 95).

states: “Dos Passos, Joyce, Dos Passos, Joyce! Everyone says, ‘Joyce,’ but no one has read him!” (quoted in Pel'son 68). At Mirsky’s suggestion that Joyce is nevertheless a great writer, Olesha balks with his typical irony: “He wrote a chapter without punctuation marks? I heard! In Odessa, brokers have long been writing telegrams without commas and periods” (69). These sorts of statements on Joyce by Olesha appear relatively frequently in memoirs from this period. Discussing literary technique in 1934, Olesha gives Lev Tolstoy high praise and even states that in some respects he reminds him of “what they now call Joyceism [*dzhoisizmom*]” (*Povesti* 422). Two years later, that is, the same year as his Moscow Union of Soviet Writers speech, he remarked, “They consider Joyce a great writer. I only know excerpts. Yes, all that’s remarkable, that which Joyce writes” (“Beseda” 165). He then goes on to call Joyce “formally interesting” and acknowledges his “sharp eyes” and “subtle psychological analysis.” Nevertheless, Olesha claims that he wants “to know that life is beautiful” and raises the same issue as in his Meeting of Moscow Writers speech: “I don’t want to read a writer who talks about cheese, that cheese is the corpse of milk.” These statements utilize a familiar tactic: Olesha guardedly compliments Joyce for features he himself possesses as a writer (bold imagery and striking metaphors), only to cut him down for perceived failures (pessimism and formalism). In his private diary, however, Olesha would “bow before the shade of Joyce” and go on to praise *Dubliners*’ “Araby” as “one of the best stories of all times” (*Kniga* 154).[33] Olesha’s turn to *Ulysses* for inspiration and dialogue in spite of the dangers of being interested in the controversial writer should therefore be explored more fully, particularly since *Envy*’s characters and thematics bespeak an unmistakable impact by Joyce, whatever the degree of Olesha’s acquaintance with *Ulysses*.

[33] The fact that “Araby” struck Olesha so profoundly should not come as a surprise. Joyce’s story shares many features with Olesha’s own short fiction: a protagonist faced with the challenges of maturity, an epiphanic moment, sharp details, and a concise, tensely wound plot.

THREE OTHER FAT MEN: BUCK, BLOOM, AND BABICHEV

A Joycean impact on Olesha has been observed previously by a handful of critics. Boris Volodin, for example, notes "echoes" of Joyce in *Envy* but does not provide any specific details (165). Nils Åke Nilsson in his pioneering article "Through the Wrong End of Binoculars" also considers a connection between Joyce's "epiphany" and Olesha's attempts to see the world anew through radical artistic *ostranenie*.[34] Nilsson holds back, however: "we cannot fail to notice how close Joyce's passage about the spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus comes to Oleša's already often-mentioned passage about the eye as a binocular or a microscope […] This should not, however, lead us to any hasty conclusion" (273). His warning against reading too far into details in support of a particular argument is justified, yet the textural fabric of *Envy* and the wealth of Joycean "echoes" in it suggest that Olesha actively engages with Joyce's masterpiece on a deeper level than previously suspected.

Of course, Olesha has not simply lifted Joyce's narrative strategies, themes, and motifs indiscriminately but instead selected elements attractive to him for various reasons and modified them for his own purposes. By doing so, he creates a web of superimposed images through which we see many of those in *Ulysses* shimmer. Olesha builds such parallels on numerous levels and then partially severs or upturns them to shape his reply to Joyce's text.

At the level of characterization Olesha uses blending techniques to engage with *Ulysses*. One of the most intriguing amalgamations of characters occurs on *Envy*'s opening pages. This

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[34] Kazimiera Ingdahl mentions a similar connection between the Joycean epiphany and moments of inspiration tied to "solar visions" in *Envy* (99). It should be noted that Nilsson and Ingdahl here refer to *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, respectively. Nevertheless, we see that stylistic parallels between Joyce and Olesha have been previously drawn, even if only in passing. The concept of epiphany remains extremely important even in *Ulysses* where Joyce takes it in new directions and further complicates the notion. Early in the novel Stephen recalls his past "epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep" (34). See Bowen for a short but comprehensive reevaluation of Joyce's understanding of epiphanies throughout his fiction.

first major correspondence between the two novels sets up the terms of Olesha's interest in *Ulysses* and the contrasts with which he repeatedly plays. Here, Olesha recreates the morning scene from Joyce's novel, which, as noted above, Zhitomirsky translated, by alluding to Buck Mulligan via Andrei Babichev:

> He sings in the mornings in the toilet. You can imagine what a buoyant, healthy man this is. The desire to sing rises in him as a reflex. This song of his, in which there's no melody, no words, but only a "ta-ra-ra," which cries out in various moods, can be interpreted thus:
>
> "How pleasant it is to live… ta-ra! ta-ra!.. My intestines are resilient… ra-ta-ta-ta-ra-ri… The juices move properly within me… ra-ta-ta-du-ta-ta… Contract, bowels, contract… tram-ba-ba-bum!"
>
> When he passes before me from the bedroom in the morning (I pretend I am asleep) through the door, which leads to the innards of the apartment, to the bathroom, my imagination flies off after him. I hear the commotion in the bathroom stall, where it's narrow for his large body. His back rubs against the inside of the slammed door, and his elbows poke into the walls, he shifts on his feet. A matte glass oval has been set into the bathroom door. He turns on the switch, the oval is illuminated from within and becomes a beautiful, opal-colored egg. In my mind's eye I see this egg, hanging in the darkness of the hall.
>
> Он поет по утрам в клозете. Можете представить себе, какой это жизнерадостный, здоровый человек. Желание петь возникает в нем рефлекторно. Эти песни его, в которых нет ни мелодии, ни слов, а есть только одно "та-ра-ра", выкрикиваемое им на разные лады, можно толковать так:
>
> "Как мне приятно жить... та-ра! та-ра!.. Мой кишечник упруг... ра-та-та-та-ра-ри... Правильно движутся во мне соки... ра-та-та-ду-та-та... Сокращайся, кишка, сокращайся... трам-ба-ба-бум!"
>
> Когда утром он из спальни проходит мимо меня (я притворяюсь спящим) в дверь, ведущую в недра квартиры, в уборную, мое воображение уносится за ним. Я слышу сутолоку в кабинке уборной, где узко его крупному телу. Его спина трется по внутренней стороне захлопнувшейся двери, и локти тыкаются в стенки, он перебирает ногами. В дверь уборной вделано матовое овальное стекло. Он поворачивает выключатель, овал освещается изнутри и становится прекрасным, цвета опала, яйцом. Мысленным взором я вижу это яйцо, висящее в темноте коридора. (19)

Joyce begins his novel as follows:

> Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from a stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. A yellow dressinggown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him on the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned:
> —*Introibo ad altare Dei*.
>
> Halted, he peered down the dark winding stairs and called out coarsely:
> —Come up, Kinch! Come up, you fearful jesuit!
>
> Solemnly he came forward and mounted the round gunrest. He faced about and blessed gravely thrice the tower, the surrounding land and the awaking mountains. Then,

> catching sight of Stephen Dedalus, he bent towards him and made rapid crosses in the air, gurgling in his throat and shaking his head. Stephen Dedalus, displeased and sleepy, leaned his arms on the top of the staircase and looked coldly at the shaking gurgling face that blessed him, equine in its length, and at the untonsured hair, grained and hued like pale oak. (3)

Possessing huge physicality and tremendous *joie de vivre*, Babichev shares many features with Buck; the latter also enjoys morning routines and pays close attention to bodily needs and sensations. The characters' vigor overflows into Buck's chanting and Andrei's noisy ablutions (ironically called "singing" by Kavalerov). Their antipodes, the writers Stephen and Kavalerov, run counter with their sleepiness and sardonic attitudes. Neither Babichev nor Buck, however, feels in the slightest upset by their roommates' gloomy dispositions; their complete self-absorption trumps all. In addition, the buoyancy inherent to their nature comes through in various restless actions: Buck's ridiculous "rapid crosses" mid-"gurgling," Babichev's "reflex" to sing in tune with his bowel movements and to thrust out his elbows as he knocks against the walls of the toilet while he "shifts on his feet" (*perebiraet nogami*, 19). A crude energy keeps their bodies in motion, pulling other characters, including reluctant ones, into their spheres of influence.[35]

Babichev's famous bathroom scene also clearly owes much to another character from *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom. Such a scatological moment cannot be traced to Russian literature but rather to Joyce's hero: "Quietly [Bloom] read, restraining himself, the first column and, yielding but resisting, began the second. Midway, his last resistance yielding, he allowed his bowels to ease themselves quietly as he read, reading still patiently that slight constipation of yesterday quite gone" (56). Put simply, Bloom and Babichev both savor the release of their bowels in terms

[35] Kavalerov feels an attraction to Babichev that concerns him. He resents Babichev for all that he possesses—physical strength, control over his surroundings and people, his relationship with Valia—but cannot seem to suppress his simultaneous enchantment. The same conflicting feelings define Kavalerov's relations with the athletic Makarov; although the former envies the soccer player for all his talents and accomplishments, he cannot help but admire him at the same time. On this theme, see Borenstein's chapter "The Family Men of Yuri Olesha" in *Men without Women* (pp. 125-161).

that even naturalistic works previously hesitated to employ. They immerse themselves in the physiological rhythm of this process, finding a supplementary element of pleasure in the control they exert over their bodies. Such concern for the physical is emblematic of *Envy*, in which Kavalerov places so much emphasis on Babichev's fleshy and massive frame, both admiring its strength and feeling repelled by it; *Ulysses'*s unflinching portrayal of all aspects of human physicality, from bathroom habits to sexual encounters, surely offered a model for such candidness. Part of Olesha's dialogue-technique involves his conflation of several characters, in this case Buck and Bloom, into one, Andrei Babichev. This fusion in part serves to emphasize the ubiquity of this human type. Moreover, it speaks to a form of intertextuality that Wolfgang G. Müller calls "interfigurality" in his essay of the same name. The most explicit version of this technique typically involves the wholesale borrowing of characters from one text into another, for example in Henry Fielding's *Shamela* or Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Olesha does not transplant Bloom or Buck into *Envy*, of course, but he does indeed craft a figure that strongly recalls these two literary predecessors. (Bloom's role in *Envy* will be further analyzed below.)[36]

With some small modifications, much of William Schutte's list of the vivid differences between Stephen and Mulligan can apply just as well to Kavalerov and Babichev:

> At every level the two are in fundamental opposition. […] Mulligan is generous; Stephen is selfish. Mulligan is popular with all groups in Dublin; Stephen is a social outcast. Mulligan is a materialist without shame; Stephen abhors the material and exalts the spiritual and the aesthetic. Mulligan is a minister to the body (and is respected); Stephen would be a minister to the soul (and is ignored) […]. (73)

Perhaps more than anything, the fact that people ignore him terrifies and annoys Kavalerov, the would-be minister to the old world and anti-materialist. Peter Barta also makes the intriguing

[36] In general, one-to-one correspondences are less important than the overall effect of Olesha's allusions to *Ulysses*. Rimgaila Salys suggests that *Envy*'s opening is also reminiscent of Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* and that Babichev shares traits with its eponymous figure, though the connections to *Ulysses* appear stronger, particularly in these early scenes (24).

point that "Stephen gravitates away from enclosed areas. Bloom, however, feels secure inside buildings and feels less confident in the open: he is more vulnerable to gossip and hostility when outside the controllable environment of the room" (63). On the contrary, while Kavalerov never quite feels comfortable with himself or his surroundings, several of his great moments of crisis take place outside. For example, his abortive meeting with the machine Ophelia occurs in a barren field described by his guide, Ivan Babichev, as a "typical wasteland relief" (93). One of his final humiliations—his confrontation with Andrei at the soccer match—also happens in a very public space. Babichev, though, feels completely at home when encased by physical, man-made structures such as his apartment or the Chetvertak. The rigid spaces built up around him represent progress to Babichev. For Kavalerov, both indoor and outdoor spaces only serve to remind him of his status as a man out of place with his environment. All of these shared and/or modified points of characterization with Joyce demonstrate both Olesha's ties to the writer, as well as the more general literary archetypes that he deploys in his fiction.

Another series of images in these opening scenes also serves to link the two characters through shared traits, both material and psychological, and to create a recurring contrast between them and their younger artist counterparts, the "poets" Dedalus and Kavalerov. For example, Babichev indulges in ample "ablutions" and wears a "short mustache, right under the nose," recalling Buck's morning wash and shave (21). These men concern themselves more with the upkeep of their bodies than the cultivation of the human spirit or imagination, as expressed by Buck's irreverent attacks on faith and tasteless deprecation of Stephen's deceased mother and by Babichev's NEP-era mindset, which is epitomized by his famous passion for creating a cheap super-sausage. Perhaps physiology and physicality do not entirely rule these two characters—Babichev feels compassion for over-worked women and wants to liberate them from domestic

slavery[37]—but the narratives emphasize external appearances (for instance Buck's "white glittering teeth," 6) and point to their existence in empirical-material(istic) reality.

Mulligan's mirror, too, finds its reflection, so to speak, in the large glass door inset through which Kavalerov dimly perceives Babichev's abundant girth and hears his "singing." Much like Babichev's singing and Buck's mock chanting, imagery based on optic effects serves as a symbolic indicator of the characters' mentality, and the way Joyce and Olesha use this imagery reveals a common purpose. Babichev, for example, fails to notice the latent aesthetic beauty of the inset under certain angles of light; only Kavalerov's observation imbues it with momentary splendor. Babichev simply does not attune his vision to the metamorphoses that reality constantly undergoes to the careful eye. He ignores or perhaps does not see the intricate details of reality, such as the play of light in a mirror, and the sensual pleasures that a new perspective, such as a rooftop view, offers.[38] Kavalerov, on the other hand, cleverly perceives the glass oval in the bathroom door becoming an "egg" (19) and the "blue and pink world of the room" whirling in Babichev's "mother-of-pearl button lens" (20); if Babichev were to register such transformations at all, they would undoubtedly strike him as irrelevant, and he would consider mad those who see and attach importance to such changes. Stephen's vision proves just as sharp as Kavalerov's: "Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack. Hair on end. As he and others see me. Who chose this face for me. This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too" (6). He not only sees himself in the mirror but also

[37] See the Harun-al-Rashid scene in the novel (23). Coincidentally, Joyce momentarily casts Bloom in the same role near the end of "Circe." Here, Bloom seeks out Stephen after the incident at Bella Cohen's brothel: "*Incog Haroun Al Raschid he flits behind the silent lechers and hastens on by the railings with fleet step of a pard strewing the drag behind him, torn envelopes drenched in aniseed*" (478).

[38] By contrast, Kavalerov imagines Babichev's "Buddha-like" shadow, cast from the apartment balcony, physically disturbing a garden (31), and the bell-ringing he hears from the same space later transfixes him (55-6).

confronts deep-seated apprehensions about himself in the reflection it offers; in addition, he views the mirror as a "symbol of Irish art" and turns to focused introspection on larger issues. Kavalerov's numerous encounters with mirrors, such as when he meets Ivan on the street or when he wakes up at Anechka's and recalls his father while looking at himself in a mirror, lead to similar experiences.[39] Buck treats matters such as Irish art, symbolized in this scene in *Ulysses* by the mirror that they both regard with great attention, more irreverently. In this respect, Buck and Babichev lack the playfulness of mind needed for a truly aesthetic response to reality. They ignore the potential for poetic meaning not only in the reflections of light on mirroring surfaces, but in most phenomena, whereas the poets Kavalerov and Stephen cannot help but see all reality in constant flux and metamorphosis giving birth to metaphor.

In light of Olesha's fascination with the notion of cheese as dead milk, it will be instructive to pay some attention to the milk imagery introduced early in the two novels. Read retroactively, Olesha's 1936 speech offers a curious connection in this light. Following a brief conversation with an old delivery woman, Buck "[drinks a glass of milk] at her bidding," whereupon he praises it as "good food" that could cure Irish "rotten teeth and rotten guts" (12). Babichev as a habit "in the morning drinks two glasses of cold milk" (21). On one level, their consumption of milk connects the two characters through an image of healthy nourishment, valued both by the medical student Buck and the food-producer Andrei, while adding a certain infantile quality to their boisterous personalities. According to Kavalerov, Babichev "washes himself like a boy" (20). On another level, this seemingly innocuous habit carries more strongly negative symbolic implications. In *Ulysses*, Buck, Haines, and Stephen each view the woman

[39] In his memoirs, *No Day without a Line* (*Ni dnia bez strochki*), Olesha, too, recounts a similar experience of gazing into mirrors to determine whom he more closely resembles: his father or his mother (117).

who brings them milk for their breakfast in different ways. Stephen considers her a symbol of barren mother Ireland deprived of national identity; he observes her "[o]ld shrunken paps" and feels perturbed by her inability to recognize Gaelic (12). Buck treats the withered woman ironically, however, singing a "tender chant" to her as she departs, ridiculing her as old and ugly; he clearly remains unconcerned about her degraded and weakened state that also represents Ireland's. He does not care that her "shrunken paps" may not be able to produce the life-giving milk the country needs to cure—if we extend the metaphor—its "rotten guts." Babichev, too, is a milkmaid of sorts, but a thriving and robust one. He has "appropriated the female capacity for creation" by "giving birth" (22) to his Chetvertak cafeteria, which will feed the population collectively, and by therefore supplanting traditional family structures (Borenstein 167). While metaphorically seizing through industry the so-called female aspect of creativity, that is, birthing and nourishing, Babichev, whose broad chest is endowed with feminine breasts that shake when he walks, deprives this very female creativity of its organic aspect. He mechanizes the preparation and consumption of food into a de-individualized and de-ritualized activity (20). His cafeteria chain disrupts the natural order (at least in Kavalerov's and Ivan Babichev's minds) and perhaps serves to hide his sterility and renunciation of family life masked as a sacrifice for the sake of Soviet ideals (see Harkins, especially p. 446). The milk imagery linked to Babichev and Buck then comes to be associated with the idea of corrupted life-giving energies, which can be cultural (ridicule of Irish traditions and aping of English trends) or political-ideological (socialist mass feeding projects and taking in various "children" but never producing any himself).[40] Kavalerov, like Olesha, on the other hand repeatedly associates milk with life-affirming energies.

[40] Though Babichev has no biological children of his own, he takes care of Makarov, Kavalerov and Valia, his niece. His various projects—the communal cafeteria and cheap but nourishing sausage—can also be regarded as his "children." In *Ulysses*'s "Oxen of the Sun" chapter, Buck and his medical school friends' licentious and callous discussion of childbirth and contraceptives shocks Bloom, a father.

Seeing a group of young mothers in white blouses, he says that the "name of this whiteness is milk, motherhood, marriage, pride, and purity" (63). Earlier, he suggests that in place of his standard platitudes Babichev should have mentioned in a speech that the "milk will be thick as mercury" at the Chetvertak (23).

Though Stephen and Kavalerov may seem "childish" to their contemporaries, the close reader recognizes that Stephen probes deeper into the world around him than Buck does, for example, as he makes images such as the barren milkmaid part of a symbolic order, rather than a joke. He and Kavalerov *create* with the help of their imagination, whereas Babichev and Buck only *consume* and *replicate*, destroying the genuine and the organic. Babichev's projects and Buck's contempt for Irish culture exploit the "female capacity for creation," implying a desire to reduce the world of myth, aesthetics, and tradition to pragmatic convenience. It is the means to an end that is diametrically opposed to the values of independence, individualism, and creativity fervently advocated by Stephen and Kavalerov. Whereas they wish to reinvent themselves and their personal histories primarily by means of art, Babichev and Buck are more interested in promulgating their agendas through such questionable means as the betrayal of cultural legacies, be it to a foreign influence (English)[41] or an ideology imported from abroad and proclaimed to be native (communism).

The points of view by which the reader receives information in the two works complicate matters. Though *Ulysses*'s opening chapter clearly does not feature the same sort of subjective first-person narration as *Envy*'s, it *is* infiltrated by Stephen's internal thoughts and not Buck's. Stephen's imagination "flies off" after Buck and other topics of his musings in a way that recalls the workings of Kavalerov's mind. These perspectives accordingly present a presumably slanted

[41] Buck, though no great admirer of Haines, uses the Englishman to exert power over Stephen.

view (dictated by envy in Kavalerov's case, resentment in Stephen's) of Babichev and Buck, but as William Harkins notes, "Olesha never intercedes to rehabilitate Andrei in the reader's eyes after Kavalerov has 'defamed' him" (63). Although Kavalerov might exaggerate, he also ultimately may well be right about his temporary benefactor. Stephen may also be prone to forming overly negative opinions about others, but our sympathies largely remain with him throughout *Ulysses*.

THE ARTIST AND THE PHILISTINE

Marked contrasts among characters help emphasize the rich tensions throughout both novels; one of the most poignant of these tensions between temperamentally different heroes is carried by the conflict between the artist and the philistine. The primary clash of values in *Envy* concerns not so much the matter of sons rebelling against their biological fathers (whom the Revolution has swept away in any case in *Envy*) as the one of artists staking a claim against authoritative father figures who are incapable of discerning beauty in religion, art, finer feelings, love, life itself—those who reduce existence to practical materialism.[42] By raising some of the same issues associated with Buck described above with reference to Babichev, Olesha conflates the theme of artists versus philistines with that of sons versus father figures.

It is mostly the "fathers" who are associated with philistine tendencies that contrast with the perspectives of artists-sons, but since the themes intersect, matters become more complex than a straightforward "fathers and sons" opposition. In *Envy*, a member of the older generation

[42] Regarding the term "artist," it should be noted that Kavalerov is not a poet in the strictest sense. His present literary output is limited to his "repertoire" for "showmen" (36). It is in ideals, potential, and temperament that he is a poet, much like the young artist Stephen, who has written little at the time of novel's setting. While he does not currently produce genuine works of art, Kavalerov's miraculous visions of reality transform a two-dimensional NEP-era world into a sprawling, three-dimensional one.

and a young man (Ivan Babichev, Andrei's brother, and Kavalerov) form a coalition. In *Ulysses*, Buck, despite his youth, expresses philistine tendencies. Bloom and Andrei Babichev, too, represent paternal philistinism in each respective work. The first description of the former shows him consuming unappetizing food: "Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls" (45). One Joyce critic has argued that the demonstration of Bloom's eating preferences points to his "earthiness, a contrast to Stephen's idealism" (Olson 46). Analogously, Harkins has suggested Babichev's new sausage is a "repulsive parody" of the artistic impulse (447). This food imagery, soaked in guts and blood, therefore carries many of the same connotations as the milk theme previously analyzed.

The implications of the artist/philistine dichotomy seen in the two novels extend to matters of art in the characters' lives. In episode 9 of *Ulysses* ("Scylla and Charybdis"), for instance, Buck relates how he spotted Bloom examining a statue of Aphrodite at the National Museum before meeting Stephen at the National Library: "O, I fear me, he is Greeker than the Greeks. His pale Galilean eyes were upon her mesial groove" (165). It appears that Bloom's interest in art is largely limited to the physical, and, at times, the bawdy. Andrei Babichev has no interest in bawdiness or coarseness, but his massive food consumption points to gluttony, while his love life seems limited to the creation of his revolutionary sausage.[43]

[43] The use of lists as device is typical of both novels as seen in the compendium of the food Babichev orders (21). Other lists associated with Babichev include machines he needs for the Chetvertak (22), promises to women regarding their liberation from kitchen work (23), orders to subordinates (23-4), people received at his office (24), uses for animal parts (38), and promises to children (98). Of particular interest from *Ulysses* are the lists that detail Bloom's breakfast habits (45) and the infamously meticulous catalogues in "Ithaca," for example, the account of Bloom and Stephen's conversation topics, which Zhitomirsky translated (544). Those lists in *Envy* that are filtered explicitly through Kavalerov's consciousness take on metaphorical or artistically detail-oriented tones: "man is surrounded by small inscriptions, a sprawling anthill of small inscriptions: on forks, spoons, plates, framed pince-nez, buttons, pencils…" (22). See also Kavalerov's descriptions of a plane taking different shapes (47) and of the city coming to life after a downpour (63). These inventories, unlike Babichev's, serve no real purpose; they are only ornamental observations, as opposed to practical plans. *Envy*'s lists in this regard share a

Bloom, to be sure, appreciates art more readily than Babichev and even has some quasi-artistic aspirations. Implying that Bloom *does* understand poetry, Molly says in her soliloquy, "[Boylan] slapping us behind like that on my bottom because I didnt call him Hugh the ignoramus that doesnt know poetry from a cabbage" (638). He has also written a few short pieces, though none warrant much praise. Bloom's art is still generally an earthy, practical one that Stephen and Kavalerov would mock if they ever encountered it. He moreover works in advertising, turning his artistic gifts, however limited, to profit.[44]

Babichev certainly does not understand poetry, and he and Kavalerov live in two different worlds. In his landmark (and controversial) study of Olesha, Arkady Belinkov identifies the precise instant when Kavalerov fully recognizes the dissimilarity between his own personal world and the new one in which Babichev lives (187). This moment occurs when the latter laughs at Valia's story about how a stranger said that she "rustled past [him] like a branch full of leaves and flowers" (38). Not knowing that Kavalerov, who now eavesdrops on the telephone conversation, spoke these words, Babichev says to his niece that it must have been a drunk who addressed her. Here he represents the world of the philistine: "schematic, simplified, poor, adapted to ignoble purposes and therefore false" (Belinkov 187). In short, his sense of aesthetics remains limited to the "poetics" of the New Kitchen, a space that ultimately has no room for Kavalerov and his worldview.

Both writers compose their texts with all of these variables, conflating generations and creating multiple figures, in order to show that philistinism is not simply a matter of age. The

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comparable function to those in *Ulysses*. On the subject of lists in Joyce and, more broadly, in Western literature, see Eco.

[44] Kavalerov's disdainful admission that he has been reduced to writing for showmen links him to the "ad man" Bloom, suggesting that Kavalerov is really no better in terms of artistic *practice* than the older men he endlessly critiques.

conflict between artists like Kavalerov and Stephen with philistines of all brands—Soviet, British, Irish, the young Bucks and Makarovs, the older Blooms and Babichevs—transcends straightforward classification. This technique intimates that philistinism and *poshlost'* are permanent even in the Soviet Union with its eradication of the "Old World" and perhaps in Ireland as well.

THE DISPOSSESSED YOUTH

Opposite the three-part Andrei Babichev-Bloom-Buck figure stands—or rather lies—Kavalerov. This would-be writer corresponds to Joyce's stand-in, Stephen. The two are chiefly united by a struggle against their respective father figures, biological and otherwise; these are at least the terms by which they frequently understand their present circumstances. In both *Ulysses* and *Envy* an older man takes in a young artist after an alcohol-induced confrontation leaves him in the gutter. Bloom recognizes in Stephen his own deceased son, Rudy, whose ghost, aged to eleven years old in the haunting scene, seemingly rises before him as gazes at the young writer's body on the street. Babichev, too, feels sympathy for Kavalerov primarily out of the paternal feelings he has developed for Makarov, who in a letter writes to him: "I read your [Babichev's] letter, that you remembered me and pitied the drunk by the wall, picked him up and took him for my sake, because some misfortune might happen to me somewhere and I could lie there like that too" (58). Makarov, the ideal young Communist, resents the idea that he could be considered comparable in any way to Kavalerov; he would never be found lying drunk in the street, he suggests. Babichev, in other words, sees the "ghost" of Makarov hovering over Kavalerov's unconscious body, but Makarov rebukes him for a sentimentality he does not accept in this new era. Whatever the implications of their actions, the older men take in the young poets: one a rebel

against the old order and the other a rebel against the new order. Neither of the two artists' worlds encourages their development as individuals.

From this shared plot point arises one of the primary sources of anxiety for Kavalerov and Stephen: their sense of being dispossessed. They are both turned out from their living quarters as well as a bar and brothel, respectively, and these events lead them to experience a sense of displacement that feels to them both physical and mental. They believe that they do not belong with either the individuals around them or with society at large. In "Telemachus" Stephen begrudgingly turns over his key to Buck and calls him "[u]surper" (18). In other words, as with the cracked mirror, Stephen treats his peers as symbols of a divided Irish culture. Kavalerov feels much the same way about Makarov's return to Babichev's apartment after his time visiting family: "Kavalerov told Ivan about how an important person had thrown him out of his own home" (82).

In both cases the implications of being "usurped" go beyond a simple domestic dispute. More importantly, issues of national and cultural dispossession besiege the two. Stephen, for his part, feels uneasy about Buck's involvement in the Englishman Haines's taking up residence in the Martello tower: "From the first pages of *Ulysses* [Stephen] has seen himself as a servant, a dispossessed son. […] The usurper in *Ulysses* is not Mulligan or Haines, but the Anglicised culture that they partially represent" (Gibson 55). Likewise, Makarov re-claiming his couch and relationship with Babichev, and the way Kavalerov responds to this event, may be read as a statement on the cultural dispossession of an old order and as a judgment on men like Kavalerov, whose prestige was rapidly deteriorating in the Soviet state.[45] His personality and pursuit of

[45] Kavalerov and Stephen both deploy invective as a defense mechanism in their confrontations with father figures and/or philistines. The former's letter to Babichev seethes with spite: "But I'm warring against you: against the most common aristocrat, egoist, sensualist, dunce" (54). Stephen, though in a sense far less malicious than Kavalerov, uses the same means in his telegram to Buck: "*The sentimentalist*

"purposeless" aesthetic moments also do not permit him to adapt, just as historical circumstances prohibit him from recovering his preferred cultural heritage: "Ivan [Babichev] insists that he and Kavalerov are the direct, legitimate heirs of nineteenth-century culture who have been deprived by the Revolution of what was rightfully theirs: a predominant place in society" (Beaujour "Choosing" 24-5).[46] Kavalerov and Stephen in this way respond to their physical dispossession intellectually, seeing the loss of their (artistic) identity in the intrusion of new cultural forces. Their idealism clashes with the harsh realities that their opponents represent. Thus, the manner in which they endeavor to confront such issues by reinventing themselves and their heritage, to which we will return below, is central to understanding the dialogue between these two novels and its wider implications for Olesha's art.

THE GENERATION GAPS SHRINK

Much like the beginning, the end of *Envy* supplies a fascinating reformulation of *Ulysses*. Eliot Borenstein in a footnote compares Bloom's homecoming to Molly after her afternoon tryst with Kavalerov's and Ivan's dual occupation of Anechka's room (304).[47] Kavalerov's return to the detested Anechka represents an even *more* problematic resignation of spirit than Bloom's return to his unfaithful wife, in part because he still loves her. As both novels conclude with this

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is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done. Signed: Dedalus" (164). Dispossessed and lonely, the two protagonists use language as a means to enact revenge and challenge various authorities.

[46] Ivan, of course, serves as another problematic father substitute to Kavalerov. While Ivan expounds upon his ideas to Kavalerov at their first meeting, the latter thinks, "He is reading my thoughts," a sign of their like-mindedness (87).

[47] Borenstein, however, may slightly misread *Ulysses*. It is not established that Molly has seen "a long line of men" in her bed, as he writes (304). With the exception of Blazes Boylan, the long list of twenty-five men in one of "Ithaca"'s answers more likely represents those who have made Bloom jealous, romantic partners preceding their marriage, and/or Bloom's sadomasochistic fantasies. Nor can we say that Stephen remains with Bloom and Molly that night as Borenstein implies. If anything, the reconciliation between "father" and "son" in *Ulysses* remains *more* ambiguous than in *Envy*, in which Kavalerov, even if he ends up with Ivan, openly rejects both of his adopted fathers.

quite similar bedroom scenario, a comparison begs to be made and an argument for Joyce's impact on Olesha emerges as even more likely.

This synchronization begins when Kavalerov moves into Anechka's apartment. Before falling ill, he turns on the tap and then, after sleeping with her, dreams of rushing water. Likewise, having returned home with Stephen in *Ulysses*'s penultimate episode, Bloom turns on a faucet, and the narrative takes up his fascination with water: "What in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier, returning to the range, admire?" (549). Bloom and Kavalerov wash themselves and then go to their "wives/mother figures," creating another instance of Olesha's subverted parallels. Each author employs the image of the water tap as a means of purification but soon after the reader discovers the outcomes are substantially different. Kavalerov's cleansing experience with the water devolves into a nightmare. Much like Stephen fears his mother's corpse as an embodiment of the past's hold over him ("Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! No, mother! Let me be and let me live," 9), Kavalerov considers Anechka a dead-end, a reminder of the history with which he wishes to part. During the scene in which Kavalerov beats the widow, the narrator likens her to a "woman from Pompeii [*pompeianka*]," a particularly vivid simile that emphasizes her status as a largely symbolic figure in the novel; like the ruins of Pompeii, Anechka and the existence that Kavalerov associates with her will not be stamped out, no matter the intensity of his rage (116). The sons furthermore envision Anechka and May Dedalus as corpses, incarnations of a death that is both literal and figurative. Bloom, on the contrary, recognizes the unity of man and a life-giving energy in the water. Along with his love for his wife and his recognition of a "natural order" in the world, this epiphany contributes in part to his apparent acceptance of Molly's infidelity.

The critical difference between the two endings lies in Kavalerov's sharp divergence from Stephen's individualistic path. Olesha closes *Envy* with his hero's complete resignation accompanied by Ivan's ironic "Hurrah!" The latter's grotesque proclamation that it is Kavalerov's turn to sleep with Anechka frightens him, as these words remind him of his transformation into a paternal figure: "By reducing his similarity to his father to a purely sexual resemblance, Kavalerov makes his plight all the more hopeless" (Borenstein 142). He, in a sense, morphs into the Bloomian type, refuting his association with the youthful, artistic Stephen developed so far in the novel and resigning himself to a defeated state of affairs. Ivan Babichev, Kavalerov's second paternal surrogate, is forced by circumstance into a decadent Blazes Boylan role in this closing scene; he cuckolds Kavalerov by claiming Anechka before his protégé's return, thus ruining the young man's plans to "put the widow in her place," his final failed expression of power (119). In the widow's bed Kavalerov's masculinity is challenged and his father's history—or rather the lack thereof—haunts him. He realizes that he will go no further than his father but remains doomed to repeat his insignificant life, a fear not unlike Stephen's regarding Simon Dedalus.[48] The ironies of this last scene subvert Joyce, who allows Bloom to love his wife as she is and Stephen to break radically the patterns of both his elders and contemporaries.

By bookending *Envy* with parallel variants of *Ulysses*'s beginning and conclusion, both of which Zhitomirsky featured in his 1925 translation, Olesha emphasizes the main points of his literary response to Joyce. Kavalerov may begin in a situation comparable to Stephen's as a

[48] The emotions expressed in this scene recall one of Olesha's anecdotes regarding his father from the sketch-based memoir *No Day without a Line*. While at a hairdresser's, his father proclaims, "Give my heir a haircut!" (119). Olesha remembers how this phrase bothered him even as a young child: "It was painful to hear that. And for some reason shameful. And for some reason I remember that pain to this day. Really, which sort of heir? An heir to what? I know that Papa's poor. Really, an heir to what? To Papa in general, his replica?" (119).

dispossessed writer seeking transformation and resolution, but, following a string of challenges he cannot overcome, his project has completely collapsed by the end of the novel. This reconfiguration of the ending results in Kavalerov turning out to be more like an apathetic version of Bloom—without any hope or even love—rather than Stephen, who, unlike Olesha's hero, can boldly proclaim, "In the intense instant of imagination […] that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be" (160). Olesha does not directly state, but cautiously intimates that in Joyce's West there may be cause for sons to rebel against their fathers, but there is also the option for them to go their own way should they have the courage to do so. No such alternative, Stephen's "possibility," exists for men like Kavalerov in the Soviet Union.[49]

Bloom's time with Molly at the end of *Ulysses* does not precisely mimic the *ménage à trois* scenario with which *Envy* concludes, yet it marks one likely source for Olesha's thought.[50] By transposing distinct elements of *Ulysses* into *Envy*, Olesha simultaneously develops a dialogue with a contemporaneous text and actively raises new questions in his own literary context, that of Soviet Russia in which fathers and sons were thrust into vicious ideological battle.[51] If Andrei Babichev's lineage can be mapped back to Bloom and Buck, Kavalerov's to

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[49] As has already been pointed out by Borenstein, Edward Said's comments on the problem of "filiation" and "affiliation" resonate throughout *Envy*: "Childless couples, orphaned children, aborted childbirths, and unregenerately celibate men and women populate the world of high modernism with remarkable insistence, all of them suggesting the difficulties of filiation. […] The only other alternatives seemed to be provided by institutions, associations, and communities whose social existence was not in fact guaranteed by biology, but by affiliation" (17).

[50] Cf. Molly's musings about taking Stephen the young poet as a lover, not to mention Bloom's apparent support for such a possibility: "Ill make him feel all over him till he half faints under me then hell write about me lover and mistress publicly too with our 2 photographs in all the papers when he becomes famous" (638).

[51] Of relevance here is the controversial 1926 Soviet Family Code. This new Code gave legal recognition to "de facto marriage" based on cohabitation, abolished collective paternity of orphans, and altered alimony standards. See Goldman for further details. Babichev's concerns—adopting Makarov and the establishment of a communal kitchen—as well as Kavalerov and Ivan's sharing of Anechka are very much a part of the debate surrounding the Family Code.

Stephen, and Anechka's parodically to Molly, then one must consider why Olesha would choose these characters, images, and themes to populate and enrich his own novel through a refracted perspective. In other words, how and why did the conversation between *Envy* and *Ulysses* come to be and what does it suggest?

FATHERS, SONS, AND THE NIGHTMARE OF HISTORY

Based on its prevalence throughout both his fiction and non-fiction, the topic of fathers' relationships with their sons clearly struck a deep and personal note with Olesha. In the brief semi-autobiographical story "I Look into the Past," for example, the narrator proclaims, "It seems to me that the development of a man's fate, a man's character, is in no small degree pre-determined by whether a boy is attached to his father" (*Povesti* 282). Following the torments of childhood uncertainty, the "pursuits for a father, for a motherland, for a profession, for a talisman that can turn out to be glory or power" begin (282). For Olesha's narrator, and likely for the author himself, sons face a great challenge in overcoming the long shadows cast by their fathers or, in fact, by the lack thereof. Olesha's own relationship with his father, based on the anecdotes in *No Day without a Line*, was no less complex. He recounts how one day his drunk father for a joke placed him, a young boy, on a windowsill and pointed a revolver at him while his mom begged on her knees for him to stop "that" (116).[52] Without reading too far into the biographical elements of this most absurdly Dostoevskian scene, the combination of strained relations with his own father and a more general sense of displacement (felt quite vividly in his literary interests) arguably resulted in Olesha's quest for alternative foundations or points of origin, both in terms of family history and cultural touchstones.

[52] Coincidentally, Olesha's stepson, Igor', committed self-defenestration in front of his mother and stepfather in 1939.

The conflict between Kavalerov and his paternal substitutes, too, lies at the heart of *Envy*.[53] While Russian literature boasts a lengthy tradition involving fathers and children (primarily sons), *Ulysses* offers a fresh look at this eternal theme, as well as those of family structures, sexual relations, and social roles, all topics important to writers of Olesha's generation. Specifically, Joyce's novel raises the question of whether or not one may change one's history, and if so, how artistic creation fits into the equation. The parallels with *Ulysses* analyzed above lead to this primary theme of father-son angst in *Envy* with the second theme of the artist in a world of philistines coming in as an important corollary.

In *Envy*, the new notion of the Soviet non-biological family complicates the father-son relationship. Andrei speaks of Makarov as his "son," although he is not. He attempts to rationalize his feelings with the help of the new Soviet system: "I'll drive [Makarov] out if I'm deceiving myself about his being new, not entirely distinct from me […] I don't need a son, I'm not a father, and he's not a son" (89). Babichev takes on a "son" in a system that intends to eradicate irrational human emotions with rational thought based on merit. He claims he would drive Makarov out if he proved to be an unworthy new man, and, most interestingly, if the youth does not want to be like him, Andrei Babichev, in his passionate ideals. Concerns such as these occupy a central place within early Soviet culture and find their reflection in Olesha's *Envy*. Borenstein writes that Olesha uniquely proposes that the bonds of father and son survived the revolution in some form and even became "integral to the new world," as a result intensifying the violent generational conflicts of the era (126, 161).[54] Babichev struggles with old-fashioned

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[53] As Alexander Zholkovsky demonstrates, this theme and several plot points in *Envy* might also be read in light of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* (*Text* 191).

[54] Katerina Clark makes a similar claim in *History as Ritual*. She observes in the Soviet novel a recurring trope involving a "spontaneous" young man meeting a "conscious" older man who channels his untrained, directionless energies by leading him to Party work (168-70). Conversely, Olesha has the "son," Makarov, educate the "father," Babichev, to reach greater Party consciousness. *Envy* therefore

emotions that make him feel compassion for Makarov and Kavalerov. The characters' relationships in this way do not reflect a successful effort to overcome an old set of values entirely. They instead expose the fault-lines of a system that cannot be fully implemented.

The sons experience an analogous anxiety. Recalling a childhood memory, Kavalerov admits: "I recognized my father in myself. It was a similarity of form—no, something else: I would say sexual similarity: as if I suddenly felt my father's seed within me, in my *substance*. And as if someone said to me: you're ready. Finished" (34, my italics).[55] In this situation he cannot compete with his rival Makarov, who denies that he shares any substance, physical or otherwise, with his biological father, whom he occasionally visits, and not even with his chosen mentor. This is the Joycean theme of father-son consubstantiation replayed in Olesha's terms. Kavalerov becomes frightened by the idea that he contains his father within himself, that they actually make up identical pieces of an eternal pattern. The bodily/sexual takes on a grave metaphysical meaning in his mind. Its Joycean equivalent can be found in Stephen's ruminations on con- and transubstantiation: "Is that then the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial? Where is poor dear Arius to try conclusions? Warring his life upon contransmagnificandjewbangtantiality" (32). Stephen hears his father's taunts resonate in his mind and fears the similarities between them (32). The sons cannot bear to find themselves in the image of their fathers and therefore turn elsewhere, seeking a *choice* rather than passive acceptance of eternal recurrence. Kavalerov, as already stated, discovers that he has no choice, no possibility, no real future of his own creation. He will become his father, as Dedalus will eventually become his own man.

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reflects the process by which the culture and supermen of the Five-Year Plan overtook the NEP and its representatives, such as Babichev. This plot point is one more example of how Olesha blends models and trends to create something new.

[55] Cf. Olesha's comments on his father quoted above.

In Stephen's interpretation of *Hamlet*, explicated most fully in "Scylla and Charybdis," the artist (Shakespeare) becomes a father to himself by producing genuine art (*Hamlet*) and a ghost by playing a role (Ghost of Hamlet's father).[56] Disillusioned with the past, the artist may refashion it through creativity: "As we […] weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image" (159). By adopting an artistic father figure who demands no loyalty to legacy and traditions, re-writing personal history, and creating lasting art, the gifted writer may inscribe him/herself into world literature and be liberated of all servile filial bonds. This solution is theoretically open to Kavalerov as well. He, too, creates self-images and masks to alter his "given" identity.[57] For example, Kavalerov "speak[s] about himself as a literary character" (Chudakova 19). Like his author, he dreams of having been born in France and repeatedly looks to the West for inspirational models.[58] In this way, Kavalerov strives to renounce the Soviet collectivist spirit

[56] Olesha alludes to Shakespeare in some ways as well. Kavalerov's Hamletian tendencies make him an isolated, brooding character. Ivan's fictional machine, Ophelia, functions as an imaginary "daughter" that ultimately rebels against its creator in a bizarre dream passage. Olesha's play *A List of Blessings* (1931) concerns a Russian actress famed for her portrayal of Hamlet.

[57] On this subject, Meletinsky offers the following explanation: "Literary mythification is dominated by the idea of an eternal, cyclical repetition of mythological prototypes under different 'masks', which means that literary and mythological protagonists can play various roles and be replaced by a variety of characters. The mythic identity is fixed, and different figures simply come and go and assume the part" (xix). Kavalerov, indeed, repeatedly attempts to "assume the part" throughout *Envy* as he struggles to come to terms with his own personhood in contrast to the society around him and the cultural-literary ideals he cherishes.

[58] See "I Look into the Past" (1928) for a fictionalized representation of this desire (*Povesti* 282). Here, France is closely linked by the narrator to a sense of freedom or liberty as well as with the themes of reading and fatherhood. See also the various references to European literature throughout *No Day without a Line*, for example the following: "It would be entirely difficult not to fall under the charms of those writers [the German Expressionists], particularly for the novice" (*Zavist'* 293). On the other hand, in "Human Material" (1928) Olesha's autobiographical narrator claims, presaging Mayakovsky's proclamations from "At the Top of My Voice" (*Vo ves' golos*) (1930), that he wants to grip by the throat that version of himself "who thinks that the distance between us [Russia] and Europe is only a geographical distance" (*Povesti* 245). This last example reflects the conflicted emotions that Olesha felt regarding his ties to Europe or, rather, the bonds that he wished to possess but that he had to repress in the Soviet Union.

and protests against conformity. This behavior in general recalls Stephen, who stands apart from his father, carries himself as a lonesome Hamlet figure dressed in mourning, and rewrites personal and literary histories. In *Ulysses* and *Envy* the artists portray themselves as the figures they wish to be to varying degrees of success. The reader's privileged perspective provides access into their thoughts, revealing gaps in their reasoning. These characters grow to be highly self-aware, acknowledging their antecedents and manipulating their lives in ways to better represent their desires. Fluid identity therefore comes to be a major defining feature of both Kavalerov and Stephen.

It would then seem that the two heroes are "brothers" dispossessed of culture and positive paternal bonds. The outcomes of their efforts are far from identical, however. Stephen remains free to accept or reject his adoptive father, Bloom, and free to turn down all paternal guidance by becoming a "father" to himself. He is free to establish himself as a self-fashioned artist and therefore, as he says of Shakespeare, "being no more a son," he is free to "[feel] himself the father of all his race" (171). Kavalerov feels prohibited from accomplishing any of these feats of life-creation, since he can transcend neither his personality, nor his paternal legacy and the historical circumstances encircling him. Makarov is hailed as the new Soviet man, linked to soccer and engineering, while Kavalerov's lyrical outbursts are viewed as the ravings of a drunk and not as a means to become a new man in his own right.

The Soviet cultural climate complicated the role of the artist and of the individual. Olesha crafts a singular vision in *Envy* that spotlights the impossible struggle of freely choosing a heritage unless one was prepared to risk everything. There can also be no absolute reconciliation between fathers and sons in the world of *Envy* even while traces of those bonds remain, since they are classified as invalid. Nor can the individualist artist be reconciled to the philistine, as

philistine values are no longer questioned. Though both Stephen and Kavalerov head out on their own, the latter's departure is short-lived, and he returns, unable to engage in a project resembling Stephen's or to withstand the centripetal force of Anechka's bed. Even if Stephen ultimately rejects Bloom's offer, he maintains his own identity and can write his own course in life and literature. Kavalerov fails to do so; this is emblematic of the situation facing Olesha during a critical moment in the Russian literary tradition. His hero cannot take the nonconformist's route and align himself with Western models, just as he cannot find absolution in any "father's" bosom.

Torn by the desire to join the "victorious masses" of the "glorious" new state and the enticements of a romantic Western world based on the ideals of the past (as he envisions it), Kavalerov hesitates as Olesha personally did. *Envy* is neither anti- nor pro-Soviet. *Ambiguity* prevails, and this contributes to a reading in which Kavalerov is both victim and perpetrator. Trapped in the history Stephen calls a "nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake" (28), Olesha's protagonist experiences the "disillusion with historicism as a theoretical or artistic point of view, which perhaps expresses [his] fears regarding cataclysmic changes and [his] skepticism that social progress can change the metaphysical basis of human existence and consciousness" (Meletinsky 277). Kavalerov's personal nightmare is more menacing than Stephen's in part because of his inner discord. Beaujour remarks that ambivalence drives Kavalerov's and Olesha's problems. Olesha's text leaves the "old world" characters at a particularly muddled standstill: Kavalerov, hopelessly aiming to select his forebears, and Ivan, abandoned by his progeny, fail to obtain their self-proclaimed inheritance as heirs to the cultural vanguard ("Choosing" 32). They are pulled between opposing forces, unable to decide for themselves what is best, "doomed to remain stationary" (32).

CONCLUSION

Olesha's impulse to draw on and modify works of literature can be observed throughout his fiction. A subtle, yet highly intertextual author, Olesha told Isaak Glan that he once "thought up such a book" in which he would "simply retell ten classic plots," such as *Faust* or Dante's *Inferno*, in order "to bring them closer to readers" (quoted in Pertsov 282-3). Though Olesha never managed to write this peculiar book, he did recount many plots and ideas throughout his memoirs, which his widow Olga Suok, Viktor Shklovsky, and others eventually compiled as the volume *No Day without a Line*. Olesha uses the chapter "The Golden Shelf" to register his miscellaneous literary interests. In the process of reflecting on the texts that influenced his growth as both a person and a writer, Olesha not only describes their contents but transforms them into something of his own creation as well. These stories—*The Divine Comedy*, *War and Peace*, *The Idiot*, among many others—take on Oleshian tones as the author highlights particular elements, critiques certain methods, and manages to convey his initial wonder and amazement. Though Olesha makes no direct mention of Joyce in *No Day without a Line*, including on his Golden Shelf, Olesha's engagement with *Ulysses* throughout *Envy* represents a similar sort of experimentation with "borrowed" materials.

By inscribing his novel, *Envy*, with allusions and themes from *Ulysses*, Olesha creates a bold intertextual dialogue, one that reflects his stated interest to retell and reshape stories. Olesha finds in Joyce's gargantuan novel ideas resonant to his worldview, but he complicates them with his own experience, that of the stalled artist. Babichev echoes Buck and Bloom. Stephen devolves into the buffoonish Kavalerov who by the end of the novel can find no escape from his emotions or social circumstances. Finally, the ephemeral potential for optimism found in Molly's

bed turns into a murky amalgam of Oedipal myth[59] and misplaced hopes in Anechka's. As John Hollander notes, "[i]n the very rhetoric of returning only part of an utterance," in this case some elements of Joyce's characters, the echo device recalls its mythological source, "mocking, lamenting, assenting, amplifying, and, indeed, interpreting" (60). Olesha's narrative amplifies the tensions found in *Ulysses*, just as it in a sense mocks certain of Stephen's ideals and interprets the Joycean model within a new context.

The unruly feelings driving Kavalerov's final acts bring to mind one more correspondance between *Envy* and *Ulysses*. Early in the latter novel, Stephen witnesses the passing of a cloud that Bloom simultaneously recognizes in "Calypso": "A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green" (8) and "A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly. Grey. Far" (50). Kavalerov notices a similar phenomenon: "An enormous cloud with the outline of South America stood over the city. It shone, but the shade from it was formidable [*groznyi*]. The shade approached Babichev's street with astronomical sluggishness" (60). As the cloud darkens the two scenes, it summons past and portends future troubles in the

[59] The subject of mythological subtexts in *Ulysses* and *Envy* presents an instructive contrast. While Joyce—arguably—builds his entire text upon the mythic ground of Homer's *Odyssey*, Olesha's short novel lacks this structural component. Instead, references to myths such as Jocasta and the insinuations of an Oedipal conflict between Kavalerov and the Babichevs constitute a part of Olesha's associative poetics by which one defamiliarized image leads to another. Olesha, indeed, uses literary and mythical archetypes, thereby partaking in what T.S. Eliot famously called the "mythic method" and what Meletinsky refers to as "archetypal representations of human universals," to enrich his characterization, but nowhere does this device achieve Joycean depth or breadth (330). On the subject of myth in *Envy*, see Tucker and Borenstein. The former suggests an alternative explanation for Olesha's use of myth: "Oleša's intricate vision enabled him to discern the underlying dynamic of the Soviet takeover of mythic archetypes and the state's employment of these for its own narrow ends" (47). For Olesha, who grew increasingly conflicted throughout the 1920s, the Soviet conquest of myths and legends consequently represented a debasement against which he responded in his fiction. Olesha's coeval Andrei Platonov followed a similar path. Genuinely devoted to the cause of Communism in the early 1920s, he eventually recognized the major problems inherent to the Soviet system. His deployment of mythic and biblical archetypes in texts such as *Chevengur*, a strategy reminiscent of Olesha's, has been noted previously. See, for example, Bethea 1989. No matter the case, myth is therefore appropriated for different ends in *Envy* than in *Ulysses*. On Olesha's poetics, see Peppard.

characters' thoughts: the bitterness of death, visions of a wasteland, and an imminent confrontation with Babichev. While in *Ulysses* Bloom and Stephen are unwittingly brought together as companions and potentially as adoptive family by Joyce's parallax metaphor, Kavalerov remains simultaneously (and paradoxically) both alone in his quest and grudgingly united with his father figures through envy and despair.

In this way, Olesha's dialogue with *Ulysses* and deployment of images from Joyce's text signify above all two things. First, Olesha pays tribute to a fellow writer who champions individual insight and who shares his epiphanic outlook by which the everyday—a cloud, a conversation, a shout in the street—is transformed into the revelatory. Second, by showing that it was not possible everywhere, Olesha counters the concept in European Modernism that allows the artist to artistically rework history and productively develop a self-realized personal literary biography. Outside pressures notwithstanding, it is ironic that Olesha would call Joyce a pessimistic writer in his 1936 speech. Olesha's own ending to *Envy* represents a metaphoric and artistic *impasse*, the terminal point of Kavalerov's attempts to redefine himself. The novel ends with neither a resounding "Yes!" nor a resigned "No." Instead, the narrator abruptly leaves Kavalerov in a limbo-esque state with Ivan, Anechka and her repellent bed, and, most importantly, a toast to the degradation of history and tradition.

Chapter 2 — Vladimir Nabokov: Unite and Conquer

What have you learned from Joyce?
Nothing.
Oh, come.
James Joyce has not influenced me in any manner whatsoever.

– Nabokov, Interview with Herbert Gold

INTRODUCTION

Depending on how loosely one plays with the dictionary, Vladimir Nabokov's assertion in his interview with Herbert Gold for *The Paris Review* that he "learned nothing" from James Joyce can, on the one hand, be accepted without reservations or should, on the other, be taken with a great deal more than a pinch of salt. Always wary of falling under the "influence" of another writer, especially a literary heavyweight such as Joyce, Nabokov immediately changes the terminology of the discussion from "learning" to "influence." The latter term, according to Nabokov's line of reasoning, seems to encompass the former, suggesting that it is impossible for him to educate himself on the strategies of a fellow author, and potentially develop them further, without the implication of a contaminating influence. Nabokov was, of course, remarkably sensitive about any such accusations. Just after making the aforementioned statements, Nabokov comments that he first read *Ulysses* "around 1920 at Cambridge University, when a friend, Peter Mrozovski, who had brought a copy from Paris, chanced to read to me, as he stomped up and down my digs, one or two spicy passages from Molly's monologue, which, *entre nous soit dit*, is the weakest chapter in the book" (*Strong Opinions* 102-3). Such critical insertions into a more or less straightforward account are also typical of Nabokov's defensive maneuvers against charges of influence.[60] His next encounter with the novel, he claims, came "[o]nly fifteen years later,

[60] Cf. Nabokov's comments on Gogol (103), Proust (197), and Dostoevsky (148).

when [he] was already well formed as a writer and reluctant to learn or unlearn anything" (102). Here he unequivocally asserts that an author is immune to another's sway beyond a given point.

However, Nabokov's dates are misleading: In November 1933, that is, shortly before he began work on his final Russian novel *The Gift* (*Dar*, 1935-7, 1952), Nabokov wrote to Joyce with an offer to translate his masterpiece.[61] The historical facts then not only contradict Nabokov's timing but, if one accepts Nabokov's statements regarding the nature of literary influence at face value, demonstrate that he may very well have imbibed more lessons from Joyce than he cared to admit.

These nuances are, of course, common currency among discussions of Nabokov's "influences." Whether or not Joyce, or any other writer for that matter, directly influenced Nabokov is really much beside the point. Joyce's impact has been so remarkably diffuse that it would be difficult to name a single author, Russian or English, from 1921 onward who does not exhibit in one respect or another a potential Joycean trace. What concerns us in this chapter instead is the nature of Nabokov's *response* to Joyce, which, as has been noted previously, finds a central hub in the novels *The Gift* and *Bend Sinister*.[62]

At least in comparison with the other three primary subjects of this study, Nabokov is a special case in terms of his relationship to Joyce. The only one to meet his counterpart in person, Nabokov could support his reading of *Ulysses* with anecdotal knowledge.[63] Nabokov also

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[61] Terrence Killeen's article "Nabokov … Léon … Joyce" (1992) in *The Irish Times* describes the letter in question, which is part of the James Joyce-Paul Léon papers housed in Dublin's National Library. Nabokov relates that an unnamed émigré publisher requested he translate *Ulysses*. He writes, "I need hardly say that I am a great admirer of your work, and thus should be happy to undertake this translation" (cited in Killeen 8). The proposed translation, of course, did not materialize.

[62] See, for example, Moynahan 1995 (p. 434) and Begnal 1985.

[63] In his landmark biography of Joyce, Richard Ellmann recounts a story told to him by Alfred Appel regarding Nabokov's meeting with Joyce at Paul and Lucie Léon's Paris apartment. Nabokov claims to have heard directly from Joyce that Stuart Gilbert's schema of *Ulysses*'s eighteen episodes was purely a "whim" and the collaboration a "terrible mistake" (616). As Michael Begnal points out, however, the date

possessed an impressive depth of understanding of both technical and aesthetic matters in Joyce's art as evidenced by his extensive written commentary. Additionally, the vast number of intertextual references to the Irish writer's writings throughout a lengthy career in two languages provides greater material for analysis than, say, Olesha's smaller output.

Before exploring the discrete connections between *The Gift* and *Ulysses*, it will be worth considering their more general, external resemblance. This vantage point provides a ground upon which the individual items and comparisons come into sharper focus. In her study of *Ulysses*, Margaret McBride concisely reviews the gargantuan novel in the following terms:

> As one stands far back from *Ulysses*, contemplating the design, it can be viewed, first and foremost, as an amazingly Daedalian *Künstlerroman*. The work nests stories inside stories and includes crucial poetic theories which subtly but substantially influence the narrative line. More specifically, with regard to the character of Stephen, the mirroring devices elegantly resolve his plotline as a sense of autofictive *mise-en-abyme* loops the tale into eternity. Significantly, such a trajectory has been, all along, the goal of the time-obsessed Stephen. (182)

One cannot help but notice just how closely this synopsis reads like a summary of Nabokov's final Russian novel. In fact, many of the same critical approaches that McBride mentions have long been applied to *The Gift*. Alexander Dolinin has probed the novel from numerous points of entry: father and son relations, discussions of art, and so on. He does so, to borrow McBride's terminology, in order to "contemplat[e]" its "Daedalian design," which nonetheless maintains an "overall thematic unity" ("*The Gift*" 139). Pekka Tammi, among others, has considered its roots in and departures from the *Künstlerroman* tradition (*Problems* 86). Sergei Davydov's seminal

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of the dinner party mentioned by Nabokov—1937—is wrong; it must have taken place in 1939 ("Joyce" 522-3). Moreover, when discussing these meetings at other times, Nabokov's memory is apparently far less acute: "Another time my wife and I had dinner with him at the Léons' followed by a long friendly evening of talk. I do not recall one word of it but my wife remembers that Joyce asked about the exact ingredients of *myod*, the Russian 'mead,' and everybody gave him a different answer" (*Strong Opinions* 86). Accounts such as these must be read cautiously, particularly when they are raised without evidence and as a means to support a reading of another author's text. Lucie Noel Léon's own memoir of Nabokov, "Playback," also describes this meeting with Joyce at her apartment (219).

"Teksty-Matreški" Vladimira Nabokova describes the novel's nesting-doll design that encapsulates "stories inside stories." Fyodor's "poetic theories" and their ties to the overall narrative have also been addressed in many studies, including Buhks, Brown, Ben-Amos, Blackwell 2000, Morris, and Ivleva. Justin Weir explores Nabokov's use of the "*mise-en-abyme*" technique in order to appreciate the novel's overall narrative design (xxi). *The Gift*'s structure has likewise been described as a "spiral" that spins on "*ad infinitum*" (*cf*. McBride's "eternity") (Toker 161). Finally, time is absolutely crucial to Fyodor's thinking throughout *The Gift*'s five chapters, making its presence felt in everything from the manner in which the young writer's three major works' reflect his mastery of time (Waite 59) to his conception of a true reader being the future "author reflected in time" (E340/R515).[64] Dolinin's provocative **"**Nabokov's Time Doubling" (1995) also describes Nabokov's method of developing multiple timeframes. These superficial parallels alone, to be sure, prove little. Rather, it is in the combination of various shared narrative strategies, numerous intertextual allusions, and an overall thematic exchange that we may locate the presence of Joyce and his texts in Nabokov's novel. The similarity between *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, as exemplified by McBride's précis, reflects the external cohesion that remains to be tapped at a more substantial level.

While a number of scholars have analyzed many of the issues in *The Gift* that will be addressed below, none has approached Nabokov's "study" of and dialogue with Joyce at this particular level of analysis. A comparative reading of *The Gift* alongside *Ulysses* reveals just how indebted Nabokov may have been to Joyce and his ideas concerning the father-son relationship and the artist's creative reworking of these relations. In other words, by analyzing

[64] Citations from *The Gift* refer to the original Russian version included in the fourth volume of the Sympozium edition of Nabokov's collected works (R) and Michael Scammell's English translation (E). All other translations from the Russian are my own unless otherwise noted.

the theme of father-son consubstantiation presented in *The Gift* in light of what Joyce says about the issue in *Ulysses* via Stephen Dedalus, we can better understand Nabokov's position, his narrative construction, and *The Gift*'s dialogic content.

As will be shown, both Stephen and Fyodor aim to redefine their past vis-à-vis their biological and adopted fathers. While their projects are quite similar, they ultimately produce contrasting ends: Stephen elects a literary forefather to detach himself from his real and would-be fathers; Fyodor chooses a literary father to unite himself with his lost biological one. Nabokov's reworking of Joyce's project serves to "correct" it according to his beliefs and complex position as an émigré writer. In the process of investigating these parallels between Joyce and Nabokov, we will note points previously made by scholars, such as Michael Begnal, Yuri Leving, Julian Moynahan, and Brian Boyd, but will also offer allusions and correspondences that have remained unnoticed.[65] Such a system of intertextual elements will help establish the general thematic cohesion cum Bloomian "swerve" against *Ulysses* built into *The Gift*. This chapter will also address the two novelists' conceptions of the role of the artist and of metafiction, both of which tie directly back to the primary father-son theme. In addition, we will show that Nabokov's second English-language book, *Bend Sinister*, and in particular its seventh chapter, offers further commentary on one of the three primary themes in *Ulysses* against which Nabokov "polemicized" in his own art, that of the son displacing filial bonds in place of literary ones.[66] Thus, while Monika Greenleaf writes that "*The Gift*'s determined russocentrism

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[65] Most recently, Marijeta Bozovic has convincingly analyzed Nabokov's development of a Joycean subtext throughout *Ada, or Ardor* as a means to both create his own "canon of interpenetrating European traditions—with the Russian novel as a central, rather than marginal strain"—and to respond creatively to his predecessor (4).

[66] The three issues are the aforementioned father-son relations, Homeric parallels, and Joyce's stream-of-consciousness technique. On *Ulysses*'s ties to the *Odyssey*, Nabokov said, "There is nothing more tedious than a protracted and sustained allegory based on a well-worn myth" (*Lectures* 288). His third complaint has been more fully explicated. In his lectures on *Ulysses*, Nabokov writes, "The point is that the stream

suggests the genealogical omission not only of rival contemporary poets but also of European modernists like Proust and Joyce,"[67] by probing the nuances of Nabokov's literary dialogue with Joyce, we can better comprehend Fyodor's metaphysical exploits in *The Gift* (144).

FINDING THE FATHER AND DEFINING THE SON IN *THE GIFT*

When Fyodor is introduced to the reader, he is in a period of enormous transition as he moves into a Berlin boardinghouse during his eighth year of emigration. Devoid of a permanent home, in constant need of money, and aware of his burgeoning literary talent, Fyodor struggles against the world that surrounds him.[68] The interconnected constants in his life are, in this order, literature, family, and love (for art, for his father, and, eventually, for Zina Mertz). As these elements constitute Fyodor's greatest passions, it would only be natural that in his attempt to recover the past, he would take different turns than Stephen, similar though their respective efforts may be in theory. Moreover, Nabokov's personal history shapes the nature of his character's pursuits away from the Joycean path of affiliation; an émigré whose father was killed in a botched assassination attempt, Nabokov felt a duty to maintain a bond with what he had lost

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of consciousness is a stylistic convention because obviously we do not think continuously in words—we think also in images; but the switch from words to images can be recorded in direct words only if description is eliminated as it is here. Another thing: some of our reflections come and go, others stay; they stop as it were, amorphous and sluggish, and it takes some time for the flowing thoughts and thoughtlets to run around those rocks of thought" (*Lectures* 363). Note here Nabokov's use of Joycean imagery to make his point: the flowing river of thought, the Scylla-esque rocks. John Burt Foster, Jr. has ably shown how Nabokov modified the technique for his own texts, namely *Bend Sinister*, but ultimately found it lacking as a means to represent memory (*Nabokov's Art* 173). Incidentally, the mental ramblings of Alexander Alexandrovich Chernyshevsky shortly before his death in *The Gift* are delivered by means of a quasi-Joycean stream-of-consciousness technique (E311/R486).

[67] Vladimir Alexandrov offers the opposite opinion: "Nabokov's use of other primary 'vehicles' than Russian literature when treating these themes in earlier and later works […] indicates that Russian literature was neither specially privileged, nor of course an end in itself for him, even though literary echoes from various traditions are important constituents of all his works" (136). To consider *The Gift* a singularly Russocentric work is too limited a view.

[68] Numerous scholars have called *The Gift* a "portrait of the artist as a young man" in the Joycean tradition, though nearly always with a caveat in tow. See, for example, Ben-Amos (142), Lee (81), Boyd's *The Russian Years* (447), Tammi's *Problems of Nabokov's Poetics* (86), and Salomon (185).

and all that it represented. Unlike Joyce, who chose self-imposed exile and who maintained a positive relationship with his father, John Stanislaus Joyce, until his death in 1932,[69] Nabokov was forced to *react* to the circumstances of emigration and his father's death. Thus, in Nabokov's fiction as well as in his autobiography, *Speak, Memory*, he often presents an idealized portrait of the family. His dysfunctional family units serve as perversions of the romanticized ideal.[70] Joyce, on the other hand, mythologizes his families far more, expressing an attitude that lacks the pathos inherent in Nabokov's understanding of the family.

A central principle of *The Gift* involves Fyodor's merging of his father, the biological figure whom Stephen Dedalus calls "a necessary evil,"[71] with Pushkin, a literary forefather, in the novel's second chapter (170). Fyodor finds that Pushkin comes to permeate both his own life and the life of his father as he begins work on a biography of Konstantin Kirillovich Godunov-Cherdyntsev, a naturalist who disappeared in Central Asia:

> Pushkin entered his blood. With Pushkin's voice merged the voice of his father. He kissed Pushkin's hot little hand, taking it for another, large hand smelling of the breakfast *kalach* (a blond roll). […] From Pushkin's prose he had passed to his life, so that in the beginning the rhythm of Pushkin's era commingled with the rhythm of his father's life.
>
> Пушкин входил в его кровь. С голосом Пушкина сливался голос отца. Он целовал горячую маленькую руку, принимая ее за другую крупную, руку, пахнувшую утренним калачом. […] От прозы Пушкина он перешел к его жизни, так что вначале ритм пушкинского века мешался с ритмом жизни отца. (E98/R280-1)

What Fyodor attempts to accomplish through the biography of his father goes far beyond his initial expectations and ultimately extends the very limits of his artistry. As has been observed

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[69] The Joyce family naturally had its share of conflicts. Ellmann describes the scene of "family squalor" following one particularly violent incident as "Dostoevskian" (41). However, while the majority of John Joyce's "children grew to dislike him intensely, […] his eldest son [James], of whom he was most fond, reciprocated his affection and remembered his jokes" (22). At the end of his life, John, "largely neglected by the other children who could still remember the mistreatment they had suffered from him, loved James more and more with the years" (610).

[70] Obvious examples include Humbert Humbert, Dolores, and Charlotte Haze in *Lolita*, Van Veen, Ada, and Lucette in *Ada*, and, perhaps, *The Gift*'s Chernyshevsky clan.

[71] All citations from *Ulysses* refer to Joyce 1986.

previously, this project bears some similarity, if in a refracted form, to the ideas proposed by Dedalus in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*.[72] What has been suggested in generalities, however, has not been analyzed in its particulars.

Sergei Davydov, for example, writes:

> Fedor's naturalistic expedition to Tibet […] becomes for Fedor a metaphysical journey into the *terra incognita* of the beyond. The journey is begun by the father whom the son joins mid-way, but the trip is completed by the son alone. As a result of this 'at-one-ment' with the father, Fedor has matured spiritually as well as artistically—the young poet returns from the journey as a prose writer of some stature. At the end of the journey, Fedor's search for Pushkin is also completed. ("Weighing" 421)

This process is achieved through similar methods and forms as Dedalus's but is directed toward different ends. It is for these two writers a project equal parts allusive, narratological, and metaphysical. Stephen seeks to put himself at a clear remove from his biological father by means of electing a literary precursor and further by "fathering" himself by means of his art;[73] this distancing goes further, however, as Stephen rebels against other adoptive fathers along with the original, Simon Dedalus. Fyodor, on the other hand, wishes to unite the biological with the literary, the filial with the artistic. He learns from his father—his mentor—unlike the heroes in other modernist novels including *Ulysses*. He feels an intellectual affinity that transcends countless boundaries. In particular, the father figures in Joyce's and Olesha's novels lack a legacy. In Nabokov's *Gift*, on the other hand, there is more. Konstantin Kirrilovich endorses his son as a pupil, and this move distinguishes Fyodor from his literary counterparts. For him

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[72] Boyd argues that, like *Ulysses*, "*The Gift* […] traces a son's special search for his father and in fact makes of the relationship between father and son a kind of metaphysical riddle" (*Russian* 466).

[73] Hugh Kenner writes that Stephen's "present instinct is to get clear of" all fathers, "living or mythic, elected or adoptive" (17). In theory, Stephen *does* wish to avoid all fathers who try to dominate his life or art. On the other hand, his presentation of his *Hamlet* theory undoubtedly posits the Bard as his literary forefather, if not in aesthetics then certainly in accomplishments. Stephen, too, imbues Shakespeare with his own concerns: usurpation, creative mastery, and so on. While Stephen flees from various father figures throughout *Ulysses*, his project actually entails giving paternal authority to one—Shakespeare—in his often paradoxical manner.

reclaiming a literary tradition by uniting it with his own personal and family history means overturning recent events and recovering his father, who comes to stand for the culture that is seemingly inaccessible to him as a Russian émigré in Berlin. He does not consider being different from his father. He only regrets that Konstantin Kirrilovich remains a mystery and that he possesses only partial knowledge of his father's scientific theories. This relationship clearly constrasts with Kavalerov's and Stephen's with their respective fathers as they seem to feel that they completely understand their paternal figures.

Nabokov's Bloomian swerve ("*clinamen*" — "an act of creative correction") away from Joyce's text emphasizes precisely these crucial differences (30). Reading *The Gift* in these terms, we see that Nabokov revises Joyce's project according to his own views and experiences. He does not accept the tenets of his precursor, as they will only serve to separate him from the culture he wishes to retain. Thus, Nabokov manipulates the same ideas—selecting one's ancestors, merging fathers—but "swerves" away from the divisionary component inherent to Joyce's endeavor. Pushkin is here necessary for Fyodor's "gift"; they are not in conflict whatsoever. In brief, Fyodor seeks to recoup his father and all he represents by selecting a literary predecessor who embodies the ideals, aesthetics, and worldview shared by the two fathers and solitary son. *The Gift*, and not just in this second chapter, is imbued with Pushkinian references that drive the project's momentum. Many of these allusions have been noted previously. Davydov's "Weighing Nabokov's *Gift* on Pushkin's Scales," for example, mentions these kinds of occurrences, including alliterative moments reminiscent of Pushkin's poetics (419), the generic mixture that makes *The Gift* an *Onegin*-esque "novel-in-verse," and Fyodor's resemblance to the persona at the end of Pushkin's "Osen'" poem of 1833, to name just a

sampling (421).[74] As Savely Senderovich describes it, Pushkin acts as "a textual source, a historical figure, a literary personage, a cause for mystification, a poetic motif, and a psychological symbol—in a word, an entire continuous [*skvoznoi*] semantic layer" in *The Gift* (493).

A parallel form of this strategy of applying associative allusions to unite biological father, literary father, and son can be found in Dedalus's case. William M. Schutte's pioneering study *Joyce and Shakespeare* catalogues the vast number of references to Shakespeare's work throughout *Ulysses*. Many of these allusions serve to give the text a Shakespearean tint in characterization, dialogue, and situation rhyme. Of particular relevance are those associations with Shakespeare that are bestowed upon Leopold Bloom, Dedalus's would-be adoptive father. Hugh Kenner makes the interesting observation that in his speech at the National Library Stephen's idiosyncratic portrait of Shakespeare is remarkably akin to Bloom: "a restless man with a lively daughter and a dead son, uneasily yoked to a wife who 'overbore' him once and cuckolds him now, rearranging all this difficult experience in a steady flow of words" (114).[75] As Konstantin Kirillovich is granted Pushkin's traits, so Stephen's potential father-substitute, Bloom, is serendipitously equated with the young writer's ideal artist, the version of Shakespeare he depicts in his speech. Unlike Fyodor, however, Stephen will meet this hybrid figure but will not realize it and will turn down his well-intentioned offers of assistance in "Ithaca." Fyodor, on the contrary, goes to great lengths to associate Konstantin Kirillovich with Pushkin even if he can no longer access either father in any physical sense, only in his dreams and writing.

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[74] Aleksandr Dolinin's commentary to the Sympozium edition of Nabokov's collected works offers many more such insights.

[75] On the correspondences between Stephen's version of Shakespeare and Bloom, see Schutte (p. 127) for his comparisons and McBride (pp. 82-4, 89) for a summary of numerous critics' observations.

Again, many of these parallels, particularly those from chapter 2, have been previously drawn. However, one of the subtle allusions to Pushkin in *The Gift* that to our knowledge has remained unexplored can be found in Fyodor's consideration of which fate his father may have faced on his final expedition. This example shows the nature of Fyodor's fusion of father figures through narrative and allusion:

> And if he died, how did he die? […] Oh, how did he die? From illness? From exposure? From thirst? By the hand of man? And if by somebody's hand, can that hand be still living, taking bread, raising a glass, chasing flies, stirring, pointing, beckoning, lying motionless, shaking other hands? Did he return their fire for a long time? Did he save a last bullet for himself? Was he taken alive? Did they bring him to the parlor car at the railway headquarters of some punitive detachment (I can see its hideous locomotive stoked with dried fish), having suspected him of being a White spy […]? Did they shoot him in the ladies' room of some godforsaken station (broken looking glass, tattered plush), or did they lead him out into some kitchen garden one dark night and wait for the moon to peer out? How did he wait with them in the dark? With a smile of disdain?
>
> А если погиб, — как погиб? […] Как, как он погиб? От болезни, от холода, от жажды, от руки человека? И, если — от руки, неужто и по сей день рука эта жива, берет хлеб, поднимает стакан, гонит мух,шевелится, указывает, манит, лежит неподвижно, пожимает другие руки? Долго ли отстреливался он, припас ли для себя последнюю пулю, взят ли был живым? Привели ли его в штабной салон-вагон какого-нибудь карательного отряда (вижу страшный паровоз, отопляемый сушеной рыбой), приняв его за белого шпиона? Расстреляли ли его в дамской комнате какой-нибудь глухой станции (разбитое зеркало, изодранный плюш) или увели в огород темной ночью и ждали, пока проглянет луна? Как ждал он с ними во мраке? С усмешкой пренебрежения. (E137/R319-20)

Compare this passage with Pushkin's "Traveling Complaints" (*Dorozhnye zhaloby*) (1829-30):

Долго ль мне гулять на свете	Do I have long to wander on earth
То в коляске, то верхом,	At times in a carriage, at times on horseback,
То в кибитке, то в карете,	At times in a covered cart, at times in a carriage,
То в телеге, то пешком?	At times in a cart, at times by foot?
Не в наследственной берлоге,	Not in my inherited den,
Не средь отческих могил,	Not among my ancestral graves,
На большой мне, знать, дороге	On the highway, it seems,
Умереть Господь судил,	The Lord judged I should die,
На каменьях под копытом,	On the stones beneath hoof,
На горе под колесом,	On the mountain beneath the wheel,
Иль во рву, водой размытом,	Or in the washed-out ditch
Под разобранным мостом.	Beneath a dismantled bridge.
Иль чума меня подцепит,	Or the plague will take hold of me,

Иль мороз окостенит,	Or the cold will ossify me,
Иль мне в лоб шлагбаум влепит	Or a clumsy invalid
Непроворный инвалид.	Will smack my head with a wooden barrier.
Иль в лесу под нож злодею	Or in the woods under the knife of a villain
Попадуся в стороне,	I will be caught on the sly,
Иль со скуки околею	Or I'll croak from boredom
Где-нибудь в карантине.	Somewhere in quarantine.
Долго ль мне в тоске голодной	Will I long observe in hungry melancholy
Пост невольный соблюдать	An involuntary fast
И телятиной холодной	And through the cold veal
Трюфли Яра поминать?	Recall the Iar's truffles?
То ли дело быть на месте,	How much better it is to be in one's place,
По Мясницкой разъезжать,	To wander around Miasnitskaia,
О деревне, о невесте	At one's leisure to think
На досуге помышлять!	About your village, about your bride!
То ли дело рюмка рома,	How much better is a glass of rum,
Ночью сон, поутру чай;	At night sleep, in the morning tea
То ли дело, братцы, дома!..	How much better it is, brothers, to be home!
Ну, пошёл же, погоняй!..	Well, let's go, whip!
(Pushkin, Sobranie 2:305-6)	(adapted from Wachtel 145-6)

If the precise misfortunes do not match exactly, the implications of these constructions are quite similar. In both cases the protagonist muses on possible deaths, some stemming from external causes, others from internal ones. Senderovich observes that "because in Fyodor's consciousness Pushkin is so firmly linked to his father, he is also associated with the idea of death" (517). Particular details related to Civil War-era Russia naturally replace the dangers of Pushkin's time, but the fear of death while traveling is maintained. Additionally, both poem and prose passage depict the clash between the "artist"[76] and a perilous world, between the mundane and the deceptively quotidian, between an ill-starred death and an enchanted life.

[76] After "failing" to complete his father's biography, Fyodor recognizes the artistry of the "entrancing rhythm" in works by exemplary naturalists such as Konstantin Kirillovich as well as "that real poetry with which the live experience of these receptive, knowledgeable and chaste naturalists endowed their research" (E139/R321). Like his creator, Fyodor understands that exploratory, creative scientific work is just as much an art as poetry.

Fyodor concludes his grim musings, much like Pushkin, on a more positive, or at least more speculative, note:

> Once the rumor of my father's death is a fiction, must it not then be conceded that his very journey out of Asia is merely attached in the shape of a tail to this fiction (like that kite which in Pushkin's story [*The Captain's Daughter*] young Grinyov fashioned out of a map), and that perhaps, if my father even did set out on this return journey (and was not dashed to pieces in an abyss, not held in captivity by Buddhist monks) he chose a completely different road?
>
> Раз слух о гибели отца — вымысел, не следует ли допустить, что самый его путь из Азии лишь приделан в виде хвоста к вымыслу (вроде того змея, который молодой Гринев мастерил из географической карты), и что может быть, по причинам еще неизвестным, мой отец, если и пустился в обратный путь (а не разбился в пропасти, не завяз в плену у буддийских монахов), избрал совершенно другую дорогу. (E138/R320)

This process introduces serious doubt into the (imagined) realities. That is, the questions, as in Pushkin's poem, render null any sense of certainty, leaving the possibility of survival intact. There is an added direct parallel as both texts conclude with the persona pressing forth on an unnamed "road." The inversion, despite Nabokov's noted distaste for the "life is a road" metaphor-cliché,[77] suggests that both Pushkin's poet-persona and Konstantin Kirillovich ride out of their respective texts into a life that remains incomprehensible and somehow still positive. Again, Fyodor's father's life is imbued with a Pushkinian trace, linking the two even further through matters of life and death. Fyodor associates this life, its potential end, and its miraculous continuation with Pushkin's own fate as he also relates an account of a practical joke involving a man that resembles an aged Pushkin. Unlike Dedalus with his Shakespeare-esque Leopold Bloom, Fyodor is aware of what he accomplishes by making these explicit and implicit connections, which suggest that, even if the young writer does not meet either father in reality,

[77] Fyodor includes the following line in his recreation of the dying Alexander Chernyshevsky's thoughts: "the unfortunate image of a 'road' to which the human mind has become accustomed (life as a kind of journey) is a stupid illusion" (E310/R484). He, in a sense, literalizes the metaphor in his description of his father's imagined survival.

he comes closer to reuniting with Konstantin Kirillovich through his contact with Pushkin's texts and that he promotes the possibility of his father's survival. Pushkin's stylistics are Fyodor's means to reach out to his father as he writes his life story. The very narrative fabric, permeated with all its allusions, makes this process productive for Fyodor. As Bloom points out in his tamer *The Anatomy of Influence*, the "revisionary relationship between poems, as manifested in tropes, images, diction, syntax, grammar, metric, [and] poetic stance," says more than a potential influence between writers themselves (6).

This entire process is bolstered by an explicit reliance on historical sources in both *The Gift* and *Ulysses*. Stephen (via Joyce) cites directly and indirectly the Shakespeare scholars and biographers George Brandes, Frank Harris, and Sidney Lee in his performance-speech.[78] Stephen, who is comfortable raiding the author's life to explain his art, uses these texts to better access, or construct, his version of Shakespeare's world. His focus, though, remains on the literary father figure upon whom he has chosen to model himself. Fyodor, adopting Stephen's methods, introduces documentary sources to construct a life of his biological father, all the while aligning them with Pushkinian texts. He samples excerpts from and transforms travelogues written by famed naturalists such as Grigory Grum-Grzhimaylo and M. Przheval'sky in a kind of tapestry or collage, for example in the following passage compared by Dieter E. Zimmer and Sabine Hartmann:

> *he who had once brought the newly wed botanist Berg the* complete *vegetable covering of a motley little mountain meadow (I imagined it rolled up in a case like a Persian carpet)* (p. 114)
>
> Grum 1899, p. 361: [In the 'Alps of *Xining']: "a multitude of meadow plants grow in this Alpine zone. On the green floor…the most diverse flowers are growing…and most of them were in full flower, forming a living Persian carpet." [SH] (41)[79]

[78] See Schutte (pp. 153-77) for an extensive line-by-line comparison.
[79] See Zimmer and Hartmann for a nearly exhaustive account of these sources and Paperno's earlier "How Nabokov's *Gift* Is Made" for further discussion of the transformation of authentic sources within *The Gift*.

Countless such borrowings litter chapter 2 of *The Gift* as Fyodor creates a vivid picture of his father's life and travels. The two artists seek out materials from life and from literature in order to strengthen their paternal constructions by means of allusion. Both situations concern the artist's desire to equate himself with an idealized model—or two in Fyodor's case.

One critical matter, which has been left underemphasized by previous critical literature, is the complete nature of Fyodor's relationship to Pushkin. To some extent it has been taken for granted that this relationship is self-selected, a choice entirely driven by Fyodor's preferences and aesthetic system.[80] Alexandar Dolinin offers an exception to this critical tendency. He notes that Fyodor wishes to be considered a "legitimate successor" to a particular line of development in Russian literature that begins with Pushkin ("*The Gift*" 144). According to Dolinin, Nabokov believed that new talents must establish their place not by simply "inventing [their] lineage but also by rejecting or negating a number of other alternatives that would hinder [their] natural growth" (145). This point is where Nabokov most strikingly differs from Joyce: His hero selects and elevates his lineage, rather than reinventing it in his own image. Fyodor could very well have chosen another literary tradition to which to adhere: "In general I considered that if [my father] would forget for the nonce the kind of poetry I was silly enough to call 'classicism' and tried without prejudice to grasp what it was I loved so much, he would have understood the new charm that had appeared in the features of Russian poetry, a charm that I sensed even in its most absurd manifestations" (E149/R330). This implies an element of willfulness about Fyodor's

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Rampton offers a less sympathetic discussion of how this process is repeated for parodic effect in chapter 4 of the novel, Fyodor's book on Chernyshevsky.

[80] While Nabokov may, indeed, still use predecessors to elevate his own status, "influence of this order," Mary Orr argues, "can begin to postulate and address such questions as 'What is literature for?'" (84-5). She contrasts such an approach to Bloom's anxiety of influence, a "solipsistic" attitude, in her view, that serves to "demonstrate the genius of the later critic or poet."

actions. He simultaneously champions the ideas of chance (*sluchainost'*), synchronicity, and fate through his art, but the Pushkinian tinge that surrounds his life is just as self-fashioned as the master-artificer Dedalus's deliberate associations with Shakespeare and his creations. Consequently, when his mother describes in a letter to Fyodor that she packed "a hareskin coat straight out of *The Captain's Daughter*" for her spontaneous trip to meet Konstantin Kirillovich on one of his expeditions, might we consider the possibility that her son has modified her words as he manipulates others (E105/R288)? This is, after all, the same Fyodor who knowingly deforms materials for his Chernyshevsky book and claims that he will "shuffle, twist, mix, rechew and rebelch everything, add such spices of [his] own and impregnate things so much with [him]self that nothing remains of the autobiography but dust" (E364/R539).

All this is to say that Fyodor, like Stephen, plays loose with "facts," whether in life, literature, or documentary texts, in order to construct a desired artistic result. This deliberately crafted image includes numerous connections that bridge the gap between Konstantin Kirillovich and Pushkin, between a lost culture and a literary tradition besieged in the Russian émigré community. It is not impossible that Elizaveta Pavlovna would allude to the "hareskin coat" in her letter to Fyodor; it is after all a key item in Pushkin's historical novel. However, in light of the dynamics of Fyodor's fiction, it is also not inconceivable to imagine his altering his mother's letter for the sake of narrative and imaginative consistency. This allusion to *The Captain's Daughter* would then contribute yet another providential touch to his tale. As Schutte writes of Stephen's treatment of sources, Fyodor's work also "lacks the scholar's fairness and impartiality" (54). He seeks out "those facts which will bolster his preconceived notions" about his subject, whether it is his father or Chernyshevsky. The imperative of his project—the desire to link his father directly with Pushkin—motivates his deployment of the allusions he chooses.

Zina realizes this fact and demands a "deeper truth […] for which [Fyodor] alone was responsible and which he alone could find" (E205/R385). This truth, a word similar enough to "reality" or "life" that Nabokov may well have suggested it too always fall between parentheses, is the artistic creation of the son in an effort to find (or construct) his father.[81] The "half-truths" and essentially "plagiarized" sections of their narratives are transformed by Fyodor and his predecessor Stephen into the reality of their art.

THE METAPHYSICS OF FATHERHOOD: TIME, HISTORY, TRADITION

When he writes that Pushkin "comingled with the rhythm of his father's life," Fyodor suggests a metaphysical bond between the two men and, by association, the son as well. Through the literary word all three will be permanently bonded, and Fyodor "will receive a pushkinian blessing" from his father's shade (Greenleaf 150). Beyond the allusive and narratological strategies devised by Fyodor to achieve this goal lies a metaphysical foundation. This part of the project may once again be traced back to Dedalus's thoughts in *Ulysses* and seen as a response to them.

Stephen argues that the artist may actually father himself by creating lasting art, consequently breaking bonds that are in any event based only on a "legal fiction" (170). In other words, the writer's past will be determined by future acts and words that will rewrite what comes before them. Fyodor follows in Stephen's wake but not without challenging some of the particularities of his theory. The loving composition of his father's biography and his art will

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[81] In *Strong Opinions* Nabokov offers the following two retorts to an interviewer: "Your use of the word 'reality' perplexes me. To be sure, there is an average reality, perceived by all of us, but that is not true reality: it is only the reality of general ideas, conventional forms of humdrummery, current editorials" and "Your term 'life' is used in a sense which I cannot apply to a manifold shimmer. Whose life? What life? Life does not exist without a possessive epithet" (118). These ideas find a plethora of manifestations throughout Nabokov's novels, including *The Gift*. Perception of "reality" or "life," Nabokov suggests, may be refined through a true artist's vision.

restore bonds to the past that were severed and will position him as next in the lineage he chooses for himself in the metaphysical coup over history: "[…] the dumbing-down of history that was the Soviet regime and the tragedy that was the death of Fyodor's father (and VN's father) is undone by the life's work that lives on. […] The future is secretly embedded in one's work" (Bethea, *Superstitious Muse* 140-1). Nabokov, according to David Bethea, proposes "that Pushkin's art is not only about how consciousness imagines the future, but how such a consciousness also is the future" (141). Again, Stephen's choice of Shakespeare, whom he considers the greatest symbol of this process, helps explain his theories. Fyodor's approach is much the same—electing a father figure who embodies the concept of a future that transforms the past—but with opposed ends.

Fyodor's and Stephen's statements on time, history, and tradition act readily as keys to understanding the dialogue in which Nabokov engages with Joyce. For example, Nabokov's protagonist proclaims: "Existence is thus an eternal transformation of the future into the past—an essentially phantom process—a mere reflection of the material metamorphoses taking place within us" (E342/R517). In analogous phrasing, Stephen reminds himself during his library performance that he must "[h]old to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past" (153).[82] Artistic acuity, at least as these two young writers conceive of it, provides dominion over the past. For them, the only way to make sense of the present moment is to

[82] According to Gifford's annotations to *Ulysses*, Joyce here reworks a line from St. Augustine's *De Immortalitate Animae*: "But the intention to act is of the present, through which the future flows into the past" (199). In his comparative study of Nabokov's and Augustine's autobiographical texts, Christoph Henry-Thommes does not raise this potential allusion. Exactly when Nabokov read Augustine remains unclear. While Henry-Thommes does not explicitly comment on the matter, his analysis of direct quotations from the *Confessiones* in *Lolita* and *Ada* shows that Nabokov undoubtedly did read Augustine at some point. It also stands to note that Henry-Thommes suggests that *Ada*'s Van Veen "ferociously attacks [the] Augustinian idea of time as a flow or sequence of events in his 'The Texture of Time'" (159). Keeping in mind that Nabokov is not equivalent to Fyodor or Van, this marks a curious inversion of what Fyodor writes in *The Gift*.

transform events in art and, thus, redefine them as they become the artistically immortalized "past." As *Bend Sinister*'s hero Adam Krug explains, "Anyone can create the future but only a wise man can create the past" (*Novels and Memoir* 178).[83] Moreover, the patterns in the fabric of life—coincidences and opportune occasions that resemble an aesthetic creation—*can* be perceived but only with the artist's finely tuned attention.[84]

In this way the two writers' approaches to history might well illuminate the ways in which their views converge and diverge with regard to the topic of time.[85] Stephen infamously calls history "a nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake" (28). He places history in an adversarial role. His (future) art will then be a remedy to the nightmare, a way for him to triumph over all his perceived tragedies. Nabokov recognized this aspect of Stephen's character in his lectures on *Ulysses*: "Both see their enemy in history—injustice for Bloom, a metaphysical prison for Stephen" (355).[86] Stephen's only recourse, as Robert Spoo argues, is not a true escape from history, which may after all be impossible, but "the ceaseless effort to awake from history's oppressive texts through the weaving and reweaving of alternative ones" (13). Like Fyodor, Stephen combs his personal and cultural pasts for the material that can be used in art: "By razing the past within himself he will make room for present and future possibilities" (20). He constantly pushes back against the wake of history that oppresses him in its various guises: his mother and her death, English cultural dominance, exclusion from Dublin's literati, his father,

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[83] All citations from *Bend Sinister* refer to the Library of America edition, *Novels and Memoir 1941-1951*.
[84] On Nabokov's approach to history and historicism, particularly in light of his Russian-language essay "On Generalities," see Dolinin's "Clio Laughs Last: Nabokov's Answer to Historicism."
[85] Blackwell for one partly downplays the importance of time in Fyodor's writing: "Although there is a temporal element in Fyodor's study of Pushkin's and his own father's writings, the emphasis here shifts to the spatial, the physiological and the personal" (98).
[86] The facsimile of Nabokov's lecture manuscript (1980) provides supplementary insights into his reading of Joyce's novel.

and so forth. The young artist plans to create texts that, not unlike *Ulysses*, will amend his experiences by giving them a shape more in tune with his goals and preferences.

Fyodor for his part adopts a less confrontational attitude. The combination of his powerful memory, inspired vision, and confident artistic touch allows him to "resurrect the world of his ancestors" (Henry-Thommes 264). In this manner Fyodor may reformulate the past and launch a timeless cultural memory built into and out of literature. Fyodor is thus far more concerned with a shared history than Stephen. He accepts the tragedies that have befallen him and Russia because he is able to tap into a narrative that affirms his role as a young, increasingly distinguished writer. In doing so he also sustains that same tradition. What matters most to him is not the tragedy itself, all the nightmares of history, but the artist's response to them, the manner in which he makes sense of everything that takes place around him (Dolinin, "*The Gift*" 157).

Nabokov paid particular attention to this merging of art and time. In "The Art of Literature and Commonsense," he describes the moment of artistic mastery, which involves "the perfect fusion of the past and the present," as follows: "The inspiration of genius adds a third ingredient: it is the past and the present *and* the future (your book) that come together in a sudden flash; […] time ceases to exist" (*Lectures* 378). The literary act for Nabokov thus involves a mystical temporal element, something akin to what his character Fyodor experiences. He suggests that the artist conquers the past by rewriting it, overcomes the present by recognizing that it can be understood in aesthetic terms, and redefines the future by virtue of these artistic changes to previous experiences. In essence, Fyodor attempts this feat—to escape time—in his work. The critical difference between him and Stephen, however, is that the former, at least after a period of maturation, does not feel oppressed by history's burden for he can position himself in relation to past achievements in a manner that allows him to disregard all "the

darkest and most dazzling hours of physical danger, pain, dust, death" (*Lectures* 373). As a fellow dispossessed son, not to mention émigré, Fyodor should by all rights feel the need to awake from the nightmare of history. Spoo notes that this nightmare metaphor "can now be recognized as a characteristic trope of modernist historiography, a figure for the desire to break through received textualizations of the past to an unwonted authenticity" (90). He traces its usage through the works of Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Ezra Pound, among others. In his characteristically iconoclastic manner, Nabokov circumvents precisely this trope in his dialogue with Joyce: Fyodor, cast adrift into exile by forces beyond his control, seemingly separated by new "textualizations" from the tradition to which he feels closest, simply isolates himself from all these crises, delving deep into the art of memory to overcome his losses. This, then, is part of Nabokov's response to Joyce's efforts; his character will not disrupt bonds even amid the chaos of the modernist period.

Calling to mind Stephen's proclamation about history being a "nightmare," Nabokov writes in *Speak, Memory*: "Initially, I was unaware that time, so boundless at first blush, was a prison" (*Novels and Memoir* 370). He would later renounce this comment: "My exploration of time's prison […] was only a stylistic device meant to introduce my subject" (*Strong Opinions* 141). Alexandrov reads Nabokov's statement and his later repudiation as "more a reflection on the incorrect methods Nabokov had explored and rejected than his final word on this aspect of his metaphysics" (25). Whether or not this is the case, Nabokov's regular use of the prison image in his *Ulysses* lectures and his autobiography suggests that the subject and Joyce's treatment of the theme were significant to him. If we take Nabokov's statements at face value, then we see that whereas Nabokov may have once felt the pressures of time in a way similar to Joyce or Stephen, he found the strategies that allowed him to view history differently, not as an

adversary.[87] Fyodor achieves such transcendence partly by virtue of his ability to overcome a tendency toward egocentricity. His growth in the novel involves the recognition of others' sufferings, journeys, and connections, which are all inevitably marked by time. He appreciates the fact that he can define history himself but that others—his father, other émigrés and Berliners, even Pushkin—help make up the cultural past. Not *everything* can be a reflection of the artist.[88]

Given their conflicting views on history and time, the two writers consequently treat the related subject of tradition differently. Even as they critique others and their ideas, sometimes even viciously, Fyodor and Stephen creatively alter their opponents' thinking through their art. Such is the nature of the former's biography of Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the nineteenth-century writer and critic credited by Fyodor as the precursor to the Soviet regime's radically violent thought. Fyodor *transforms* and *manipulates* the material of Chernyshevsky's life in order to fit it to his aesthetic system. He critiques, to be sure, what he views as Chernyshevsky's chief faults—a preference for generalities, a stodgy belief in life's supremacy over art, sloppy writing—but in finding the "themes" of the critic's life, Fyodor treats his subject as just another source for his art, inverting the critic's insistence that art should reflect life.

This practice recalls Joyce-Stephen's in *Ulysses* (and throughout his oeuvre). Joyce implies that the genuine artist subsumes the tradition that comes before him, projecting himself in and through it to redefine its constituent parts: "All experience is important to these men

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[87] Will Norman's book *Nabokov, History and the Texture of Time* interrogates the narrative "built quite precisely on the exclusion of history" that Nabokov repeatedly stressed as the correct way to read his texts (158). He develops a series of insightful readings of Nabokov's novels and autobiography in light of the history (or histories) around them, using theorists such as Adorno, Benjamin, and Freud to illuminate previously concealed elements within these works. In so doing, Norman reveals a more nuanced, multifaceted complex of historical "sources" in Nabokov's work.

[88] Such insight, as will be shown in chapter 3, is lost on Bitov's Leva Odoevtsev.

because it happened to them. This is not vanity but a necessity of their art. If the growing artist is a true artist (a born artist as Joyce would suggest), he finds that the center of his art, his own personality, isolates itself from the elements of its own past, its present" (Epstein 56-7). We can see this at work in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode, in which Joyce varies his style numerous times to parody his precursors: Defoe, Swift, Steele, Sterne, and many others. Joyce acknowledges there is a past before him and his art; he will not, however, acquiesce to the power of the tradition. Taking on Shakespeare and Homer as models, he redefines them and all those other writers before him as he crafts a new modern-day epic, *Ulysses*.

Nabokov's stance "corrects" Joyce's: If the latter creates a literary black hole into which all the past is transformed by the present as precursors are taken in, then Fyodor-Nabokov "tap[s] into a wider tradition, enriching his own poetic voice to develop a creative constellation of past, present, and future" (Pichova 76). These metaphors of the black hole and the constellation neatly describe the differences between the two writers in their creative practice. In other words, Joyce considers all the past a reflection of his art, both a stepping stone toward *Ulysses* and a newly forged literary history that must take his texts into consideration. Nabokov's rejoinder to Joyce regarding the literary tradition continues his already well-developed argument that the son should not divide but maintain filial bonds in order to mature fully and potentially to recoup something once thought lost. Nabokov and Fyodor build bridges between writers, excluding only those whom they deem unworthy. By positioning himself as the descendent and pupil both of Pushkin and of Konstantin Kirillovich, Fyodor resurrects a direct, formerly interrupted line. Though he may be the apex of this line, a tradition to be honored remains intact. Joyce's parodies paradoxically ensure his targets' place in the pantheon. This feature is the key difference: he

believes that his art will transform the past as he "projects" his image into the past. *Ulysses* will retroactively redefine the tradition, just as the "son" will become "father" to himself.

Fyodor refutes, or at least does not engage in, this component of the project. Julian Connolly traces Fyodor's development from a poet who must find the balance between inserting too little of himself in a work (his poetry collection) to a prose writer who inserts too much of his personality (his father's biography) and finally to the successful novelist whom we can perceive behind *The Gift* and who is one step removed from the *character* Fyodor (202, 216). There is likewise a related development of literature depicted in *The Gift*. Davydov notes that the novel is at its core about "creative evolution" (*"Teksty-Matreški"* 199). This evolution is seen on the micro-scale in Fyodor's artistic development from a mediocre poet to a novelist of great stature.[89] On the macro-scale, Davydov suggests, the novel itself embodies the very evolution of Russian literature from Pushkin's time to the modernist era to which *The Gift* belongs with each chapter representing a step in this gradual progress ("*The Gift*" 359-60). Such a structure evokes Joyce's stylistic experiments in "Oxen of the Sun," in which he parodies the development of the English literary language over centuries. In his response to Joyce, Nabokov repeatedly maintains the need to remain faithful to the fathers. Part of Fyodor's poem from chapter 3—"To fiction be as to your country true"—comes to mind (156). For Fyodor, as for his author, the concepts "fiction" and "country" represent more than paper, geography, and politics. They both equally imply a cultural heritage embodied by fathers from various fields including poetry and lepidoptery.[90] Indeed, Fyodor calls Pushkin "the gold reserve of our literature" (E72/R257).[91]

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[89] See Waite's "On the Linear Structure of Nabokov's *Dar*" for another "linear" approach to *The Gift*.
[90] Again, Nabokov's status as an émigré and Joyce's as an expatriate might explain their differing perspectives.
[91] See Kissel''s "O nemetskikh pfennigakh i russkom zolotom fonde: Tema deneg v romane V. Nabokova 'Dar'" for a thorough analysis of this metaphor and all its implications throughout *The Gift*.

Only by maintaining this pedigree will Fyodor incorporate what came before him and defeat time—represented by historical forces and mortality—by means of a stylistic "metaphysical checkmate" (Bethea 345).

In this regard the difference between Fyodor's and Stephen's approaches to composing the history of their respective fathers plays a key role. There have been various explanations offered as to why Fyodor does not finish the biography of Konstantin Kirillovich. Weir calls the book a "failed attempt" to bring together Fyodor's two selves: the contemporary author and the son of a famed explorer (90). Blackwell, in the only full-length study of *The Gift* in any language, proposes that Fyodor cannot bring himself to complete the task as he lacks his "ideal reader," his father (154). Earlier, though, and here Blackwell is more to the point, he observes Fyodor's frustration at "having inserted too much of himself into the tale" (54). As the biography's "he" turns into "I," Fyodor realizes he has not observed the appropriate critical distance between his father and his own persona.

As previously stated, Stephen feels no qualms about importing wholesale his problems, for example the idea of usurpation, into the life of Shakespeare. In recounting the story of his "father,"[92] Stephen in fact tells his own saga, that of the dispossessed artist who goes on to transform life through art. As Spoo wryly remarks, "where Stephen is, there betrayal and martyrdom will be" (75). Fyodor, on the other hand, recoils at the thought that he has forced himself onto his father's memory: "I myself am a mere seeker of verbal adventures, and forgive me if I refuse to hunt down my fancies on my father's own collecting ground" (E139/R321). The one finds—or rather situates—his reflection in the past, in his conquest over history, and in the literary forefathers he adopts. The other identifies parallels between father figures and himself,

[92] Or, at least, his *version* of Shakespeare's story.

stretching materials when necessary, but nonetheless refuses to insinuate himself into their beings. Fyodor only wishes to establish a direct lineage.[93]

PLAYING GOD: THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST

The role of the genuine artist who can manipulate time and reality, so central to the metaphysical projects analyzed above, looms large over both *The Gift* and *Ulysses*. It in many ways also ties directly to the father-son dynamics with which both engage. How the two aspiring writers imagine themselves, the way they are described by their creators, and certain allusions to situations in Joyce's novel throughout *The Gift* repeatedly suggest that Fyodor-Nabokov's conviction that the artist is a god-like figure may be considered in part a rejoinder to Joyce's development of the concept throughout both *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. While some of Nabokov's references to *Ulysses* have been previously identified,[94] several more similarities, which can help us better understand Fyodor's character, have yet to be addressed. We will limit our analysis primarily to these previously unexplored allusions in order to further define Nabokov's multifaceted dialogue with Joyce.

One particularly arresting image in the fifth chapter of *The Gift* is that of a dog's corpse found in the Grunewald by Fyodor: "Here is a dark thicket of small firs where I once discovered a pit which had been carefully dug out before its death by the creature that lay therein, a young, slender-muzzled dog of wolf ancestry, folded into a wonderfully graceful *curve*, paws to paws" (E331/R506, my italics).[95] This specific detail has its Joycean source: Early in *Ulysses* Stephen

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[93] Pushkin, again, is said to have "entered his blood," not the other way around (E98/R280-1).
[94] See, for example, Boyd's chapter on *The Gift* in *The Russian Years* (447-78). There he treats topics such as the lost key theme, the works as novels of the city, and the sons' metaphysical search for father figures.
[95] "Вот -- темный, частый ельничек, где однажды я набрел на ямку (бережно вырытую перед смертью), в которой лежал, удивительно изящно *согнувшись*, лапы к лапам, труп молодой, тонкомордой собаки волчьих кровей" (my italics).

examines the "bloated carcass of a dog" on the shore of Sandymount (37). After witnessing another dog sniff the body, he thinks, "Ah, poor dogsbody! Here lies poor dogsbody's body" (39). Finally, the dog's owner calls the dog back: "The cry brought him skulking back to his *master* and a blunt bootless kick sent him unscathed across a spit of sand, crouched in flight. He slunk back in a *curve*" (39, my italics). In both scenarios the writers wander alone, immersed in their thoughts and epiphanies, when they either run across or recall a dog's body. How they each respond to their respective encounter and understand it speaks to the differences in their personalities at these points in the narratives and to Nabokov's broader engagement with Joyce's work.

Two primary concerns overwhelm Stephen here at the end of the third episode of *Ulysses*: the relentless pressure of time and the possibility that he, too, is a pretender. The hydrophobic Stephen associates the dead dog with himself as Buck previously called him "poor dogsbody" (5). He feels that he may be unable to transcend his current weaknesses and become the artist he wishes. The sight of the other dog's "master" moreover reinforces Stephen's anxieties about the usurpers Buck and Haines and thwarted cultural legacies. Alone on the beach, Stephen sees himself in the dog as well as in the drowned man whose sad fate was related earlier in the novel and whom Stephen links to the deceased dog (18, 38). The pull of time, symbolized by the ocean's currents and the shifting sands, drive Stephen to despair.

In *The Gift* Nabokov creates a clear association to this scene through the image of the dog and related diction, specifically the word "curve." An element of Fyodor can be found in the dog's body that he finds, just as Stephen associates the corpse and the subservient mutt with himself. Fyodor's dog first of all recalls the very nature of his own texts—from the book of poetry opening with "The Lost Ball" and closing with "The Found Ball" to the Chernyshevsky

book and to *The Gift*'s circular construction. Whereas Stephen's dog "curves" as a response to his master's violent kick, Fyodor's dog lies in a "graceful curve," suggesting a more majestic state. Likewise, Fyodor notes that the dog was of "wolf ancestry." In doing so, he again raises the issue of lineage that motivates much of this thinking throughout the novel. This creature, found by chance, embodies Fyodor's belief in an elect ancestral line of literary development. Its death and associated decay do not bring misery to his mind. Rather, he sees refinement in the corpse, an emblem of a long-lasting tradition. While Connolly does not specifically mention the dog's body, he observes that Fyodor's Grunewald epiphany allows Fyodor to recognize the links to the past that are preserved by his art: "The twenty-page description of the Grunewald outing offers a delicate yet brilliant verbal fugue in which reminders of death are interwoven with counterbalancing images of life and vitality" (210-11, 213). Fyodor no longer fears death in the way he did at the start of the novel, for example as he writes his father's biography, but recognizes that there are artistic-metaphysical means to overcome it.[96]

Stephen, on the contrary, sees only decay in the image of the dead dog. (There is, admittedly, much less grace in the sight of a bloated carcass.) He wishes to reinvent himself in order to avoid becoming another victim of history, another son drowned by Ireland's pull. The living dog sees itself in the dead "dogsbody," just as Stephen glimpses his own death (McBride 41). Nabokov, then, positions Fyodor with his acceptance of the dog's "graceful curve" as a counter response to this all-consuming dread present in "Proteus." Fyodor realizes that even in death he may become part of a larger chain. His found dog digs its own grave, positioning itself with its "wolf ancestry," within a place of its choosing.

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[96] Here we might recall a line from *Bend Sinister*: "But the very last lap of [Krug's] life had been happy and it had been proven to him that death was but a question of style" (*Novels and Memoir* 358). Fyodor comes to the same realization, though his artistic abilities allow him to liberate himself from death.

Nabokov also tacitly points to Joyce as an intertextual source through Fyodor's feet. Directly before his first imagined conversation with his rival, the acclaimed poet Koncheev, Fyodor visits a shoe store. There, a salesgirl uncovers his "poorly darned foot" before selling him shoes that are just slightly too small (E64/R249). The shoes, along with a view of his skeletal foot in an X-ray machine, prompt Fyodor to begin mentally composing a poem and to consider his state as an émigré writer. Later, at home, Fyodor dresses and "admir[es]" his new shoes "apprehensively" (*opaslivo*) (E64/R250). Something about the shoes disconcerts Fyodor. Linked with the footstep motif that runs throughout the novel, they constrict his physical movement and symbolize the artistic and metaphysical restrictions against which he clashes.[97]

While Nabokov did not introduce the foot/footstep motif to Russian literature,[98] we can once again turn to *Ulysses* for a comparable treatment. Broadly speaking, Joyce plays up his own footstep motif for all its worth in his city novel. For example, Blazes Boylan's footsteps, consistently marked by his "new tan shoes," create a portentous footfall, particularly in Bloom's thoughts (187). Most shoes in *The Gift* and *Ulysses*, in fact, influence the protagonists' mindsets. Destitute and desperate (much like Fyodor), Stephen borrows his roommate's "broadtoed boots, a buck's castoffs," feeling "the creases of rucked leather wherein another's foot had nested warm" (41). He imagines that his own "two feet in his [Buck's] boots are at the ends of his legs, *nebeneinander*" since he has likewise taken a pair of trousers (31). Later, in "Scylla and

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[97] This motif also figures prominently in chapter 4, Fyodor's book on Chernyshevsky.

[98] Justin Weir, for example, suggests that this scene is a parodic response to Pushkin's podiatric fixation (83). *The Gift*'s narrator even provides the following amusing commentary on the exploitation of female legs in literature: "Down the helical stairs of the bus that drew up came a pair of charming silk legs: we know of course that this has been worn threadbare by the efforts of a thousand male writers, but nevertheless down they came, these legs–and deceived: the face was revolting" (E163/R343-4). See also Davydov 1982 (pp. 422-3). Joyce previously describes a similar moment of surprise tinged with disappointment when in "Nausicaa" Bloom realizes that Gerty McDowell, with whom he has flirted from a distance on the beach, is actually lame.

Charybdis," during his crisis, Stephen's thoughts return to these matters: "His boots are spoiling the shape of my feet. Buy a pair. Holes in my socks" (173). Fyodor's "poorly darned foot" has its Irish precedent. Stephen's borrowed shoes, like Fyodor's new ones, impose a metaphoric system of oppression upon him which he resists. They are a concrete symbol of Buck's grip over Stephen, his financial stranglehold. Stephen desires nothing more than independence. Likewise, although Fyodor's shoes are not on loan, they produce no less bitter an emotion. In these respective scenes, they realize that they must break free of systems opposed to their worldviews before casting out into the world.[99]

Continuing the device of physical connections between Fyodor and Stephen, Nabokov also suggests a link through their teeth.[100] At the end of the "Telemachiad" Stephen thinks, "My teeth are very bad. Why, I wonder. Feel. That one is going too. Shells. Ought I go to a dentist, I wonder, with that money? That one. This. Toothless Kinch, the superman" (42). In his mental re-evaluation of his recently published volume, Fyodor offers the following account of one of his poems: "Here is the description of a drive to this dentist, who had warned the day before that 'this one will have to come out'" (18). Intriguingly, the original Russian version reads: "Вот описание поездки к этому дантисту, предупредившему накануне, что that one will have to come out…" (205). Both passages feature teeth that are "going," in need of removal for their own respective reasons. Moreover, a Monsieur Drumont is mentioned in the same paragraph in *Ulysses*, and a Monsieur Danzas mentioned in the paragraph featuring Fyodor's

[99] In accordance with his general thesis in *Nabokov's Otherworld*, Vladimir Alexandrov reads this scene, along with Fyodor's corresponding poem, as a marker of the "liberating effect of the step that he imagines he will make as a disembodied spirit onto the other shore of the Styx" (111). He also connects it to water and footstep motifs (110-13). Alexandrov's argument is convincing, but one need not necessarily look to the metaphysical: the shoes and Fyodor's hopes to step freely represent a more tangible, creative struggle.

[100] My thanks to Sergey Karpukhin for bringing this parallel to my attention.

reflections.[101] These peculiar parallels imply that Nabokov might have had *Ulysses* in mind when composing his scene with its dentistry theme. The patent change from "that" to "this" suggests a playful bilingual exercise. Just as Stephen manipulates his demonstrative pronouns ("That one. This.") and their meanings,[102] Nabokov adjusted his English line, which was conspicuous enough to begin with in the Russian original, to direct the reader to his Joycean source. This allusion is, of course, achieved in a particularly circuitous, Nabokovian manner. It nonetheless reflects Stephen's line more closely as his protean thinking shifts from "that one" to "this." Equally important is the fact that at these points in the novels both artists are considering memory and time. As he composes a mental review of his verse collection, Fyodor realizes how his flagging memory can "condemn to extinction" once dear "objects" (18). In a sense, then, he observes the same process in action as Stephen, who finds that the world goes on existing even if he is not around to perceive it: "Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes" (31). Both Fyodor and Stephen fuse the mnemonic with the perceptual, associating the artist's ability to give name to things (or come close with demonstratives) with his control over reality.

Beyond these peripheral, yet significant similarities between the novels' protagonists' external appearances, the manner in which the theme of the writer as a god-like creator is developed in *Ulysses* is echoed by Nabokov's novel as well. Nabokov and Joyce's bold

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[101] Dolinin notes that this is a reference to Nabokov's ancestor Konstantin Karlovich Danzas (1801-1870), Pushkin's close friend and second in the duel with d'Anthès in 1837 (*Kommentarii* 641). According to Gifford, Édouard Adolphe Drumont (1844-1917) was a "French editor and journalist whose newspaper, *La Libre Parole* (Free Speech), was distinguished chiefly for the bitterness of its anti-Semitism" (*"Ulysses" Annotated* 55).

[102] Spoo parenthetically comments that a "study could be made of the ideological war of pronouns waged by Stephen and Deasy," the school headmaster (106). Both Joyce and Nabokov are acutely aware of the potential for deception inherent in even the smallest of words.

conception may have their mutual sources, but expressive allusions to *Ulysses* in *The Gift* along with shared phrasing make it possible to assert a direct link between the two authors.

For example, responding to Lynch's mention of former classmates, Stephen asserts his control over the past and those he has encountered: "You have spoken of the past and its phantoms, Stephen said. Why think of them? If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call? Who supposes it? I, Bous Stephanoumenos, bullockbefriending bard, am lord and giver of their life" (339).[103] Stephen therefore claims that he, as the creator-god, personifies a power that can save others from time's wake by incorporating them into his art. His writings will preserve not just their memory but even their essence as well, as Stephen delivers his particular brand of justice through his words. Fyodor makes a similar assertion when, mentally reworking the poem begun that afternoon during his imaginary conversation with Koncheev after the shoe-purchasing scene, he says, "It is with *this*, that from the slow black ferry […] Under the vertical slow snow in gray-enjambment-Lethean weather, in the usual season, with *this* I'll step upon the shore some day. […] Do you know what just occurred to me? That river is not the Lethe but rather the Styx" (E75/R260). Leona Toker interprets this moment as Fyodor's realization that "eternity can be free from oblivion" (159), while Vladimir Alexandrov links the artist's memory with intimations of the "otherworld" (111). Both of these interpretations point to what matters most here: Nabokov's belief that artistic memory will recover what has been doomed to the void, thus merging the past and the future in a metaphysical bond that ultimately transcends time.

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[103] This phrasing is used by Stephen elsewhere. In "Aeolus," just before delivering his Parable of the Plums, he says, "On now. Dare it. Let there be life" (119). Joyce, however, is quick to create ironic distance: Lynch bemusedly retorts that Stephen only has "a capful of light odes" that "can call [his] genius father" (339). Earlier, considering his birth, Stephen thinks to himself, "One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life. Creation from nothing" (32).

These practices, according to Alexandrov, "resurrect the Romantic idea that the artist is God's rival, and that man's artistic creations are analogues to God's natural world" (18). This approach again connects directly with the father-son dialectic at work in both texts. Joyce provides Nabokov with a model for transforming the past, which he deploys to great success. In asserting the right to overcome the limitations of both memory and time, Fyodor can step upon the shore of the Lethe (or the Styx, as he would have it); he can bring back the past—his father, culture, and literary tradition, all once lost—with the metaphysical energies of his art and position himself as their heir. For Nabokov, far more than for Joyce, collective memory, whether it addresses personal or cultural matters, plays a greater role in this process. By recalling the past in his art, Fyodor can bring it to life once again. Stephen, of course, manipulates life through art in a similar fashion, but he aims to thrust *himself* upon the past, "correcting," as it were, his lineage. According to the two writers, art can defy death by bestowing immortality upon the deceased, just as it can conquer forgetfulness by crafting avatars of the past: Konstantin Kirillovich, Pushkin, Shakespeare.

Another scene from *The Gift*, via a detour to *Pale Fire***,** recalls this same conception of the writer as creative deity. As was pointed out to Nabokov by Alfred Appel, Jr., a few lines from John Shade's poem ("I stand before the window and I pare/ My fingernails and vaguely am aware/ Of certain flinching likenesses" [*Novels 1955-1962* 462, l. 185-7]) reiterate one of Dedalus's ideas from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (*Portrait* 233). Nabokov's response to this comparison was unequivocal: "Neither Kinbote nor Shade, nor their maker, is answering Joyce in *Pale Fire*. Actually, I never liked *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I find it a feeble and

garrulous book. The phrase you quote is an unpleasant coincidence" (*Strong* 71).[104] This statement is salient both in its intensity and its abrupt turn toward disparaging remarks following a suggestion of influence. They are the words of an artist surprised by the thought that someone has glimpsed into his laboratory and espied material adapted from a "rival." Regardless of Nabokov's expressed strong opinions, both scenes convey the sense of the writer as a god who watches over his creations from a distance.[105]

An earlier echo of this scene, though, can be found prior to the beginning of Nabokov's English period. Near the end of *The Gift*, the hero prepares himself for his first night alone with Zina: "Fyodor shaved, carried out long and successful ablutions, and cut his toenails–it was especially pleasant to get under a tight corner, and *clip!*– the pairings shot all over the bathroom" (E356/R531). By the novel's fifth chapter, Fyodor feels self-assured with the energies of creative genius and inklings of great future works. He, like Stephen before him and Shade after him, becomes aware of the greater power of art that has been bequeathed to him by his teacher-ancestors. This moment, more so than the one in *Pale Fire*, also emphasizes the pleasures of the artist and the seeming disinterestedness he feels toward the mundane outside world. Both Fyodor and Stephen are clearly interested in empirical reality, in sensations and perceptions, and in the distinctive traits of each item they encounter. What matters most to them, though, is their

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[104] There is, though, at least one explicit reference—an "answer" from Nabokov—to Joyce in Kinbote's notes: "Of course, it would have been unseemly for a monarch to appear in the robes of learning at a university lectern and present to rosy youths *Finnegans Wake* as a monstrous extension of Angus MacDiarmid's 'incoherent transactions' and of Southey's Lingo-Grande ('Dear Stumparumper,' etc.) or discuss the Zemblan variants, collected in 1798 by Hodinski, of the *Kongs-skugg-sio* (*The Royal Mirror*), an anonymous masterpiece" (*Novels 1955-1962* 488). Annalisa Volpone suggests that in associating Joyce with Hugh MacDiarmid and Robert Southey Nabokov is "mocking what he believed was the total nonsense of Joyce's language as well as the audacity of his style in *FW*" (n. pag.).

[105] It is possible that Nabokov, like Joyce, derived this description from Flaubert, who wrote in 1857: "An artist must be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen" (quoted in Gifford, *Joyce* 256). In *Portrait* Stephen uses a similar formulation but adds the flippant reference to nail clipping later taken up by Nabokov. For comments on these various connections, see Moynahan (pp. 435-6) and Wood (pp. 11-14).

transformation of such reality into the realm of art. They view the creative artist as one who constructs a reality out of the materials presented to him and who then proceeds to reveal his existence, if at all, only through hints of this higher existence. To some degree this is all a ruse, posturing by Fyodor and Stephen both: They actually care very much about their literary constructions, particularly those of their "fathers," and it cannot be said in good conscience that they stand back. It is here that their most deeply felt convictions and anxieties make themselves known.

METAFICTIONAL STRATEGIES

This conception of the ideal artist extends our analysis, as might be expected, further to the metafictional elements present in *Ulysses* and *The Gift*. Once again, the former novel provided Nabokov with a model for a particularly multi-layered metafictional structure. On one level, the protagonist of each book becomes the author of his respective text. Scholars of both writers have previously made these claims, though not without opposition. However, how Nabokov's strategy owes to what he read *in* and *into* Joyce's *Ulysses* remains to be explored more fully. On an even more expansive metafictional level, we find that yet another author, that is, the "arrangers" known as "Joyce" and "Nabokov," lie beyond the authorial-protagonist figure. His statements in his lectures on *Ulysses* also give credence to such a claim. On this particular point attention must be drawn to Nabokov's *reading* of the novel as a means to express his own themes and aesthetic preferences. If Nabokov did not directly adapt this method from Joyce, then he evidently read it *into* Joyce's novel, suggesting that *Ulysses* was one source, undoubtedly among others, from which Nabokov developed these devices in his own fiction.

While Nabokov never commented on the possibility of Stephen being the authorial force behind *Ulysses*, this interpretation aligns with his own deployment of a similarly intricate

strategy in *The Gift*. The most recent and detailed explication of this possibility is McBride's "*Ulysses" and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus*.[106] McBride posits that Stephen, modeling himself on Ovid and Homer, transforms a chance encounter with Bloom into a sprawling novel that parallels his Shakespeare theory in its characterization, themes, and construction. Though not without its faults, McBride's study does carefully outline an approach to *Ulysses*'s circular structure, positing Stephen as the master craftsman and performer of a text inspired by the world around him and taking his general aesthetic system into account.

The idea of Fyodor's being the author of *The Gift* is in some ways far less controversial, and yet Nabokov scholars remain divided on the novel's "authorship" to the present day. Traditionally, Fyodor has often been viewed as the hero-author, who ultimately comes to write *The Gift* at some point after the last days described.[107] Dolinin has argued against this view, citing inconsistencies in the novel's narrative and topography, as well as Fyodor's point of view, and promoted reading *The Gift* as an "isomorphic" text of Fyodor's future novel ("*The Gift*" 164-5). For our purposes it matters not who is correct in this debate: Nabokov's metafictional strategies at this level mimic those of Joyce, or at least those that he observed and appreciated in *Ulysses*. For example, in a conversation with Zina, Fyodor remarks, "It's queer, I seem to remember my future works, although I don't even know what they will be about. I'll recall them completely and write them" (E194/R374). This vague proclamation recalls Buck's rendering of something Stephen has told him: "Ten years, he said, chewing and laughing. He is going to write

[106] See McBride (pp. 29-37) for a succinct history of this approach to Joyce's novel, which began with Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* (1931).
[107] See, for example, Davydov 1982 (198), Levin (205), and Blackwell (10). However, as the latter notes, "Perhaps the most heated debate [*The Gift*] has generated centers on the question of whether Fyodor, the main protagonist and perspective, is to be considered the fictional author of *The Gift* (which then becomes an inserted text within itself), or, on the contrary, the novel's implied literary narrator is separated and superior to Fyodor" (7).

something in ten years" (205).[108] *Ulysses*, of course, takes place on June 16, 1904, and the famous postscript reads "Trieste–Zurich–Paris / 1914–1921" (644). What is even more suggestive of Stephen's authorship is Haines's response: "Seems a long way off, Haines said, thoughtfully lifting his spoon. Still, I shouldn't wonder if he *did* after all" (205, my italics). His phrasing—the past tense "did"—suggests a completed act, as if the character Haines briefly becomes aware of the novel's eventual realization in ten years time. Furthermore, after Stephen tells Bloom his Parable of the Plums in "Ithaca," the latter recognizes the potential for other stories "unnarrated but existent by implication" (561). Characters of both novels thus refer to this seemingly as-yet-unwritten text that will encapsulate and "rechew" their lives.

These moments are all intimations of what Stephen calls "postcreation": "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away" (320). In granting their protagonists such long-range artistic vision, Joyce and Nabokov imbue them with immense aesthetic power over time itself. *Ulysses* and *The Gift* serve as "proof" of these creative energies. Naturally, the novels are not so straightforward as to posit Fyodor and Stephen as the authorial forces after an initial reading. The accumulation of details and patterns over multiple readings, along with a consideration of the protagonists' general aesthetics, produces such an interpretation. McBride traces the presence of certain thematic clues that create "a rupture that invites the reader into a higher order of metafiction: the reader no longer is reading a story about the writer, Stephen, but is instead reading a story *by* the writer, Stephen" (145). Again, Nabokov would have been drawn to such an intricate narrative construction as the one used throughout *Ulysses*. This device theoretically allows Stephen to

[108] While trying to convince Stephen to write for his newspaper in "Aeolus," Myles Crawford also remarks to the young writer, "I want you to write something for me, he said. Something with a bite in it. You can do it. I see it in your face. *In the lexicon of the youth* ....." (111).

become father to himself through art, just as it allows Fyodor to tell the story of his novel's creation and, furthermore, to rewrite the past in a manner that will position him in posterity as heir apparent to a seemingly no longer extant branch of Russian culture and, thus, "resurrect" his fathers.

In his classic study of the "self-begetting novel," Steven Kellman defines the sub-genre as "a kind of novel whose very form demonstrates radical longing to overcome a generation gap by merging parent and child into one enduring unit" (ix). He lists traits found in *The Gift* such as the artistic growth of an oftentimes first-person narrator, an ending that leads to the beginning, and a structure modeled on the double helix (3-4).[109] Taking things to a literal level, Nabokov fulfills Kellman's dictum that "the [self-begotten] book that becomes incarnation of the hero who grows up to write it and thereby earn a name for himself. The novel's title is what he in effect dubs himself" (8). Fyodor (Theodore), of course, means "*gift* of god." He embodies his art: "he was already looking for the creation of something new, something still unknown, genuine, corresponding fully to the *gift* which he felt like a burden inside himself" (E94/R277, my italics). The narrator likens this "burden" to childbirth, in this case an artistic self-begetting.

Connolly, likewise adopting Kellman's typology, has observed that in *The Gift* "Nabokov demonstrates the full potential of the novel of self-begetting" ("Vladimir" 64). In this brief study he traces Nabokov's development of the genre, revealing how for most of his characters, the art of the self-begetting novel serves to reveal their inadequacies and to "imprison the protagonists in a hall of self-reflexive mirrors" (62). Thus, in Nabokov's able hands, the self-begetting novel

[109] Kellman also proposes "a Möbbius strip or Vico's *corsi e ricorsi*" as alternative images, conveniently bringing together Nabokov and Joyce with two fell phrases (4). Irena and Omry Ronen were the first to describe *The Gift*'s composition as a "Möbius strip-like structure" at the "level of narrative macrocomposition" (378). Davydov would also go on to use the Möbius strip metaphor (*Teksty-Matreški* 197).

turns into a work about the clash between life and death, between immortality and oblivion, between personal growth and shallow solipsism. Connolly focuses on the qualities of *The Gift* and, consequently, Fyodor's aesthetics that allow him to transcend his identity as a character at the end of the novel and perform a self-begetting literary feat.

However, some of Kellman's other statements on the nature of the self-begetting novel illustrate the manner in which Nabokov departs from this revolutionary novelistic mode, which flourished in the modernist period. For example, Kellman notes that protagonists of self-begetting novels are "typically solitary and single" (8). Correspondingly, imagery and tropes related to sex, gestation, and birth are common to self-begetting novels, including *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, as their heroes' are preoccupied with the possibility of self-production and rebirth. One exemplar of this particular element is the "Oxen of the Sun" episode, which Joyce structured into parts resembling the human gestational cycle, complete with impregnation and afterbirth, as it traces the history of the English literary language. Furthermore, in both *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, Stephen dreams of a woman who will become his muse. In the former, he seemingly finds his wish in his vision of the bird-girl, but the entire affair is filtered through a highly ironic mode, and when we meet Stephen again in *Ulysses* he is indeed completely alone. This state is, of course, partially self-imposed: Stephen after all defines his three artistic defenses as "silence, exile and cunning" (*Portrait* 269). Therefore, in the future, he will go on either to find this inspiration or resort to asexual literary reproduction like other self-begetting heroes before him.

Nabokov sets up Fyodor in a seemingly comparable position at the beginning of his novel: alone, displaced, and eager for consummation of his desires, both literary and sexual. Preparing to review his recently published collection Fyodor "[takes] out his book and thr[ows]

himself on the couch–he had to reread it right away, before the excitement had time to cool" (E9/R197). The Russian is more explicit with its sexual undertones: "он упал с ней на диван." The phrase "falling with her [*s nei*]" on the couch taken literally suggests a close link between Fyodor's literary output—his self-begotten persona—and his physical desire to produce (Naiman 168).[110]

By the novel's fifth chapter, however, it is revealed that at the time of the novel's "completion," whether at Fyodor's hands or some unseen writer's, Fyodor *has* in fact found love and his entire tale is enveloped by this relationship. Although the sexually charged thematics of the standard "self"-begetting novel remain in place, Nabokov, unlike Joyce, shows how a protagonist may yet produce such a novel under the influence of a tangible muse. Near the novel's conclusion, Fyodor's Grunewald epiphany takes on a manifestly sexual tinge at its climax:

> He had imagined what he had constantly been imagining during the past two months-the beginning (tomorrow night!) of his full life with Zina-the release, the slaking-and meanwhile a sun-charged cloud, filling up, growing, with swollen, turquoise veins, with a fiery itch in its thunder-root, rose in all its turgid, unwieldy magnificence and embraced him, the sky and the forest, and to resolve this tension seemed a monstrous joy incapable of being borne by man. A ripple ran over his chest, his excitement slowly subsided, the air grew dark and sultry, it was necessary to hurry home.
>
> Он вообразил то, что постоянно воображал в течение последних двух месяцев, завтрашнее начало полной жизни с Зиной, — освобождение, утоление, — а между тем заряженная солнцем туча, наливаясь, ростя, с набухшими бирюзовыми жилами, с огненным зудом в ее грозовом корне, всем своим тяжким, неповоротливым великолепием заняла небо, лес, его самого, и разрешить это напряжение казалось чудовищным, человечески непереносимым счастьем. Ветер пробежал по его груди, волнение медленно ослабло, вс? было темно и душно, надо было спешить домой. (E345-6/R521)

[110] See Naiman's chapter on *The Gift* in *Nabokov, Perversely* (161-78) for a fascinating reconsideration of the novel's treatment of sexuality in light of what others, including Barskova, Blackwell, and Brodsky 1997, have said on the subject.

The orgasmic energy of the cloud powered by the pathetic fallacy unites Fyodor's desires for Zina with *The Gift*'s highly wrought language. Moreover, Fyodor will find out that night that physical consummation of his love for Zina will not be so easily attained as he loses his keys and she leaves hers within the locked apartment that her parents have just vacated. And yet, "the programmatic love scene is displaced by the novel itself" as their story with all its joys and frustrations represents the literary fruit that allows Fyodor to transcend time (Blackwell 138). The result of these components is that if Nabokov does indeed use elements typical of the self-begetting novel, he is also careful to distinguish himself even within the sub-genre.

Discussing Joyce's first two novels, Kellman suggests that "the native streams of *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman* converge to produce a fiction which, if not self-begetting, is at least highly self-conscious about its prospects for self-begetting" (80). *Ulysses* constantly raises this "possibility" of self-begetting (5). Kellman's words, of course, are well chosen and seem to allude to Stephen's aphorism: "In the intense instant of imagination […] that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be" (160). The "possibility" for self-begetting oneself remains fertile throughout *Ulysses* as Stephen contemplates his own art, as well as that of Shakespeare, whom he considers a master of the practice. The very same may well be said once more of *The Gift*: Nabokov constructs his novel in such a way that the potential for its self-begetting is raised through its thematics, structure, and plot, and yet, as Dolinin has convincingly shown, other alternatives are simultaneously possible. We would like to point out in relation to Kellman's characterization of the prototypical self-begetting novel (while keeping *Ulysses* in mind as a *possible* example) the ways in which Nabokov further swerves from the mold. These moves reflect an additional divergence from Joyce's path. As noted above, Fyodor is *not* alone in the process of creating his novel but actually finds his muse,

who propels him to create his literary masterpiece. Of course, Fyodor may still idealize or objectify Zina in the process. Eric Naiman rightly observes that she is described with "little individuality" and that all her being is concentrated through and devoted to Fyodor's perspective (172). Unlike the other self-begetting heroes whom Kellman mentions, such as *La Nausée*'s Antoine Roquentin, Fyodor is not rebuked by his love, nor does he remain alone like the brash Dedalus. His love—whether romanticized or not, whether truly idealized and objectified—is a crucial part of his development as a writer and as the possible author of *The Gift*, which could not be produced without his meeting Zina.

The Gift is a "self-begetting" novel only insofar as we allow for its departures from the mold. It features a circular construction and an authorial foundation in Fyodor's character. In spite of these features, Nabokov responds to Joyce's *Ulysses* as a potential exemplar of this sort of novel by incorporating both filial and romantic love as elements of his successful self-begetting novel, showing how Fyodor can produce both his own literary self and the novel even while maintaining the bonds that others cast away in an effort to generate the same results. In sum, while *Ulysses* may be considered a potentially self-begetting novel due to Stephen's character, *The Gift* becomes a self-begetting novel *in spite of* Fyodor's desire to incorporate his father and Zina into its fabric.[111] While it is true that the highly self-aware Fyodor, like all self-begetting novels' heroes, is "intent on incorporating and surpassing his predecessors,"[112] he does not adhere so strictly to the "fantasy of being simultaneously father and son" to himself (Kellman 7-8). On the contrary, he wishes to retain his fathers' separate identities throughout his life and

[111] Again, Fyodor's actions in this regard are potentially only less ego-centric than Stephen's by degree.
[112] Kellman notes that *À la recherche* possesses both "a consciousness of its own status as a work of art" and "a built-in recognition of the relationship between an individual novel and the flow of literary history" (17). Nabokov composed *The Gift* in much the same way.

art. Nabokov, via Fyodor's art, shows that the self-begetting novel *can* incorporate others, such as father figures and romantic loves, more naturally and with a less antagonistic drive.

To begin analyzing the second level of metafiction in *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, it would be worth emphasizing once again Nabokov's tendency to read into other writers' works the techniques he himself appreciated and applied to his own texts. For example, in his lectures on *Ulysses* Nabokov makes much of the man in the brown macintosh who appears repeatedly in Joyce's novel but is never given a name. With obvious glee, Nabokov writes, "Do we know who he is? I think we do. […] The Man in the Brown Macintosh who passes through the dream of the book is no other than the author himself. Bloom glimpses his maker!" (*Lectures* 320). Nabokov refers to Stephen's discussion of Shakespeare's insertion of his own likeness into his texts for evidence: "He has hidden his own name, a fair name, William, in the plays, a super here, a clown there, as a painter of old Italy set his face in a dark corner of his canvas" (172). The fact that Joyce scholarship has not readily accepted Nabokov's hypothesis should not divert us from recognizing the fact that he took delight in this strategy and applied it to great success throughout his entire oeuvre. In *The Gift* several possible Nabokovian surrogates, the novelist Vladimirov the most obvious one among them, appear.[113] All of these moments, unlike others described below, do not represent a momentary division of worlds, by which a character explicitly becomes cognizant of the reality of his maker. They are rather encoded intrusions that serve to show the stamp, if not the real face, of a higher authorial power.

Gennady Barabtarlo has traced Nabokov's use of this device to at least 1924's *The Tragedy of Mister Morn* (296).[114] Nabokov would, of course, argue that he did not learn about

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[113] Other (in)famous figures include Vivian Darkbloom in *Lolita* and *Ada* and the butterfly hunter glimpsed in *King, Queen, Knave.*

[114] For some brief remarks on the Man in the Brown Macintosh with regard to *Pale Fire*, see Ramey (pp. 202-4).

this technique from Joyce in particular, that it was a natural development of his own practice. The timing would corroborate his explanation as well. Nonetheless, Nabokov's use of the device became more pronounced after 1930, that is, after he had reread *Ulysses*, and in particular after his transition to writing in English. Even if Joyce did not intend the Man in the Brown Macintosh to be his "representative," Nabokov interpreted the figure in this way, reading into the novel the sort of multi-layered structure he would come to perfect in his own works. Indeed, Barabtarlo stresses that the writer "stubbornly (and often without success) attempted to find such 'authorial figures' [*upolnomochennykh*] in famous novels" such as *Ulysses* (296). Whether McIntosh served as initial inspiration or belated affirmation for this method, the real purpose of such "coded" authorial intrusions may be said to be an pronouncement of the creator's control over his/her work and fictional reality. As Tammi aptly writes, many of Nabokov's narratives "take the form of a more or less flagrant comedy of errors," whereby the characters seeking meaning are frustrated by forces outside their control, though often without their cognizance of them (*Problems* 131). The presence of figures such as Vladimirov or the Man in the Brown McIntosh symbolize these authorial forces that typically lie beyond the scope of the characters' complete awareness. In suggesting Joyce was one of the finest purveyors of such a technique and applying it himself to his own works, in particular *The Gift*, Nabokov sounds a self-congratulatory note. He affirms the ancestry, so to speak, of these figures. Nabokov may be unwilling to admit he "learned" anything from another writer, but he was perfectly capable of placing himself among their ranks.

A similar moment occurs in *Ulysses* during Molly's soliloquy when she seemingly pleads with her maker: "O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh" (633).[115] Curiously, when asked by

[115] As Gifford notes in his annotations to *Ulysses*, Molly's infamous exclamation is both a metafictional proclamation and an Irish equivocation: "Dodging the curse *O Jesus?* or calling on her maker?" (626).

Alfred Appel, Jr. to comment on the similarity between this narrative "involution" and those in his own novels, Nabokov remains mum, addressing only the part of Appel's question regarding the source of the Nighttown hallucinations in *Ulysses*'s "Circe" chapter (*Strong* 71-2).[116] Faced with such an obvious parallel, perhaps for once Nabokov could not disprove his indebtedness to Joyce and simply ignored the matter. Such an intricate narrative construction—an "involution" to use Appel's term—simultaneously provides further proof that if "all life is but a text," then it is possible that reality may behave like a text, leaving Konstantin Kirillovich free to return home or the talented Fyodor to restructure the past as he wishes. Of course, these are only *possibilities* that the authors weave into their texts. Nabokov maintains the ambiguity inherent to such a Joycean narrative move.

SOMETHING SINISTER IN BERLIN

Our analysis has so far demonstrated how allusive strategies, the development of the role of the artist, and metafictional techniques reminiscent of Joyce all augment this theme in significant ways throughout Nabokov's novel. Now we might turn to *Bend Sinister*, another text with many ties to Joyce that have been mentioned in the past but never specifically in light of *The Gift*'s thematics.

Bend Sinister, like *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, also treats the theme of fathers and sons through its own peculiar, skewed perspective. In this novel, Nabokov's second English-language book,

[116] Incidentally, Nabokov's assertion that "Bloom cannot be the active party in the Nighttown chapter" because he "has been drained of his manhood earlier in the evening and thus would be quite unlikely to indulge in the violent sexual fancies" feels weak (*Strong Opinions* 72). Bloom's highly sexual and fanciful imagination has been emphasized throughout the novel, making these hallucinations no less plausible. As Ellmann writes, "A critic has complained that Bloom has no normal tastes, but Joyce would undoubtedly reply that no one has. The range of Bloom's peculiarities is not greater than that of other men" (361). Of course, there are elements in "Circe" that simply lie beyond Bloom's realm of knowledge and, thus, must emanate from elsewhere, but that is altogether another matter.

the writer offers further commentary on *Ulysses*, in particular its "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, as well as on Joyce's aesthetics more generally. *Bend Sinister* also amplifies many of the techniques and themes developed in *The Gift* and *Ulysses*. Both of Nabokov's novels feature initially disorienting shifts from first- to third-person narration. The authorial stamps distributed throughout *The Gift* are developed in *Bend Sinister* into the "anthropomorphic deity impersonated by [Nabokov]" who makes his appearance for the first time in fully realized form at the book's end (169). The metaphysical and metafictional components then become warped in the novel's twisted logic allowing the protagonist to realize his status as a fictional construct. Additionally, the son's search for his father is inverted as the Hamletian father of *Bend Sinister*, Krug, loses his son in a horrific turn of events near the conclusion.

A great deal of work has been conducted on the relevant allusions to Shakespeare that appear throughout the novel. In addition to Samuel Schuman's comprehensive *Nabokov's Shakespeare*, Herbert Grabes suggests that this is proof of Nabokov's "outdoing his predecessors," namely Joyce and Goethe, in their parodic treatments of *Hamlet* and Shakespearean scholarship (499).[117] His novel is a tribute to Shakespeare, the greatest representative of classic English literature, *and* his modernist heir, James Joyce (Foster, "*Bend Sinister" 31)*. In choosing these two authors for models, the newly minted English writer Vladimir Nabokov ensured himself a place in an exalted lineage, much as he did with Pushkin throughout his Russian works. Nabokov in effect enacts the same project as Stephen in *Ulysses*: Seeking to establish his position in English literature, he elects his father(s) carefully. Even so, he cannot help but offer criticism through his parodic treatment of Joyce, now his "brother" as a

[117] Naiman offers essentially the same claim, adding that Nabokov believed Stephen's speech does not sufficiently connect with the rest of *Ulysses* and wished to make his own Shakespeare chapter "central to the thematics" in *Bend Sinister* (48). The references to Shakespeare are also part of Nabokov's efforts to appeal to English-speaking rather than Russian-speaking audiences.

fellow self-appointed descendent of Shakespeare. Nabokov saw a somewhat contradictory need to position himself in relation and in opposition to other major English-language writers.[118] Such parody in *Bend Sinister* might best be understood as Omry Ronen defined it in his sketch of Nabokov's primary parodic methods: "parody in the narrow sense, when a style is represented in such a way as to foreground and exaggerate its characteristic features, especially faults" (65).

The conversation between Krug and Ember on *Hamlet* that takes place in chapter 7 of the novel illustrates this form of exaggerated parody well. As others have remarked, this chapter draws on *Ulysses*'s ninth chapter for much of its impact. Remarkably, Nabokov offered little explicit commentary on "Scylla and Charybdis" outside of *Bend Sinister*. In fact, in his lectures on *Ulysses* the episode is given only a brief paragraph that summarizes the fundamentals of Stephen's theory and states in categorical terms Joyce's failure: "The discussion in this chapter is one of those things that is more amusing for a writer to write than for a reader to read, and so its details need not be examined" (*Lectures* 326).[119] This is a curious statement given that Nabokov himself, who elsewhere ceaselessly champions details, finds much of interest as both reader and writer in this very chapter, as evidenced by the parodic treatment he delivers in *Bend Sinister*. To the best of our knowledge, while other analyses of this section of the novel have done a commendable job explicating its intricacies, none has attempted to bridge the gap between it and

[118] In her fascinating analysis of *Bend Sinister* and Nabokov's polemics with Edmund Wilson as embodied in the novel's narrative, Susan Elizabeth Sweeney comments, "Nabokov thus magically fuses *Hamlet*, a play which does feature a mad prince, with *Rusalka*—thereby effecting a 'cultural synthesis' of Shakespeare and Pushkin (in Priscilla Meyer's phrase)" (187). Pushkin remained crucial to Nabokov's art, but Shakespeare and other English writers also came to occupy critical positions.

[119] Coincidentally, in a 1928 letter mixed with praise and critique, H. G. Wells wrote to Joyce, "You have turned your back on common men, on their elementary needs and their restricted time and intelligence and you have elaborated. What is the result? Vast riddles. *Your last two works have been more amusing and exciting to write than they will ever be to read*. Take me as a typical male. Do I get much pleasure from the work? No" (*Letters* 275, my italics).

what Nabokov does in *The Gift*.[120] *Bend Sinister*'s own Shakespeare chapter may be considered a continuation, albeit a more ferocious, if still playful one, of Nabokov's rejoinder to Joyce begun in *The Gift*. Bringing together all three novels here will help reveal further nuances of Nabokov's *Gift*.[121]

As with the Joycean parallels in *The Gift*, many, including some of the most pressing, have already been explored. One of the earliest was Michael Seidel's observation that Krug's play with anagrams in the name Telemachus resulting in "Hamlet" "makes the same Shakespearean connection implicit in the opening Telemachian chapter of *Ulysses*" (359). In her study of Nabokov's so-called impersonation of the "anthropomorphic deity" throughout *Bend Sinister*, Susan Schaeffer explains a reference to Giambattista Vico by way of his influence on *Finnegans Wake* (139-40). Begnal notices several more important connections. For example, he finds that Krug's description of a filmmaker who is interested in adapting *Hamlet* for the screen as a "hawk-faced shabby man" alludes to Stephen's self-identification with Daedalus as a "hawklike man" in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* ("'Bend'" 22). He also adds that Krug counters Stephen's definition of paternity as a "legal fiction"[122] with the proposition that children are

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[120] Foster treats this section at length in terms of his overall thesis regarding Nabokov's connections to European Modernism and his "art of memory." However, he downplays the importance of Joyce in Nabokov's earlier novels, including *The Gift*: "At the same time, [*Bend Sinister*] moves decisively beyond the limited reception of Joyce in *Despair* and *The Gift*. Instead of focusing on *Portrait of the Artist*, which is in turn subordinated to Dostoevsky or Proust, Nabokov now juxtaposes Krug's painful family drama with major stylistic experiments in *Ulysses*; as a result, he can indicate the special relevance of that key work for his two-tiered art of memory" (*Nabokov's Art* 170). On the contrary, *Ulysses*'s importance to Nabokov's ideas on fatherhood extends throughout a great deal of his oeuvre.

[121] In some respects, *Bend Sinister* may be called yet another Nabokovian complication of the self-begetting novel. The text's frequent references to its own creation and its final scene, in which the author stands up and considers his works and characters, demonstrate the self-reflexivity inherent to the genre. Krug, though, is *not* a protagonist who writes his story and self into existence.

[122] Joyce was responding here to a variety of sources, from Homer ("Mother has always told me I'm his son, it's true, / but I am not so certain. Who, on his own, / has ever really known who gave him life," 84) to August Strindberg's 1887 play, *The Father* ("If I really knew I was the father, then, sure, but I don't know that, no one can. I mean, slaving away for somebody else's kid, I'm not made for that—not me, no, sir! I mean, you and the Captain, sir, can understand that, I know," 5).

"formed by a fusion which is, at the same time, a matter of choice and a matter of pure enchantment" (23). Moreover, Begnal extends his analysis to Nabokov's treatment of *Finnegans Wake* by comparing the cyclical, dreamlike structure of the two novels (25). Joyce, then, permeates *Bend Sinister* in various guises, guiding Nabokov's hand as he shapes the novel's imagery, characterization, structures, and thematics. By this point Nabokov had read both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* and could use them to wed himself to the English modernist tradition by setting up his many parodies and parallels.

Exploring a few more subtle intertextual connections will prove beneficial. Given that Nabokov went to great lengths to associate *Ulysses*'s MacIntosh with the novel's ultimate creator, the presence (or, better to say, non-presence) of a certain "Mac" in *Bend Sinister* might be motivated by such intertextual concerns. When Krug finally realizes he must flee Padukgrad with his son, David, he turns to the mysterious Peter Quist for help. The two come to an agreement in Quist's antiques shop and then Quist offers Krug access to a secret passage:

> "Oh, but I can show you a shorter way," said Quist. "Wait a minute. A very short and pleasant cut."
>
> He went to the foot of a winding staircase and looking up called:
>
> "Mac!"
>
> There was no answer. He waited, with his face now turned upwards, now half turned to Krug—not really looking at Krug; blinking, listening.
>
> "Mac!"
>
> Again there was no reply, and after a while Quist decided to go upstairs and fetch what he wanted himself. (314)

Despite pressing hints and ominous insinuations throughout these dealings, only later do Krug and the less attentive reader realize that Quist works for the Ekwilist state and that this unseen "Mac" is a brutish enforcer who will come to detain Krug while David is kidnapped. Until then, though, Mac's true identity remains a mystery. The fairy tale nature of this exchange, complete with a miraculous helper and hidden tunnels that somehow allow Krug to travel home within minutes, grants it a disorienting quality. Therefore, when Quist calls out, "Mac!" we can be

tempted to read into this innocuous name a reference to Nabokov's interpretation of the Man in the Brown *Mac*Intosh. Quist's beckoning is a sham appeal to the literary god lurking beyond the text that actually leads nowhere. Krug mistakes Quist and by extension Mac for allies, just as the reader may mistake Mac for a benevolent higher force controlling Krug's fate. An anthropomorphic deity does indeed exist in the novel's reality, but Krug's last-minute escape attempt and his appeal to Quist only serve to highlight Krug's hubris. He will be punished for his previous callous treatment of both literature and his friends, and Mac here stands for belief in a false idol and inattentiveness to detail. Nabokov's multicultural, intertextual, and frequently playful narrative composition grants his texts such multivalence.[123]

In scenes such as this one we see how Joyce permeates the narrative of *Bend Sinister* in many subtle ways. Moving from the particulars and back to the realm of thematic overlap, the aforementioned conversation between Krug and Ember brings together many of these elements just described and simultaneously speaks directly to Stephen's performance in the National Library. Consequently, the dialogue also has ramifications upon our understanding of Fyodor's project in *The Gift*.

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[123] Tammi first argued that Nabokov's allusions must be studied in a series of stages: "Having identified one source we should always go on to look for other potential subtexts, hidden under the false bottom of the primary one. […] these instances require 'reading[ing] in three dimensions' (*The Gift* E: 17; R: 16) – a reading both triggered and impeded by VN's strategies, but nonetheless directed towards bringing the branching intertextual structure into a semantic whole" ("Seventeen Remarks" 192). (A Russian version of Tammi's article appeared two years later.) Likewise, building on Tammi's formulations, Leving says the following about Nabokov's allusions: "Allusions are often indirect or brief and are used to summarize broad, complex ideas or emotions in one quick, powerful image. Nabokov often appeals to multiple sources as either overt or encoded subtexts. Needless to say, he was not an imitator—disguised reminiscences and direct quotations […] acquire a new dimension" (277). Alexandrov argues that Nabokov's allusions, components of his "expanded lexicon," should be rigorously studied in order to "do full justice to his art": "The one major contextual category that Nabokov unequivocally implies is important for understanding him is literary allusions. His works are filled with direct and concealed references to, and parodies of, Russian and European literature, as well as various other cultural 'monuments'" (16). Such an allusive strategy contributes in part to Nabokov's "constellation"-like writing. His intertexts all serve to establish a literary universe of which he *attempts* to be in total control. We can, however, find connections that he concealed and that often say a great deal more about his work.

The connection is established early in the chapter when, after describing a series of three engravings on Ember's wall, the narrator, referring to Shakespeare, says that "[h]is name is protean," a reference to *Ulysses*'s "Proteus" episode and Stephen's cogitations on time, change, and identity therein (252).[124] Boyd cites these engravings as a reference to "three inset illustrations from the title page of Gustavus Selenus's study of cryptographic systems, *Cryptomenytices et Cryptographiae* (1624), reproduced in Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence's *Bacon is Shakespeare* (1910)" (*Novels and Memoir* 684). Durning-Lawrence was the leading proponent of the Baconian theory in Shakespeare studies. Nabokov begins to establish his parody of scholarly perversions by which the author's life is mishandled and art poisoned by extra-literary considerations. Nabokov, for his part, prefers the divine details of Shakespeare's texts as evidenced by the following narratorial remark: "However, the fact that the Warwickshire fellow wrote the plays is most satisfactorily proved on the strength of an applejohn and a pale primrose" (252). The presence of "pale primrose" found in Warwickshire, from where Shakespeare originated, makes a more convincing argument for Nabokov than any inferences to his marriage dug up in a given play. According to Nabokov, all these transformations of Shakespeare ("Shaxpere," "Shagspere," "William X"), like Stephen's manipulations of the Bard's life, only distort and distract from the art created by a man of genius. Fyodor has therefore been previously offered up as a response to this process when he refuses to do the same with his father's history.

The two performance scenes are notably similar in structure as well. Without resorting to the type of reading of *Bend Sinister* that Naiman believes has caused "simplification arising out of the scholarly desire to find in it an uplifting message," Ember's room, the home of the scholar,

[124] Nabokov here also encodes an additional reference to Pushkin, who was called Proteus by Nikolai Gnedich: "Пушкин, Протей / Гибким твоим языком и волшебством твоих песнопений!" (148). In this way Nabokov continues to unite the father of Russian poetry with the father of English literature.

does still represent a sanctuary from the trials of the outside world, just as the National Library for Stephen stands as the last refuge for a poet in a pragmatic world which now champions science over art (50). As Stephen comes to the emotional climax of his speech, Mulligan, cynical double and usurper, interrupts with his ironic commentary: "*Eureka!*" (175). Buck's intrusion manifests the poet's displacement by the medical student both in their individual lives and on a broader symbolic level. He takes the limelight from Stephen when he is invited to the literary evening being hosted by George Moore, while the young writer is left in suspense. In *Bend Sinister* the same process is repeated: Amid the scandalous discussion on *Hamlet*, the state's crude representatives, including the freshly embodied Mac, intrude upon Ember and Krug's world, a realm that remains opaque to the Ekwilist forces. This space, which once seemed safe and immune to such interferences, is revealed to be no less permeable. It is, in fact, only a mirage, and one suspects that Nabokov would have it be so because Krug and Stephen encroach upon the realm of great literary predecessors.

With reference to Fyodor and *The Gift* we can better analyze Krug's quasi-literary activities and their consequences. Unlike Krug, Fyodor does not sink to the level of the philistine in his deformation of Chernyshevsky, nor does he ever even consider mocking Pushkin. He certainly drags his Chernyshevsky through the mud, but Fyodor does not do so with the same intentions as Krug, let alone Stephen. Perhaps more importantly, both Fyodor and his maker do not rank Chernyshevsky on the same level as Pushkin, making this performance more acceptable to them. Taking a closer look at Nabokov's Shakespeare chapter, we find that Krug and Ember derive great pleasure from their baroque, bizarre interpretations of *Hamlet*. This relaxed attitude toward the Bard, according to Naiman in his provocative *Nabokov, Perversely*, is an aesthetic crime in Nabokov's estimation: "Although Nabokov himself was certainly not averse to parody,

when characters in this novel parody great authors, their fates are similar to those of the benighted protagonists of Greek myths, punished for poaching on the realm of the gods" (64). Chernyshevsky is at best a demigod in Fyodor's view. What Krug and Stephen do to Shakespeare, however, goes against Nabokov's "aesthetics of the father." Reading retroactively, we can therefore see how Nabokov viewed Stephen's treatment of *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's life as too crude, an oversimplification of a genius's creative process, and bring to sharper relief both Krug and Fyodor's fates.

Krug and Ember raise their spirits after Olga's death with these ribald and dubious readings of *Hamlet*, which are in a sense akin to Stephen's. Some are original creations, others taken from coded sources. Much like the quoted historical documents transformed by *The Gift*'s texture, Shakespearean scholarship is manipulated in *Bend Sinister*. Grabes calls this process "a kind of dialogue between the literary tradition and Nabokov's own method of linking new stories" (502). For example, recounting the hawk-man's plan for a film adaptation of *Hamlet*, Krug reports, "He added he had thought she was eighteen at least, judging by her bust, but, in fact, she was hardly fifteen, the little bitch. And then there was Ophelia's death. To the sounds of Liszt's *Les Funérailles* she would be shown wrestling—or, as another rivermaid's father would have said, 'wrustling'—with the willow. A lass, a salix" (258). This entire scene is a masterful concentration of intertexts. These lines seamlessly mix music, Joyce, and Shakespeare. There is the "rivermaid's father"—a reference to Joyce's Anna Livia Plurabelle candidly explained by Nabokov in his foreword—and the Joycean wordplay with "wrestling"/"wrustling" and "A lass, a salix" (168). Ember is then described as "enter[ing] into the spirit of the *game*" (259, my italics). References to Joyce ("*cp.* Winnipeg lake, ripple 585, Vico Press edition") and Pushkin ("*Russalka letheana*") appear directly afterward, once more linking the two in this "game" of

crass quasi-literary one-upmanship. This passage makes Krug, Stephen, and, by extension, Joyce culpable. While Nabokov appreciates games and puzzles, those characters who break or even bend his rules and mock the dignity of great artists often face terrible plights. Nabokov "takes the enterprise of literature very seriously" (Schuman, "Something Rotten" 209). Like Naiman, Schuman argues that Nabokov "affirm[s] that grotesque literary criticism and revision is more than poor playing of intellectual game: it is a reflection of a deformed and deforming, inhuman, vision of the world" (209). When one challenges the sanctity of his forefathers, the writer's wrath emerges. So while Krug is certainly not a Hermann or Humbert, his grief blinds him, and he takes a misstep.

Fyodor, who, again, admits that he is a "mere seeker of verbal adventures" but "refuse[s] to hunt down [his] fancies on [his] father's own collecting ground," opts out of just such a game (E139/R321). He acknowledges the limits of his abilities, which *may*, but should not intrude upon the life and art of a cherished father figure. As a result, what goes on between Krug and Ember in *Bend Sinister* can be seen as an even further travestied version of what Stephen accomplishes in *Ulysses* and, as a result, what Fyodor *nearly* does in *The Gift* by distorting his father's life with his own aesthetics and interests.

Stephen commits two chief "aesthetic crimes" according to Nabokov's literary penal code. First, he willingly inserts himself and his concerns into the life of Shakespeare. He chooses to "shuffle, twist, mix, rechew and rebelch everything," to apply Fyodor's words, in order to construct an image of Shakespeare according to his pressing needs (E364/R539). Though they do not involve a ridiculous fascist interpretation of *Hamlet*, such as the one present in *Bend Sinister*, Nabokov finds this practice questionable, to say the least. Fyodor does something similar when he equates elements of Pushkin's poetry and status as a teacher figure with the life of his

biological father. There are critical differences, though. Fyodor's scheme brings the fathers together, rather than divide them. His undertaking elevates his own position as "chosen son" by proxy, but he still reveres the fathers. Fyodor transposes elements of Pushkin's art onto his father's life, not the other way around, thus preserving the poet's distinction in this line of development.

In his crime spree, Stephen also mixes life and art in a very literal fashion by developing an interpretation of *Hamlet* that uses sources external to the literature rather than respecting the inviolability of Shakespeare's plays. On these issues we may turn to Nabokov's own public statements. He had the following to say in a 1971 letter to the editor of *The New York Times Book Review* about Edmund Wilson's *Upstate*:

> The method [Wilson] favors is gleaning from my fiction what he supposes to be actual, 'real-life' impressions and then popping them back into my novels and considering my characters in that inept light—rather like the Shakespearian scholar who deduced Shakespeare's mother from the plays and then discovered allusions to her in the very passages he had twisted to manufacture the lady. (*Strong Opinions* 218)

Of course, Nabokov's choice of "the Shakespearean scholar" here brings to mind Krug, Stephen, and their games. He goes on to suggest that "the publication of those 'old diaries' (doctored, I hope, to fit the present requirements of what was then the future), in which living persons are but the performing poodles of the diarist's act, should be subject to a rule or law that would require some kind of formal consent from the victims of conjecture, ignorance, and invention" (219). The image of "performing poodles" recalls Nabokov's proclamation that his "characters are galley slaves" (95). The difference, of course, is that Wilson has treated Nabokov in a manner that reduces him to a character and his life to material for his writings, essentially enacting Stephen's claim that his past acquaintances will "troop to his call" (339). What becomes clear from statements such as these is Nabokov's aversion to exploiting "real life" in explaining a writer's art, his distaste for abusing others' (the "geniuses" of the world) work, and his

unwillingness to subject "real life" to the manipulations of art, *especially* if he is not the one behind the pen. Fyodor may transform Chernyshevsky into a literary character—Zina becomes "used to considering him as belonging to Fyodor"—but certainly not with the intention of using the life to explain the art (E204/R384). This is a crucial idea Nabokov repeatedly addresses from *The Gift* to *Bend Sinister* and from his autobiography to his public critique of Wilson's memoirs.

Another relevant text for this discussion is "Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible" from 1937. This lecture, originally delivered in French and with none other than Joyce in the audience,[125] ostensibly deals with the creative process of translating Pushkin, but in large part concerns itself with the concepts of the "real" and the "plausible" in biographical writings. Nabokov speaks out against "fictionized biographies":

> One begins by sifting through the great man's correspondence, cutting and pasting so as to fashion a nice paper suit for him, then one leafs through his works proper in search of character traits. And God knows one is pretty unfastidious about it. I have had occasion to find some rather curious items in these accounts of eminent lives, such as that biography of a famous German poet, where the content of a poem of his entitled "The Dream" was shamelessly presented *in toto* as if it had actually been dreamt by the poet himself. Indeed, what could be simpler than to have the great man circulate among the people, the ideas, the objects that he himself described and that one plucks from his books in order to make stuffing for one's own? (39)

Much of this speech recalls Nabokov's rejoinder against Wilson, not to mention his literary treatments of these issues. Nabokov was clearly opposed to the practice of creating "paper suit[s]" throughout his entire career, as he vehemently attempted to establish a clear demarcation between his art and his personal life.[126] While what is typically called "life" could be found in his

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[125] Cf. "A source of unforgettable consolation was the sight of Joyce sitting, arms folded and glasses glinting, in the midst of the Hungarian football team" (*Strong Opinions* 86). For some brief remarks on this occasion, see Boyd's *The Russian Years* (p. 434) and Begnal 1994 (p. 520-1).

[126] Whether or not he was entirely successful in this endeavor or consistent in his practice is, of course, an entirely different matter. There are moments when Nabokov playfully mixes the two sides of the equation. For example, he writes in the foreword to the English translation of *Glory*: "If Martin to some extent can be considered a distant cousin of mine (nicer than I, but also much more naive than I ever was), with whom I share certain childhood memories, certain later likes and dislikes, his pallid parents, *per contra*, do not resemble mine in any rational sense" (xi).

novels, Nabokov felt that knowledge of this kind contributed nothing to a *real* understanding of his work. Concerning Pushkin, Nabokov confidently asserts, "those of us who *really* know him revere him with unparalleled fervor and *purity*, and experience a radiant feeling when the richness of his life overflows into the *present* to flood our spirit" (39, my italics).[127] Nabokov in this way continues to position himself as a descendent of the true Pushkinian literary lineage. He "knows the poet" better than others and "experiences" a merging of his past with the present moment unfelt by those not capable of attaining such great artistic heights. The historical past transforms the present as Nabokov (and Fyodor) are able to channel the poetic energies of those periods. Those with whom he implicitly contrasts himself render both Pushkin's life and art inert. Long before Nabokov wrote of Wilson's "performing poodles," he had described the "macabre doll" that a man becomes when someone probes too deeply and carelessly into his private life in search of answers to his art (40). The biographer's perception of the subject turns out to be "plausible, but not true," a deformation of the ephemeral truth that actually lies in the artist's work, not "real life." There is, though, an irony in the fact that Nabokov's statements on Pushkin are no less a "contamination" of the poet, his life, and his art than those against which he writes. Nabokov simply adds a spiritual element.

A strong internal resonance between these ideas and *The Gift*'s plot in chapter 2 exists. The lecture, in other words, presents Nabokov's theory, while the novel illustrates it in a direct artistic form. Nabokov was engaged with the theme of "biography" and its limits at this point in time (1937) when the two texts were composed, a year after "Mademoiselle O," his first major

[127] Nabokov here contributes to the body of writings on one's personalized version of Pushkin ("my Pushkin"). Examples include Valery Briusov's *My Pushkin* (1929), Marina Tsvetaeva's *My Pushkin* (1937), Vladislav Khodasevich's *Pushkin's Poetic Economy* (*Poeticheskoe khoziastvo Pushkina*, 1924) and *About Pushkin* (*O Pushkine*, 1937), and Anna Akhmatova's *About Pushkin*. See Paperno's "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebrianogo veka" (1992) for a fascinating discussion of this phenomenon.

venture into autobiographical writing. Fyodor stops writing his father's biography when he realizes he has tainted Konstantin Kirillovich's experiences with a "secondary poetization" (E139/R321). In other words, he has departed from the realm of the real (his father's "art" of lepidoptery) and unwittingly plunged into the "plausible" (elaborate, romanticized descriptions of his father's travels). Stephen, however, does not hold back when describing *his* Shakespeare, and neither does Krug in his grief-inspired abandon. The latter for his part fails to recognize the aesthetic chain of command, so to speak, that is so central to Nabokov's art. He joins Ember in raiding Shakespeare's art and life for amusement: even worse, he does not do so to make any more sense of his own existence like Stephen does. Instead, he does so only in order to distract himself from his recent personal tragedy.

Krug's subsequent "punishment" constitutes a sort of "aesthetic exorcism," if we might appropriate Davydov's phrase, of this brand of critical interpretation and blasé attitude toward literature. While Nabokov cannot penalize Stephen, he *can* respond in his own novels, reprimanding Krug for crimes molded on Stephen's, and offer an alternative through Fyodor's "superior" behavior. Krug, it stands to note, also bears many similarities to Hamlet and, therefore, Stephen. Schuman cites, for example, their shared "indecision and inaction springing from […] philosophical temper" ("Something Rotten" 205) and the manner in which their minds come into fatal "interaction with the 'flaws' of the societies around them" (206). As far as Hamletian characters go, Krug stands far closer to Stephen than Fyodor, and yet Stephen *is* able to extricate himself from the binds in which he finds himself. After all, if he plays with Shakespearean scholarship and with the Bard's writings in a manner distasteful to Nabokov, at the end of his performance he responds to John Eglinton's inquiry by "promptly" saying that "no," he does not believe in all his stories (175). He does possess the "possibility," the dormant

talent (if so far unproven), to produce lasting art and transform the world. Fyodor, therefore, represents one further step removed from Krug and Stephen. Krug, though capable of much more, wallows in what might be termed the "philistine filth": the poisonous game of speculative interpretation of a writer's life. The latter, Stephen, eventually rises from it and admits it is nothing to believe in, even if it is all for a purpose. Fyodor, on the contrary, imbibes the lessons of his forefathers, honors the "immortals" with whom Nabokov sides, and successfully begets his novel as a result (Naiman 64).

The greatest irony is that Krug seems to understand the power of the past well. On a personal level his mind is constantly taken by memories of his deceased wife: "Long summer days. Olga playing the piano. Music, order" (305). These memories trouble his consciousness, defining his present moment. The pull of the past, its appeals and idyllic glow, dictate much of Krug's desire to ignore the recent political (and personal) changes he has witnessed. Speaking with an Ekwilist soldier about a mutual acquaintance early in the novel, as mentioned previously, he remarks, "Anyone can create the future but only a wise man can create the past" (178). His comment implies that the teleological drive of *Bend Sinister*'s authoritarian state, as well as its real-world counterparts, focuses on the future at the expense of the past. On another level, though, it makes the by now familiar assertion that the genius artist can restructure the past to refashion the present; the philistine instead looks forward to projects that may ultimately not be realizable or, worse, that destroy the past's great achievements. Stephen's statements regarding the past come to mind here, too. Like Krug, Stephen plays with the story of Shakespeare's life and art. The reasons why they do so differ, but their actions betray a simultaneously callous and permissive attitude, at least according to Nabokov's schema. Even if Krug ultimately disagrees with the "hawk-like" man's interpretations, the joy he experiences from his interlocutor's

interpretations as well as those of his own invention reveals at least a partial kinship between the two. Fyodor, on the other hand, accepts Pushkin's grace in his own art. He is the wise man who "can create the past"—but only with the cherished help of his forefathers. This is Nabokov's challenge: Hamlet has to avenge his father but be certain that the ghost is legitimate before doing so; Nabokov avenges his father through his *art*, which denies history and his father's death.

"ALAS, POOR GHOST!": CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS À LA NABOKOV

It is particularly telling that Krug's "punishment" involves a twisted recapitulation of Bloom's past, as well as an inversion of Hamlet's and Fyodor's. Following a blunder by the state's goons, Krug's son, David, is horrifically murdered at an orphanage for violent children. Foster has described the similarity between Bloom's vision of an 11-year-old Rudy at the end of "Circe" and David's prepared body when it is shown to Krug in *Bend Sinister* (*Nabokov's Art* 176). They are described with similar colors (mauve), accompaniments (dog and lambkin), and gaudy clothing. The "return" of the lost sons turns ghastly. These two events should, of course, be read with reference to the plot of *Hamlet* and, in the case of Nabokov, his attempt to "outdo" his predecessor, Joyce, who includes a number of ghosts in *Ulysses*.[128]

Despite the Ekwilist state's efforts to render David a literally exquisite corpse, his appearance is far more haunting than Rudy's due to the seemingly innocuous details, such as the "smooth" blanket, that contrast with the disturbing gravity of the situation (345). More importantly, the destabilizing contrast between life and death in this scene produces much of its effect. For example, David's lifeless face is "skilfully painted and powdered" in an effort to

[128] On a related topic, Bloom writes that "the strong dead return, in poems as in our lives, and they do not come back without darkening the living" (*Anxiety* 139). They—the ghosts of the past—reveal a "vulnerability" in writers who seek to produce "definitive statements, testaments to what is uniquely the strong poet's gift" (140). Something of this kind of conflict can be seen in both *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, in which writers wrestle with their literary and personal antecedents.

make him seem more animate (345). On the other hand, what Krug perceives to be "a fluffy piebald toy dog […] prettily placed at the foot of the bed" turns out to be a vicious "creature" that reaches for the inconsolable father with its "jaws" as he knocks it over in his flight out of the room (345). The dead elements come alive, while what should live remains dead, threatening Krug's grip on reality and unsettling the reader's sensibilities. Like Joyce, though, Nabokov makes the son the "ghost" in his inverted rendering of *Hamlet*. In doing so, the two writers simultaneously link themselves to the greatest representative of English literature and advance their own art with this revision. However, Bloom's vision is of a different order than Krug's: just as Krug has previously manipulated Shakespeare's text, his own life now plays out like a disturbing version of the Bard's plot. Bloom's Rudy serves as a reminder of the possible communion the father may share with the son or with an adopted son (Stephen), while the sight of David's corpse triggers Krug's madness.

Ghosts—a term that should be understood very broadly—are ubiquitous in Nabokov's art.[129] Their treatment in *The Gift* also involves a reworking of the plot of *Hamlet* in various guises. Polina Barskova has cleverly demonstrated how Nabokov "highlights different aspects of *Hamlet* for different families in his novel" (204). She develops a masterful close reading of the three primary clans in *The Gift* and the manner in which their fates retell the plot of *Hamlet*: the Godunov-Cherdyntsevs, the Shchyogolevs, and the Chernyshevskys. In the case of Alexander Chernyshevsky, he goes mad, as Hamlet pretends to do so, after encountering the ghost of his son, rather than his father (Barskova 205). Barskova argues that Fyodor's dream-encounter with

[129] Vladimir Alexandrov's landmark *Nabokov's Otherworld* was one of first studies of Nabokov's metaphysics that systematically described the author's "intuition of a transcendent realm" in his art (3). Major texts that have been analyzed in terms of "ghost stories" include *Pale Fire*, *Transparent Things*, "Signs and Symbols," and "The Vane Sisters."

the "ghost" of Konstantin Kirillovich represents a positive alternative to the Chernyshevskys' fate, that of a "life-affirming philosophy" emblazoned in the novel's very title Da*r* (205).[130]

Fyodor experiences this dream, in which he is called to his old apartment to meet an unexpected guest, near the end of *The Gift*. This scene establishes a parallel with Stephen's vision of his mother's corpse in "Circe." Unusual details reveal to the careful reader the fantastic nature of the moment in *The Gift*. Once there, Fyodor is bewildered to find himself face-to-face with Konstantin Kirillovich. As much as Fyodor craves his father's miraculous return, he also dreads the possibility. The dream sequence in which the two are reunited reveals a great deal about Fyodor's psychology, including his deep-seated anxiety: "His heart was bursting like that of a man before execution,[131] but at the same time this execution was such a joy that life faded before it" (E354/R530). The meeting is an "execution" as it is the conclusion of all that has come before it: the young Fyodor's maturation as an artist, an aching hope for his father's return. It is likewise a final judgment. Here, Fyodor's vision of his father will decide Fyodor's fate, rendering him mute or allowing him to flourish as a writer. However, until that impending moment, the idea of death permeates the entire scene, associating itself with both the absent father and the expectant son: "[d]eath, for Nabokov, is an insult, even a shameful secret" (Rutledge 80). Fyodor knows that his father must have perished at some point on his return journey, yet the *plausibility* of his return, which he has entertained for so long, not its shameful *truth*, which lies entirely outside the realm of believability, haunts him. Roger Salomon notes Fyodor's trepidation and argues that such an event would "only make palpable the gap between

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[130] See also Dolinin "'Dar'" (n. pag.) and Boyd "The Expected Stress" (p. 28) for other iterations of this claim that explicitly mention *Ulysses*'s conclusion.

[131] The execution theme was crucial in Nabokov's thinking at this time. He paused his work on *The Gift* to complete *Invitation to a Beheading* (*Priglashenie na kazn'*) "in one fortnight of wonderful excitement and sustained inspiration" (*Strong Opinions* 68).

style and fate and lead finally to anticlimax […] Certainly Fyodor's father belongs (and must remain) in mythic time" (189). The corporeal form has passed on, leaving behind only Fyodor's memories of his father and the connections from which he draws.[132] The fear possessing Fyodor passes only when his father speaks to him, an act which reveals "that everything was all right and simple, that this was the true resurrection, that it could not be otherwise" and "that he was pleased–pleased with his captures, his return, his son's book about him" (E355/R530). Notably, Konstantin Kirrilovich's words are not reproduced in the narrative. They seemingly emanate from the otherworld to Fyodor's sleeping consciousness and thus exist beyond representation. Nonetheless, the (imagined) verbal exchange allows for the two to be reconciled at last. Again, phrases fairly reminiscent of others previously associated with Pushkin and Konstantin Kirillovich, including "woolen jacket" and "big hands" (*cf.* the hareskin coat and "hot little hand" in the novel's second chapter), unite the two father figures. Curiously, Nabokov's "Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible" makes the case that "works survive and should be appreciated; the 'real life' cannot be resurrected" (Rutledge 46-7). If Fyodor witnesses the "resurrection" of Konstantin Kirillovich, it is only so because he imagines the father's image through his own creative spirit. It represents another tremulous step toward Fyodor's greatest accomplishment: the completion of *The Gift*, the story of Fyodor's principal constants: literature, family, and love.

Fyodor's encounter with the ghost of his father stands in stark contrast to Krug's with David or Bloom's with Rudy and simultaneously produces vastly different results than Hamlet's meeting with the ghost of the King. Some shared details between the various scenes deserve

[132] This fear of the corporeal can be extended further: "Fyodor, like Hamlet, hates the very idea of flesh, which is profoundly hostile to his life and his mission. Both protagonists inherit this hatred of carnality from their fathers" (Barskova 200). Fyodor's desire to avoid the bodily can therefore also be observed in his largely chaste relations with Zina throughout the novel.

note. Nabokov's "anthropomorphic deity" at the end of *Bend Sinister* wields an "inclined beam of pale light" to deliver "instantaneous madness" to the protagonist (351-2), while in *The Gift* the narrator notes how "a light broke through" (*prorvalsia svet*) during Fyodor's reunion with his father, making him feel at ease (E355/R530). This light, then, is associated with clarity of mind: Krug may go mad, but he understands that he is only a creation of a greater mind beyond his world; Fyodor at long last feels reconciled with his father's avatar, which he had crafted since his disappearance, and with his father's indissoluble *true* memory. Hamlet and Krug are set on a destructive path, emblematic of their own tendencies,[133] due to their respective ghostly encounters. Following his dream, Fyodor on the contrary discovers a unity in the world he had had trouble discerning previously: "Pondering now fate's methods […] he finally found a certain thread, a hidden spirit, a chess idea for his as yet hardly planned 'novel'" (E362-3/R538). Stephen, like Bloom, is constantly bombarded with reminders of the past that tear him down: his mother's corpse, English dominion in the form of Haines' patronage, and the very weight of literary history. In particular, May Dedalus's sepulchral appearance in "Circe" serves as a vivid inversion of Fyodor's experience with his father's ghost. The specters of the past in Joyce's novel disconcert their witnesses. They emphasize a disconnect between past and present that only Fyodor manages to overcome. Indeed, Krug, too, is haunted by memories of his wife and a past now lost. Fyodor, though, ultimately meets the past—in the guise of his dead father—unswervingly. In doing so he takes on the mantle of the artist-son-creator in a manner that tacitly combats Stephen's practice in *Ulysses* with its acceptance of the father.

[133] Krug realizes that "for long summer years and with enormous success he had delicately taken apart the systems of others […] He was constantly being called one of the most eminent philosophers of his time but he knew that nobody could really define what special features his philosophy had" (305).

CONCLUSION

Nabokov's dialogue with Joyce lasted many years and covered vast ground in his letters. It began before Nabokov's turn to English and his impulse to insert himself into the English literary tradition. Much more so than Olesha, Bitov, and Sokolov, Nabokov competed with Joyce. This rivalry arose early in his career when he began to define himself against other writers of various eras. By inscribing Joyce (and in particular *Ulysses*) into the pantheon of literary history and simultaneously revising Joyce's techniques to fit his own particular worldview, Nabokov came to define his art in similarly triumphant terms.

His exchanges with Joyce also served as a means to shape Nabokov's own dialogic position on various subjects: metafiction, the development of the artist-god trope, and father-son relations, a theme of utmost importance to Nabokov in no small part because of his personal biography. He very much wished to counter ideas that became common currency in the modernist age, a time when sons were severing ties to their fathers and, as Eliot Borenstein writes, "when biology, like all nature, was a frontier to be conquered, an elemental force to be reined in" (125). This topic was no less contentious in the thirties when Nabokov composed *The Gift*. To Nabokov, who as a young man had lost not only his father, but also his homeland and direct ties to his culture, such a pursuit rang false. To abandon his father's memory would have been tantamount to the betrayal of a cultural heritage that had nurtured his artistic development. Likewise, Fyodor is free to choose a new literary, affilial father to replace the filial one, like Stephen, but he refuses to do so. He possesses the talent to transmogrify Pushkin or Shakespeare's legacies, again like Stephen and Krug do, but he respects the inviolability of those figures whom he considers his forefathers, whether biological or not. Finally, in his encounter

with the ghost of the past, he overcomes his limitations, while Krug and Alexander Chernyshevsky unravel and Stephen remains in a struggle with himself and with history.

In all these ways we see how Nabokov actively, enthusiastically, and regularly engaged Joyce's ideas. Despite what Nabokov would have his readers believe, to his credit much of what he learned from his Irish contemporary came in the form of what *not to do*. The Joycean lessons in *The Gift* and *Bend Sinister* demonstrate Nabokov's ability to transform others' creations into something worthy of the appellation "Nabokovian." His hero Fyodor may be viewed in this light as a confident reply to Stephen, the anti-paternal artist. Like Olesha, Nabokov could only respond to Joyce in a manner representative of his position. Unlike his Soviet coeval, Nabokov was able to elect (or disavow) a heritage freely in emigration. He did, in fact, gradually associate himself with the Anglophone literary tradition more and more as the years passed. However, the burdens of the past weighed heavy. The responsibility to preserve an endangered culture drove many of Nabokov's actions, including his portrayal of Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev as the living embodiment of artistic ideas opposed to those championed by Dedalus.

Chapter 3 — Andrei Bitov: In Search of Lost Fathers

O Pushkin!

О Пушкин!..

– Bitov, *Pushkin House*

What does he need it for?? A souvenir? Found himself a Joyce!
That puffed-up, unreadable Irishman particularly irritated
Urbino. Yes, indeed! Joyce himself stole the razor!

Зачем она ему?? Сувенир? Нашел себе Джойса! Этот
надутый нечитабельный ирландец особенно раздражал
Урбино. Да-да! Бритву украл именно Джойс!

– Bitov, *The Symmetry Teacher*

INTRODUCTION

Back in the Soviet Union of the late 1930s and 1940s, Joyce had become anathema to the state and, thus, a topic broached only in negative terms. Neil Cornwell notes that a series of articles produced in 1937 by Rashel' Miller-Budnitskaia and Abel' Startsev marked the decline of Joyce criticism until Stalin's death nearly twenty years later (111-12). A notable exception, though one that aligns with general critical trends, is Andrei Platonov's review of Karel Čapek's *The War with the Newts*. Here, Platonov argues that Joyce and Proust contributed to the "liquidation of humanity" by treating life and their characters as if they were atoms in an experiment (quoted in Genieva, *"Russkaia odisseia"* 100-1).[134] In other words, Joyce allegedly countered the positivist worldview propagated by the Soviet machine *and* engaged in formalist experimentation at odds with Socialist Realism. These two claims, of course, were not

[134] On the one hand, Platonov was, of course, a Soviet author writing in the 1930s. On the other, he himself consistently addressed what might be called the "liquidation of humanity" in the Soviet Union; see, for example, *Chevengur* (1927-28) and *The Foundation Pit* (1930), in which people of many different backgrounds endure severe degradation. Despite all the foibles in mankind he highlights throughout his fiction, particularly *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*, Joyce remains an optimist; one need only recall the end of *Ulysses*: "Yes" (644). All further citations from *Ulysses* refer to Joyce 1986.

particularly original by this point in time. Other publications that referred to Joyce were likewise hostile or extremely cautious. Startsev's obituary of Joyce in 1941, for instance, acknowledged his position in world literature but maligned *Finnegans Wake* as an artistic failure.

And then the critics fell silent. Following the many attacks on Joyce in the early to mid-1930s, the rise of high Stalinism, and increasingly stringent proclamations regarding the role of literature in Soviet society, Joyce disappeared from the public sphere in Russia until roughly 1955.[135] Naturally, interested parties continued to access Joyce in the intervening years. Anna Akhmatova recalls having read *Ulysses* jointly with Osip Mandelstam in 1937, she in the original and he in German translation (quoted in Genieva, *"Russkaia odisseia"* 112). Lidiia Chukovskaia's memoirs about her friend include several more conversations regarding Joyce: "I read *Ulysses* last winter," Akhmatova reported to Chukovskaia in February 1939. "I read it four times before I defeated it. A remarkable book" (quoted in Genieva, *"Russkaia odisseia"* 114). A year and a half later, Akhmatova had apparently read it twice more and, only afterward, did everything become clear to her. In 1941, Chukovskaia shared *Dubliners* with Akhmatova. The poet initially found the collection weak, though she was fascinated with how Joyce reused characters and themes in *Ulysses*. This, Akhmatova felt, constituted exactly the same technique she was developing in *Poem without a Hero*. It also stands to note that she quotes *Ulysses* in an epigraph to her *Requiem*: "You cannot leave your mother an orphan" (*Sobranie* 21).[136] In short, Akhmatova's statements show that Joyce continued to seep into the Russian cultural consciousness and works written for the drawer in these Soviet twilight years. A taboo, an artifact from a quickly fading era, and, most dangerously, an enemy to state-endorsed culture,

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[135] A brief, unsigned entry on Joyce appeared in the second edition of the *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* in 1952 (Cornwell 113).

[136] Cf. Joyce's "He could not leave his mother an orphan" (339). Akhmatova later used this same line as the epigraph to "Shards" (*Cherepki*).

Joyce also quickly became a symbol of an alternative path for writers who sought means of expression beyond the tenets of Socialist Realism.

These developments bring us to the post-war, post-Stalin period. With the relaxed strictures of the Thaw, it once more became permissible to mention Joyce's name and even to study his work. Even though the same kinds of *de rigueur* attacks persisted, the importance of recognizing Joyce as a forerunner of European Modernism and, thus, providing a somewhat more balanced perspective became more common.[137]

POINTS OF CONTACT

At this stage Andrei Bitov comes into the picture. Born in 1937, Bitov began writing in the mid-1950s while studying at the Leningrad Mining Institute's Geology Prospecting Department. During this time he found himself part of the generation of writers that most directly benefited from the Thaw, as both forbidden Russian classics and Western modernists became more readily available.[138] Joyce, Hemingway, and the others who arrived belatedly to Russia received a welcome reception and quickly found their places among writers of Bitov's generation whose works became infused with a complex of influences. While it would take several more years for new translations of Joyce to appear in the Soviet Union[139] and for the Irish

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[137] See Cornwell's *James Joyce and the Russians*, especially pages 113-117 in the section "The Post-Stalin Period: Cautious Reinstatement," for a more detailed account of Joyce's critical reception in the 1950s and 1960s. This period is particularly important to our present analysis of Bitov. As Cornwell's book provides a cogent overview of the historical-critical background, in the remainder of the present chapter we will place our focus squarely on Bitov and his writings. See also Tall 2004 for a condensed history of Joyce's reception in Russia during this period, as well as more generally.

[138] Bitov himself experienced something similar when *Pushkin House* finally appeared in Russia in 1987, nine years after it had been published abroad by Ardis. When asked by Aleksandr Mikhailov about this issue, his "competition" with Platonov, Nabokov, and others, Bitov does not answer the question directly (87). See also Latynina and Lipovetskii 1991 for comments on Bitov's reception during the late 1980s.

[139] A reprint of the 1937 edition of *Dublintsy* [*Dubliners*] appeared in 1966, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was finally published in a Russian translation by Mariia Bogoslovskaia-Bobrova in *Innostrannaia literatura* in 1976.

writer to be integrated fully, Bitov, who understands English,[140] eagerly took in all these new possibilities whether through direct or indirect means.

In the previous two chapters, we have stressed the importance of reading Joyce's role in the work of Russian authors within the context of their place and time. Viktor Erofeev writes in a review of *Pushkin House* that "it is impossible to enter the same novel twice. A novel flows though time and the reader's perception" (203).[141] He describes the experience of a single imagined reader; however, his point pertains to the broader changes in cultural values that generations undergo in any nation. This framework helps explain each writer's individual choices, for example the types of allusions made and his reading and selection of particular themes from Joyce. Finding himself amid the turbulent changes of the early Soviet era, Olesha felt drawn to Joyce's project in *Ulysses*, yet considered this goal unreachable. He could not overcome the historical circumstances that prevented him from taking on another literary father figure and rearranging his cultural identity. History, on the other hand, freed Nabokov; inspired by the tragedies of his exile, his father's death, and his departure from Russian culture, he used a modified Joycean model to reconstruct his identity, the past, and literature itself.

Thus, what was "authentic" and spoke to older Russian writers, as well as Joyce for that matter, is significantly different for Bitov and later authors like him. This fact can of course be explained in terms of changing historical and cultural realities. Late to the modernist experiment, he recognizes that Soviet policies disrupted literature's natural progression: "It wasn't important if these books were written and published twenty, thirty years ago — they were perceived now,"

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[140] Galina Griffiths mentions that in an interview with Bitov he described his English education at a special school to her (18).

[141] Erofeev here refers to the famous dictum attributed to Heraclitus. Incidentally, Joseph Brodsky often made use of the same idea, particularly with regard to his possible return to St. Petersburg. See, for example, Volkov (p. XXI) and Gross (p. 274-5).

he remarks in the commentary to *Pushkin House*, referring to the influx of texts that appeared after Stalin's death: "Remarque's *Three Comrades* was a phenomenon of 1956, not 1930. The 'Lost Generation,' which had burst forth with its novels in 1929, was us" (369-70).[142] Moreover, the weight of literary history places a burden upon Bitov as a mid-twentieth century writer. His texts repeatedly illustrate the psychological struggle inherent in such an experience. In this way, the goals that Joyce and Nabokov could set for themselves—electing a literary forefather, restructuring literary history in one's image, and competing with the past to overcome it—are no longer applicable to Bitov's situation. He instead engages with Joyce, his texts, and his ideas in works such as *Pushkin House* (1964-71), "Pushkin's Photograph (1799-2099)" (1987), and *The Symmetry Teacher* (2008) as part of his efforts to discover a means out of his perceived belatedness.

Whereas critics have repeatedly noted the connections between Nabokov's and Joyce's fiction, relatively scant attention has been placed on the role of Joyce in Bitov's work. Ann Komaromi remarks as late as 2005: "The importance of the respective cityscapes […] serves as an obvious point of comparison between [*Pushkin House*] and *Ulysses*, a work Modest Platonovich dangles in front of Lyova, although I have not encountered extended consideration of the parallels" ("Window" 96). This fact is puzzling given the various explicit references to Joyce throughout Bitov's novel, not to mention the implicit ones. Before proceeding with a close reading of these allusions and Joyce's impact on Bitov more broadly, it would be worth examining what others have noted and Bitov's own statements on the matter.

[142] All further references to *Pushkin House* (*Pushkinskii dom*) refer to the version included in the second volume of the *Imperiia v chetyrekh izmereniiakh* edition (1996), which features all additions to the novel including Bitov's commentary and the supplement to the commentary, "Scraps" ("*Obrezki*").

Susan Brownsberger writes in her afterward to the Ardis translation of *Pushkin House* that "Bitov's literary stance is as much as a response to Joyce and Nabokov as it is to the traditional Russian classics" (360). Her comment touches on a key point. In a novel infused so systematically with various traces of Russian literature—epigraphs, themes, situations, names—it would be easy to downplay the presence of Western modernist models. If *Pushkin House* is the museum-novel its narrator claims, it is certainly not without its foreign borrowings.[143] Indeed, Irina Skoropanova writes that Bitov uses Joyce's name, along with many others, mostly Russian, "as a cultural symbol" ("Klassika" 127). While the allusions to Russian literature, whether classical or contemporary, inform much of Bitov's thematics, Western writers, including Joyce among the foremost, contribute a great deal, too.

Yury Karabchievsky's landmark 1972 essay "*Tochka boli*" (Point of pain) also includes Joyce in a list of potential influences on Bitov. Among Gogol, Dostoevsky, Dickens, the "obligatory" Proust, and others, Joyce is said to belong to a "chain of influence" (200).[144] Constructing such a catalog, Karabchievsky jokes, provides "peace of mind [and] creates the illusion of clarity and completeness" (200). Having described Bitov's themes and characterizations with great acumen, his comments on influences and the expected analysis of Bitov's style imply his preference for, perhaps, more concrete matters. All things considered, the critic's skepticism toward such cursory comparisons is warranted; claims of influence should be

[143] Within *Pushkin House* Bitov refers explicitly to Hemingway (130, 355, 370) and Dumas (11). Other studies that analyze non-Russian intertextual links in Bitov's work include Baker (Proustian allusions in *Pushkin House*), Barta 1998 (classical motifs in "Penelope"), Brownsberger 2007 (parallels with Dante in *The Monkey Link*), Chances 1993 (situation rhymes with Dickens and Proust in *Pushkin House*), Ermilov ("One County" as a journey story à la Sterne), Komaromi 2005 (Bitov's general interest in the West), Ronald Meyer 1986 (Dickens and Dumas in *Pushkin House*), and Shaw (*The Three Musketeers* in *Pushkin House*).

[144] Solomon Volkov assembles a similar roster of "more or less direct influences": Proust, Joyce, and Nabokov (524).

clearly delineated within cultural contexts, and the manner in which an "influenced" writer modifies what he borrows must be analyzed more thoroughly. As Harold Bloom notes, "cultural belatedness demands the remedy of misprision, or creative misreading," a statement particularly relevant in Bitov's case ("Introduction" 4). Within *Pushkin House* at least, intertextuality frequently serves as a way for the author to work through his own position in Russian literature.

Bitov himself addresses the issue of influence throughout his commentary to *Pushkin House*. Written after the novel proper and initially intended to extend the conversation between character and author begun at the end of *Pushkin House*, Bitov's commentary provides page-by-page notes on the realia of Leva's life, as well as more metafictional topics. At one point Bitov announces, seemingly with tongue firmly in cheek, that Pierre Benoit was the only writer who had a "direct influence" on him, that he remains "exceptionally sensitive and bluntly honest" on this subject, and that he admits to everything that must be admitted (369). Soon after, though, before discussing Proust, Dostoevsky, and Nabokov, he proclaims, "it would be foolish to deny influences" (387). What bother him are accusations of "direct imitation" (387). This distinction is crucial when discussing Joyce's place in *Pushkin House*. It would be difficult to accuse Bitov of aping Joyce in terms of style or language. Instead, Bitov introduces and manipulates themes, characterization, devices, images, and ideas adapted from Joyce in order to further his own purposes. For instance, Bitov expands his deconstruction of the "fathers and sons" theme by referring not only to Turgenev but also to Joyce.

In his commentary Bitov develops a fascinating and complex understanding of belatedness that connects directly to his reading of Joyce. He says that he "realizes perfectly that secondariness [*vtorichnost'*] is not simple repetition, that it's possible to be secondary and not know that you're repeating, that an influence can be caught even from the air, not only from a

book you have read" (386). Bitov expressed a similar view in an interview with Vitaly Amursky in which he described how young Leningrad writers like him underwent a "self-education," when they would catch "out of the air" or "by chance" a "bit of culture, a means, a method" (38).[145] For these reasons, and because literature is "neither a sport, nor a science," two different writers can strive toward very similar goals without realizing it (386). Bitov also writes that "geniuses as a rule have not invented new things but *synthesized* what was accumulated until their time" (386, my italics). If perhaps it seems that Bitov protests too much, his statements certainly do reflect an anxiety stemming from literary history's amassed weight. Bitov cannot be the first to describe the tragedy of father-son conflict or the search for an alternative father. His texts will always be read in the context of what preceded them. Nonetheless, what he contributes to this theme, among many others, builds upon what has come before—Pushkin, Turgenev, Nabokov, Joyce—*and* ultimately establishes a new line of thought. If he is "influenced" by Joyce or if an idea from the "air" entered his fiction, he simultaneously transforms these elements into something new by recombining them and contributing his own experience to the tradition. This experience was that of the "post-" generation: post-Stalin, post-Thaw, and post-history.

In addition, we must as before consider how *Ulysses* in particular pervaded the "air" even in the Soviet Union. Joyce enjoyed ubiquity in literary circles of the 1920s during Olesha's time,

[145] Here we might pause to comment on the parallel stories of Bitov and Joseph Brodsky, a subject Amursky raises in another interview. Both were born in Leningrad—Bitov on May 27, 1937, Brodsky on May 24, 1940—but as Bitov comments, such a difference of three years and three days was quite "significant" at the end of the fifties despite their similar interests, involvement in the same circles, and the fact that they took their literary bearings from Leningrad (50). They maintained their friendship until Brodsky's death in 1996, though it was not without its frictions. For example, Bitov recalls a chance meeting with Brodsky after having negotiated an advance on *Pushkin House*. The latter, commenting wryly on the book ("Not a bad title"), (falsely) informed Bitov that he had received a postcard from Nabokov praising one of his *poemas* (50-1). This relationship likewise shares interesting parallels with the complicated one between Joyce and Yeats. For instance, both poets were awarded the Nobel Prize (in 1923 and 1987, respectively) and all shared a special literary relationship with their native city.

and it would seem the same situation pertained in the 1960-70s following his resurgence throughout the Thaw. In his interview with Amursky, for instance, Bitov relates that his generation's awareness of literature from the 1920s arrived in a very paradoxical manner: "For example, I know now that I perceived Joyce's existence through translations of S[herwood] Anderson, that is, indirectly" (39). This not uncommon experience resulted in Bitov becoming aware of authors, at least initially, because of both the excitement that surrounded their names and their impact upon others. Discussions of texts and piecemeal access to them encouraged his generation to discover new possibilities in writing. Bitov continues: "It's paradoxical to imagine that I read even the Gospel for the first time at 27, that is, already as an established writer. But, when I read the Gospel, did I really not know them? I knew them" (39). Such a strange experience, according to Bitov, was typical of the epoch.

This process of delayed familiarization aligns with Bitov's understanding of "influences" as something synthesized, transitory, and often indirect. Suddenly exposed to an aerial influence, the traces of an author on everyone's lips, Bitov would eventually adopt similar ideas, refashioning them through the creative act. His novel, *Pushkin House*, therefore represents a disorientating amalgamation of sources. I. P. Smirnov, in an interview with Stanislav Savitsky, defines *Pushkin House* not only as an "intertextual novel, but a novel about intertextuality" (Savitskii 469). Indeed, Manfred Pfister "'meta-text' […] a text about texts or textuality, an auto-reflective and auto-reflective text, which thematizes its own textual status and the devices on which it is based" (215). A complex of foreign—in both senses of the word—elements makes up *Pushkin House*'s very architecture. Joyce contributes to this novel a group of themes and images that Bitov ably manipulates in his dialogue with his Irish predecessor.

Also speaking with Savitsky, Bitov explains that the idea of a "hypernovel"[146] came to him in the 1960s when he heard, even if only "by hearsay" about the Western modernist experience: "For example, about *Ulysses*. I understood that it's possible to write one day, like *War and Peace*, that a new psychologism exists, a new antihero" (Savitskii 476).[147] These newly imported narrative techniques and devices drawn from writers including Joyce would allow Bitov to shake the foundations of Russian literature.

On the subject of the parallels between Joyce's work and his own, Bitov remains somewhat coy. For example, in the 1994 essay "Three Plus One: On the 150th Anniversary of *The Three Musketeers*" he describes his experience as a graduate student at the Gorky Institute of World Literature. Having chosen to write an essay entitled "On Dumas's Intellectualism," Bitov considered his work pioneering: "[…] that's what I thought, already having completed my first postmodern, according to contemporary scholars, novel and finding myself not reading Joyce… [but] reading the novel *The Forty-Five* [*Guardsmen*]" (*Novyi* 39). He goes on to say that he cleverly observed modernist tendencies in Dumas. From statements such as this one, it is difficult to tell exactly what Bitov meant by his not reading Joyce in 1972. He suggests that contrary to what would be expected he had moved *beyond* Joyce by burrowing further into the past, into Dumas's era, and finding some of the roots of Modernism there.[148]

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[146] Although Bitov does not explain what he means by "hypernovel," he likely has in mind texts that reject a linear plot in favor of multiple, often overlapping, storylines and that are extremely metatextual. Examples include Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963), and Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler…* (1979).

[147] The "one day (in the life) of…" trope heralded in large part by *Ulysses* found a welcome home in Russian literature from Valentin Kataev's *Vremia,vpered!* (*Time, Forward*, 1933) and Solzhenitsyn's *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (frequently translated as *One Day* in the Life *of Ivan Denisovich*, 1962) to Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (written 1969-70) and Vladimir Sorokin's more recent *Den' oprichnika* (*Day of the Oprichnik*, 2006).

[148] Komaromi, on the other hand, suggests that Bitov may have been "commenting here on what his generation's experience of foreign literature was really like, as opposed to how it was mythologized" ("Window" 98).

For this to be the case, of course, Bitov must have been familiar with Joyce to some degree. In an interview with E. Shklovsky from 1990 he describes how a fervor for a different brand of literary education that involved several different generations marked his early years as a writer. Established figures such as Lidiia Ginzburg, one of his mentors,[149] and Mikhail Slonimsky invited Bitov and other young writers to their homes and exposed them to new ideas and authors. Ginzburg, who wrote on Joyce on several occasions, would likely have discussed such a major twentieth-century figure with her disciple. The commentary to *Pushkin House*, provides tangential evidence of such a possibility: "L. Ia. Ginzburg in a conversation led the author [Bitov] to these considerations regarding a comparison of L. Tolstoy and Proust" (374). It seems unlikely that Ginzburg's views on Joyce would not have appeared in their conversations, particularly as Joyce's name was frequently mentioned alongside Proust's.[150]

Among his contemporaries, Sergei Vol'f introduced Bitov to a great deal. Vol'f, "who could effortlessly [*po zapakhu*] understand how Joyce wrote," led him to "guess who Proust and Joyce were by one of his intonations" (*My* 5). Bitov continues: "I will write a story, and Iasha Vin'kovetsky will read it and say, 'That was in Olesha.' Or 'That's Sherwood Anderson.' I read Sherwood Anderson; I like him, although I don't have a clue that I receive Joyce through him.

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[149] See Chances 1993 (pp. 8-9) for a concise explanation of Ginzburg's intellectual impact on Bitov. See also Ginzburg's interview "Pole napriazheniia" for her remarks on Bitov and Aleksandr Kushner.

[150] Ginzburg's comments on Joyce can be found in both her critical works as well as her journals. In a note from the 1920-30s, Ginzburg observes that Joyce's attempts to capture the free, chaotic, and dizzying flow of human thought ultimately failed (*Chelovek* 172). She later elaborated on this same issue throughout her classic study *On Psychological Prose* (1971/1977). Internal speech, according to Ginzburg, is much less structured and focused on the transmission of information between two individuals; therefore, Joyce's devices, such as Molly's soliloquy, strike Ginzburg as inaccurate (308). (Her critique recalls Nabokov's. Bitov himself rarely employs stream of consciousness, largely limiting himself to free indirect discourse.) Elsewhere, on the subject of Joyce's availability to Russian readers, Ginzburg in 1954 produced a common diagnosis: "Strange aberrations are not subject only to people's age but to the chronology of books, too. The French novel of twenty years ago is a novelty. Proust is a contemporary writer. Joyce is contemporary to the point that we are still preparing [*sobiraemsia*] to read him" (*Zapisnye* 312-13). Finally, along with analyses of other writers including Proust and Kafka, Ginzburg devotes a few paragraphs to Stephen and Bloom in *On the Literary Hero* (pp. 12, 32, 137).

Thus some information came through all the time" (5). Even if by paradoxical means, hearsay, or filtered channels, Joyce became a significant presence in Bitov's literary universe.

Bitov provides some further insight into his knowledge of Joyce directly in *Pushkin House*. At the beginning of his mini-essay on influences, he states, "The author doesn't know French, and he hasn't read or seen *Finnegans Wake* (he's not alone)" (386). Of course, the elephant that remains firmly entrenched in the room is *Ulysses*. With all the other references to *Ulysses* in *Pushkin House*, it seems self-evident that the author *had* seen and likely *had* read Joyce's most famous novel. Bitov knows it at least well enough to provide versions and variants of many of Joyce's themes and images throughout his own text. The careful reading of *Pushkin House* that follows below suggests this crucial point of contact.

BITOV READING JOYCE

By now it should be clear that Joyce did indeed figure prominently in Bitov's thinking throughout the composition of *Pushkin House* and in the formation of its thematics. Harold Baker has explicated a similar situation with regard to Proust. He analyzes the "covert" Proustian "subtexts or intertexts of Bitov's novel" as a means to better understand Leva's "dynamics of identity" (604-5). According to Baker, "*Pushkin House* is pervaded with the pressure of the past, as this both causes the difficulty of achieving a distinct, integral identity (personal or literary) and, on the other hand, constitutes the field or system of values within which such identity is projected" (605). In other words, Leva's attempts to understand his personal identity run parallel with the author's (and text's) efforts to find his (and its) place in history.

This third chapter aims to uncover both the overt and covert Joycean subtexts of *Pushkin House*. To take but one larger example, the narrative thrust of the novel's first part ("Fathers and Children"), and much of the third ("The Poor Horseman"), deals with Leva's struggle to come to

terms with his personal lineage and with Russia's literary history. This feature of *Pushkin House* naturally dovetails with Stephen's own experience in *Ulysses*. As Leva entertains elaborate ideas regarding his own parentage, he also develops similar ones in his critical writings on Russian poets much like Stephen does with Shakespeare. For all these reasons, the intertextual links between *Pushkin House* and *Ulysses* merit a more thorough critical investigation than has been delivered.

Ellen Chances defines one of Bitov's primary goals as follows:

> Bitov, in *Pushkin House*, plots the process whereby he, as a writer, is breaking way from the authorities of previous literature that, through Bitov's own consciousness of their superiority, must have a deleterious effect upon his own individual creative, original gifts. He must solve Zeno's paradox by refusing to be in the race. *Pushkin House* is the story of his revolution, his rebellion against his "fathers," and his ultimate stepping away from that rebellion. (237)

The connections to Joyce function as part of this learning process for both author and character. By deploying many different allusions to Joyce, Bitov engages in a literary exchange that directly interacts with Joyce's ideas and illuminates his own responses more clearly by contrast. The Joycean intertext in *Pushkin House* makes up only one layer of a very complex work, but it remains a critical, if as yet understudied, one that spotlights the sources of Bitov's anxiety of influence and Leva's character arc. The reader witnesses Leva, at one level, attempt to restructure his past and falter under the pressures of historical reality. At a higher level, the author-narrator—A.B., Bitov's stand-in—escapes from the version of "Zeno's paradox" that plagues him in part because of Joyce's existence. Leva struggles with the phantoms of his culture's past and his ties to his family, while, in what might be termed a "Russian response" to Harold Bloom, the author-narrator realizes he need not dethrone "canonical figures" to achieve

his own greatness (Sukhanova 13).[151] Nor does he need to equate himself with them, a task Leva pursues single-mindedly. (A similar theme can be observed in "Pushkin's Photograph," to which we will later briefly turn our attention.) Bitov's sense of belatedness and the aesthetic hierarchies championed by his predecessors drive much of this anxiety throughout *Pushkin House*; it informs Leva's project and the author-narrator's deconstruction of the plot. Bitov's reply to Joyce, then, represents his engagement with the West, just as much as a means to reconnect his present with the modernist past.

Mark Lipovetsky writes that Russian "postmodernism"[152] grew out of "two contradictory tendencies": "On the one hand, there was the need to return to modernism, to use the aesthetic arsenal of the classics; this is why the works of Russian postmodernists display so many features characteristic of modernist aesthetics. On the other hand, artists gradually recognized of the impossibility of 'restoring' modernism after decades of totalitarian aesthetics" (8). These

[151] Again, a comparison with Brodsky can be instructive. David Bethea terms Brodsky's primary poetic technique "triangular vision": "His vision can be called triangular in that a Russian source, say Mandelstam, is subtly implanted within a Western source, say Dante, so that each source comments on the other, but as they do so they also implicate a third source—Brodsky himself" (49). In this sense, Brodsky, too, does not "dethrone" forebears but uses them to bolster his own position.

[152] While our aim here is not to determine *Pushkin House*'s generic status, a few comments are in order. The novel's place as a "classic" of postmodernism is debatable. Lipovetsky names it one along with Sokolov's *A School for Fools*. While not postmodernist in the style of, say, Viktor Pelevin or Vladimir Sorokin, Bitov's novel certainly contains some fundamental elements of what has been called postmodernist literature and paved the way for this development in Russian literature. Moreover, Pfister highlights the connections between Postmodernism and intertextuality: "Postmodernist intertextuality within a framework of poststructuralist theory means that here intertextuality is not just used as one device amongst others, but is foregrounded, displayed, thematized and theorized as a central constructional principle" (214). He attributes this tendency to the rise of literary studies and academia—two key themes of *Pushkin House*—in the latter half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, it may be more fruitful to consider *Pushkin House*, as well as novels such as *A School for Fools*, in light of metamodernist theory. As described by David James and Urmila Seshagiri, metamodernism "regards modernism as an era, an aesthetic, and an archive" and metamodernist writers "extend, reanimate, and repudiate twentieth-century modernist literature" (88-9). Both Bitov and Sokolov can be said to access the (Russian) modernist archive—a both real and imagined literary space—as a means to craft new forms of literature.

operations result in "paralogical"[153] compromises. Bitov's project—an escape from the nightmare of literary history—embodies exactly this paradoxical conflict of interests, and his novel features all these key elements. In his (and Leva's) attempts to recoup the past, namely nineteenth-century Russian culture and the modernist era (Formalism, Blok, etc.), he realizes the impossibility of completing this major task. Pieces of past culture enter the narrative in various forms—chapter headings, copious allusions, and so forth—but are transformed within his new context. The result is a new type of fiction and a new style, one that remains *aware* of the past even as it treats the present moment on its own terms without a constant glance backward. John Barth, in "The Literature of Replenishment," puts this same conflict in related terms: "My ideal postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back" (203).

As will be shown, the Joycean subtext in *Pushkin House* emphasizes this very process. *Pushkin House* repeatedly alludes to and modifies elements from *Ulysses*, a high modernist text; all the while Bitov's distrust of stable cultural hierarchies—a product of his era—elicits what Lipovetsky calls the "formation of a new, 'nonclassical,' 'chaosmic' system within an artistic whole" and challenges the Joycean model as well (33). Through *Pushkin House*'s various allusions to *Ulysses*, Leva's Dedalus-like endeavor to locate a literary and filial father breaks down as gaps in the historical narrative have distorted his perspective. On the other hand, the author-narrator implicitly realizes that the goals that Joyce could set for himself are no longer

[153] Lipovetsky adopts Jean-Francois Lyotard's terminology here.

applicable, but in the process he manages to produce a new model for emulation by stepping outside of the bounds of fiction as exemplified by Joyce.[154]

CHOOSING A LOCATION: TIME AND PLACE IN *PUSHKIN HOUSE* AND *ULYSSES*

While a comparative reading of *Pushkin House* and *Ulysses* will illuminate the ways in which they overlap in theme, characterization, and images, the structural similarities shared by the two novels speak to Bitov's intertextual project. For example, Andrei Ar'ev has compared Joyce's description of a single day in *Ulysses* to Bitov's focus on a particular day/night (Nov. 7, 1967) throughout the third section of *Pushkin House* (quoted in Savitskii 460). Komaromi rightly indicates that in fact *three*[155] dates figure prominently in the novel, not only that momentous November day but those surrounding it as well ("Window" 96). In any case, both authors hone in on a brief period of time in order to reveal the dramatic expanses of seemingly ordinary lives in Leningrad and Dublin. These short time spans allow them to explore their protagonists' personalities in greater detail, as the two gargantuan books serve as close psychological portraits thanks in part to the manner in which the characters' minds expand and contract through memories, associations, and imagined scenarios.

Beyond this temporal component, Komaromi also raises the aforementioned "importance of the respective cityscapes (Petersburg/Dublin)" as another structural correspondence between the two novels that has not been examined ("Window" 96). While Bitov certainly draws upon the

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[154] Such an experiential approach to writing is typical of Bitov's fiction, particularly in his many travelogues and stories about writers at work. Irina Skoropanova suggests that Bitov, drawing on modernist models, "seemingly doesn't know what will turn out [and] in the process of creating his work contemplates the laws, methods, and devices of literary creativity" ("Klassika" 129). Similarly, Richard Borden argues that in many stories Bitov shows how an author can "'discover meaning' in the process of writing the very text the reader holds" (*Art* 308). On a different level, through "rewriting" another text such as *Ulysses*, the writer (and reader) comes to understand his situation with greater acumen.

[155] Ol'ga Bogdanova observes that the number three plays a prominent symbolic role throughout the novel (28-9).

Petersburg Text tradition to construct his version of Leningrad,[156] some noteworthy Joycean tendencies can be observed as well. The novels' respective cities—and by extension countries—embody Leva's and Stephen's desires, fears, and anxieties.

In the "Eumaeus" episode, Stephen and Bloom sit in a cabman's shelter, drinking coffee and discussing various topics, among them the latter's socialist vision for Ireland. After Bloom explains that Stephen could work as a poet in his utopian state, since both "the brain and the brawn" will "belong to Ireland," the young writer takes offense:

> —You suspect, Stephen retorted with a sort of a half laugh, that I may be important because I belong to the *faubourg Saint Patrice* called Ireland for short.
> —I would go a step farther, Mr Bloom insinuated.
> —But I suspect, Stephen interrupted, that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me. (527)

Stephen implies with his derisive comments that his writing will transform Ireland, not the other way around. He proposes that whatever he eventually writes about Dublin will come to be considered more *real* than the actual city. Both country and former acquaintances will then be "subject" to his call (McMichael 155-6).[157]

Speaking about himself and his family's long history in St. Petersburg, Bitov has said, "[the city] is the main influence there is in me. That is why Joseph Brodsky often emphasizes, and my generation maintains as well, that it is the city that formed and reared us" (Rich 28).[158] Perhaps partly for this perceived power of Petersburg/Leningrad over the writer, Leva's relationship to his city is the opposite of Stephen's in *Ulysses*. The cityscape and, by extension, the imposing presence of a country that cannot "belong" to Leva constantly remind him of his secondary nature. As the author-narrator describes it in a footnote, "*Russian literature and*

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[156] See Toporov and Lotman on the Petersburg Text. See Pesonen and Mondry for Bitov's contribution to that tradition. (A slightly modified version of Pesonen's essay was published in Russian the same year.)
[157] Cf. "If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call?" (339).
[158] Cf. Brodsky's essays "Less Than One" and "A Guide to a Renamed City" in *Less Than One*.

Petersburg (Leningrad) and Russia are all, one way or another, PUSHKIN HOUSE without its curly-haired resident" (342). This symbol ties everything together: literature, city, and state. As such, Leva feels that he can only be a copy or, at best, a descendent, never an innovator in his own right, whether as a reader or writer. He therefore believes that Russia, which is equivalent to Leningrad and Russian literature, can never "belong to him." Rather, *he* belongs to it, the city (334).

This inability first becomes evident when Leva realizes that he does not understand the city in its entirety (unlike Stephen): "With surprise he caught himself thinking that very likely he hadn't left the old city once in his entire life; he *lived* in that museum, not one of his daily routes lay beyond the limits of the museum avenue-corridors and hall-squares" (52). To extend the metaphor, Leva finds himself to be nothing more than an exhibit on display in the city-museum; he lacks the sense of control, confidence, and knowledge that allow Stephen to proclaim dominion over Dublin, Ireland, and Irish literature. Instead, his scope remains limited, while Stephen roams across the entire city and scans its expanses. The roots of Leva's problems here lie in his personal faults (egocentrism), the turmoil within his family (generational inheritances and a home plagued by betrayal), and idealized visions of the outside world. Stephen's experience features all of these factors as well; however, Joyce's protagonist wills himself to power, while Leva permits himself to be blinded.

Leva's limited familiarity with the city mirrors his equally restricted mental capacity for empathy, a trait that prevents him from growing as an individual aware of others' feelings and needs. Without the emotional maturity to see beyond his own personal interests, Leva will moreover never come to a better understanding of his city, nation, or literature. Stephen, on the

contrary, believes that he understands the Irish far better than they understand themselves. This major difference, then, paradoxically inhibits the potential for the city to belong to Leva.

One of the rare times he overcomes such weaknesses occurs when he watches his love, Faina, walking along the embankment of the Neva with an unknown companion. For the first time in years, Leva recognizes the "real Faina," who is a "real object," not the egocentric manifestation of his selfish love (220). It is telling that Leva witnesses this scene from a window of Pushkin House and that this image of Faina is connected to the river embankment and her laughter with the "individual cobblestones" running along the street (221). Peter Barta's assessment of Joyce's descriptions of Dublin could be applied just as well to Bitov's: "Joyce's landscape contains a world of people, their habits, institutions, and culture rather than descriptions of the physical environment" (*Bely* 67). The scene in which Leva finally *sees* Faina for who she is can be counted among the rare exceptions to this general rule, thus marking its import as Leva perceives the cityscape merging with Faina's character.[159]

Additionally, Leva observes Faina's walking companion's conspicuously curly hair (220).[160] This feature elicits in Leva a series of thoughts that leads to memories of foreign magazines, but the other, unstated referent is clearly Pushkin. Thus, the "new" Faina remains associated with Pushkin, the source of many of Leva's anxieties, and with the city, which keeps him imprisoned within a limited space, and yet for at least this fleeting moment Leva transcends the boundaries set up around him. The tri-part combination of Faina, Pushkin-surrogate, and the cityscape (river, embankment, cobblestones) opens up an entirely new vista for Leva. This

[159] *Pushkin House*'s bravado opening—a description of wind traversing across Leningrad—presents another obvious exception.
[160] Bitov here uses the adjective *kudriavyi* (220) as opposed to *kurchavyi*, which is used to refer explicitly to Pushkin later in the novel (342).

perspective enlarges his emotional potential as he recognizes Faina's independence from his own desires and insecurities.

Only here, in the realm of the personal, can Leva, if only briefly, rise above the suffocating Leningrad experience. Elsewhere, he views the city as a reminder of his problems, particularly his belatedness and dependence. Indeed, Bitov's and Joyce's novels underscore the ingrained connection between urban environment and familial troubles. Barta writes that protagonists in the modernist city novel experience "personal displacement" due to an "inability to turn the city into a protective place, the metaphorical 'home,' without which human well-being is inconceivable" (*Bely* xv). At the same time, the city space moreover couples itself with the fear of family histories that plagues the young heroes. Allowing for some differences, this describes both Stephen's and Leva's experiences. Difficult situations at home produce an uncertainty in the two heroes that forces them to confront the surrounding environs. Stephen returns to Dublin from Paris only after receiving an urgent telegram: "Nother dying come home father" (35).[161] Here, as elsewhere, for Stephen the general idea of "home"—Dublin, Ireland, his "fatherland"—becomes entwined with that of death in many senses: literal, figurative, spiritual. Connected as it is to this stark reminder of his deceased mother, the home he has quit forces Stephen to face his own mortality. This confrontation, in part, leads Stephen to avoid his father's house: "I will not sleep here [the Martello tower] tonight. Home also I cannot go" (19).[162]

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[161] Joyce puns "mother" with "*an*other" and "*not*her." Stephen calls the telegram a "curiosity" for this shocking typo (35). The mistake suggests a negation of his mother as well as feelings of estrangement, resentment, and guilt related to her death.

[162] Joyce develops the family-home-death association in other oblique ways. For example, both Bloom and Molly compare Stephen to a stray dog: "The crux was it was a bit risky to bring him home as eventualities might possibly ensue […] and spoil the hash altogether as on the night he misguidedly brought home a dog (breed unknown) with a lame paw" (537) and "like the night he walked home with a dog if you please that might have been mad especially Simon Dedalus son his father such a criticiser" (632). To recall what was mentioned in chapter 2, Stephen associates dogs with death, drowning, and servitude. Molly, then, makes explicit the connection between Stephen, his father Simon Dedalus, dogs,

Stephen is just as unwilling to accept Bloom's invitation because of both the presence of a substitute father figure and the desire to find his way out from the "home" that is Ireland. Returning home—to any home—means accepting his father's supremacy, a thought which Stephen cannot tolerate and which torments Leva, too.

Instead, in his speech at the National Library, Stephen lists the "note of […] banishment from home" as one of the Bard's primary themes and takes on his elected predecessor's banishment for himself (174). Self-exile, he believes, will lead to triumph over the home that only drowns his creative promise.[163] Again, Stephen, like Leva after him, understands the concept of "home" quite broadly: it represents a culture, a history, and, most pressingly, a family. In terms of plot, Stephen's struggle against the family that binds him to stagnation and death forces him to confront the city throughout the novel, particularly in its ambiguous conclusion.

In *Pushkin House* the idea of a corrupted home troubles Leva just as much. Instead of death, however, a "resurrection" produces Leva's feelings of resentment and entrapment. Upon learning that his grandfather is still alive, he responds with anger toward his parents: "All these years grandfather was alive! This shocked Leva. He responded childishly: he flared up, shouted, became impertinent… How dare they hide it!" (39). As in *Ulysses*, the home becomes infected with the concept of death, though here in inverted form. In this way Leva begins to recognize the control his parents, particularly his father, wield over him. Their responses, that they wished to make it "easier for him in school, so that he wouldn't talk freely," well-intentioned or not, strike Leva, at least initially, as false. The reality once hidden behind his grandfather's absence

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and an unhappy home. After inspecting Stephen's body with Bloom in "Circe," Corny Kelleher says, "Well, I'll shove along. […] I've a rendezvous in the morning. Burying the *dead*. Safe *home*!" (495, my italics). Stephen will thereafter depart to Bloom's home — a symbolic death for the rebellious son and artist should he choose to remain there.

[163] Cf. Stephen's three defenses for the artist from *Portrait*: "silence, exile and cunning" (269).

reappears as suddenly as Joyce's name reappeared to Bitov's generation. Chances contrasts these lies—an elision of the truth—with the muteness of Modest Platonovich himself: "This is a life that is lived in muteness, in silence, when that is required by one's inner being, rather than a life that speaks out, distorting the meaning of words" ("Energy" 47). Whether Leva's father omits the truth or lies outright, his actions generate the same result: a corrupted worldview. Thus, the son's understanding of the city and its true expanses remains limited, as does his knowledge of Russian culture and his family's history. Leva, unlike Stephen, remains oblivious to this process until his own death.

Under the supervision of his father, Leva's world shrinks. His limited physical contact with the city represents exactly this repression. Leva, to repeat, realizes that to his surprise he has never left the confines of the old city until his ill-fated visit to Modest Platonovich. If Leningrad acts as an emblem of Russian culture and of Russia at large, then there is no way Leva can escape "belonging" to it even as he confronts it head-on when he meets his grandfather. The lies combined with personal mistakes, ensure that Leva will only perpetuate the same system of deception. At the conclusion of the novel's first part, the author-narrator, A.B., suggests in the "Italics are Mine" section that a series of "curtains" have made "*[l]ife […] separate from history, process from participant, heir from clan, citizen from man, father from son, family from work, individual from genotype, city from its inhabitants, love from the object of love*" (114-15). However, Leva's tale bespeaks an entirely different experience whereby life remains firmly entrenched in history, the heir cannot escape his family, the father controls the son through deception, and the city dominates the inhabitant. Both city and familial home become entwined by distorted truths and death, and in their respective ways both influence Leva's perception of the world. Unlike Stephen, when Leva confronts the city and this system of repression, he falters.

Finally, Leva's and Stephen's idealized view of what exists beyond the confines of their cities contribute to their struggles as well as they both look to the space *outside* of Leningrad and Dublin as potential salvation. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, they turn to Paris as a symbol of freedom. The former was once meant to travel there, while the latter fled to France to achieve his artistic goals. What Jean-Michel Rabaté writes about the depictions of Paris and Dublin in *Ulysses* applies to *Pushkin House*'s versions of Paris and Leningrad, if on a smaller scale: "From the very start, Paris has been identified with 'life', a mystical force which ought to be perceived in Dublin but remains thwarted by the general air of Irish corruption or paralysis" (50). Stephen seems to have believed that life in Paris would provide him with the proper critical (and exilic) distance necessary to master Ireland. Instead, he found only failure, capped by his father's haunting telegram. Back in Dublin, Stephen continues to doubt himself: "Fabulous artificer. The hawklike man. You flew. Whereto? Newhaven-Dieppe, steerage passenger. Paris and back. Lapwing. Icarus" (173). The allusions to Icarus underscore Stephen's awareness that he has fallen. The space—the city itself—prompts these reservations as the proximity to his family proves difficult to escape, both in a literal sense and a figurative one. His father's taunts reverberate in his mind: "My consubstantial father's voice. Did you see anything of your artist brother Stephen lately? No? Sure he's not down in Strasburg terrace with his aunt Sally? Couldn't he fly a bit higher than that, eh?" (32). Simon Dedalus mocks the idea that his son might "fly a bit higher" than Irishtown's unstately Strasbourg Terrace. Stephen may once again physically escape to Paris, but he must also overcome his posturing, his father's doubts, and Irish cultural-historical baggage before he can claim true independence.

Throughout *Pushkin House* Leva does not come close to Stephen's failed sally to Paris. When assigning Leva the task of guiding a visiting American writer around the city, his superior

remarks, "you didn't visit Paris last year, but you'll see you still will, you will!" (333).[164] Leva's perception of what exists beyond the Soviet Union (not to mention even *within* it) must be imperfect given the external political conditions that prevent him from mastering his own city, much as his visions of the outside world become either romanticized or co-opted. Soon after this conversation, Leva begins mentally preparing an article on the subject "Pushkin and Travel Abroad" (*Pushkin i zagranitsa*). He identifies with Pushkin, who never left Russia, but lacks the skill to transport himself even mentally or artistically elsewhere, as his predecessor managed to do. Despite his short-lived rebellion in the literary institute, Leva stays confined to Leningrad, the museum-city from which there is no escape, in no small measure because of his restricted mobility and thought.

For all these reasons, Leva's relationship with Leningrad remains largely submissive. His experiences mirror many of Dedalus's and reveal the latter's greater flexibility. Only after his resurrection in Part 3 does Leva realize in no uncertain terms that he belongs to the city-cum-embodied history, not the other way around:

> Oh, God, oh, God! What a city…! What a cold, brilliant joke! Unbearable! But I belong to it…entirely. It no longer belongs to anyone. But did it ever? How many people—and what people they were!—tried to attach it to themselves, themselves to it, and only expanded the abyss between the city and Evgeny, drawing no closer to it, only receding from themselves, separating from their very selves…
>
> Господи, господи! что за город!., какая холодная блестящая шутка! Непереносимо! но я ему принадлежу… весь. Он никому уже не принадлежит, да и принадлежал ли?.. Сколько людей — и какие это были люди! — пытались приобщить его к себе, себя к нему — и лишь раздвигали пропасть между градом и Евгением, к нему не приближаясь, лишь от себя удаляясь, разлучаясь с самим собой… (334)

[164] In *Lessons of Armenia* (*Uroki Armeniia*) (1967-9) Bitov's narrator compares Paris to a book that has been widely discussed, even over-discussed: "'But I don't want to read it!' you exclaim in the end. I don't want to go to Paris, I never really wanted to" (45). Despite these protestations, he continues, "They took both the book and Paris from me" (45). In *Lessons* and *Pushkin House* Paris functions as a symbol for a tantalizing, yet long ago appropriated alternative space.

For Leva, the weight of the past is too much to bear. He feels that if even the great poets who preceded him could not claim Petersburg for themselves, then what use is it trying himself? If the city of Leningrad (and particularly Pushkin House) represents Russian culture and history, then Leva places himself in a subservient position. Again, this perspective is the inverse of Stephen's. Joyce's stand-in argues that he can subsume the past by rewriting it through art and in his image; history may be a nightmare, but the artist can rouse himself by overcoming his forerunners and creating a new reality, therefore taking command of all that Dublin represents. Bitov shows through Leva's story that this conception of hierarchies is no longer applicable in his time. History had been disrupted by the Soviet cultural and political takeover. In place of rebellion, what remains for Leva instead is servitude, as links to the past have been shattered.

In true Bitovian manner, we already find ourselves near the end of the novel. We must now turn back to the beginning and proceed chronologically. Leva's various attempts at rewriting the past, as well as what Bitov accomplishes in his own right, remain to be explicated, particularly as both of these efforts draw on and refer to Joyce in many ways.[165] Bitov's dialogue with Joyce demonstrates the manner in which the creative individual may carve out a synthesis of past sources and new energies—a Pushkinian move—if one only comes to terms with the experience of belatedness. Komaromi has written eloquently about Bitov's engagement with the West. She argues that in his novel, the "residents of Pushkin House look toward the West and perceive their own location" ("Window" 98). According to her, the recognition of Western

[165] Lucia Boldrini sketches a similar picture of Joyce's relationship with Dante: "by inscribing Dante's literary theories and techniques into his text, appropriating (thieving) and transforming (metamorphosing) them for his own purposes, Joyce can be said to be implicitly proclaiming his own 'Taciia Dante'. By means of this silent silencing, however, Joyce also allows Dante's voice to resound through his work, acknowledging his source and giving a clue to one of the many (and always insufficient) poetic, structural and exegetical models for *Finnegans Wake*" (2). Bitov, in turn, does something very similar with Joyce's voice throughout *Pushkin House*.

precedents helps define one's own place. In other words, a parallax view is necessary: a combination of the native Russian perspective (first-person, as it were) and a foreign, Western (third-person) point of view on the same subject that produces another original outlook. Bitov treats his chosen modernist precedents in like fashion.

Turning now from the similar function of the city in both novels to allusions at the levels of image, character, and theme, we will continue to explore the ways Bitov engages with Joyce. Although Leva lacks the necessary self-awareness and empathy to free himself from the burdens of history, he is not a totally passive protagonist. If Leva's (and Stephen's) relationship with his city also speaks to much broader issues regarding belatedness and heritage, then how he approaches such topics as paternity, literary traditions, and alternative families directly will even more clearly illustrate the ways in which Bitov's response to *Ulysses*.

THE SECOND FATHER HYPOTHESIS: ALTERNATIVE FATHERS AND SONS

From the beginning of *Pushkin House*, questions of time, belatedness, and primacy beset Leva. The author-narrator gleefully describes Leva's experience of reading Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, the first book he ever read on his own. Proud of the fact that he chose this book rather than a simpler children's story, Leva questions some of Turgenev's choices:

> Leva considered his time better than Turgenev's in that there weren't such things in it, in that during Turgenev's time one had to be so great, gray, beautiful, and bearded in order just to write what in our time such a little (though very gifted…) boy, such as Leva, masters so well, and further, his own time was better in that precisely now he had been born, not then, precisely in this time Leva, so gifted at understanding everything so early, was born…
>
> Лева полагал, что его время лучше тургеневского тем, что этих вещей в нем нет, тем, что в то время надо было быть таким великим, седым, красивым и бородатым, чтобы написать всего лишь то, что в наше время так хорошо усваивает такой маленький (пусть и очень способный…) мальчик, как Лева, и еще тем было его время лучше, что родился он именно теперь, а не тогда, тем, что именно в нем родился Лева, такой способный все так рано понимать… (17)

Leva does possess some talent when it comes to literature, but the author-narrator's irony is palpable. Leva's confidence recalls Stephen's bold proclamations throughout *Ulysses* (as well as *A Portrait of the Artist*). Both cases, though, reveal an anxiety regarding the protagonists' place in history. Leva stresses the preeminence of his time because of his very presence, recalling the Soviet state's teleological foundations. This approach in turn leads him to question the primacy of the past and, therefore, his father(s).

The manner in which Leva manipulates his various father figures represents his most spirited attempts to rewrite time and overcome his secondary nature. Similar to Stephen with his Shakespeare theory, Leva develops a "second father hypothesis" whereby he interrogates his paternity. Leva, however, goes a step further than Stephen by supposing that Nikolai Modestovich is not really his biological father. By comparison, Joyce's hero critiques the idea of paternity as a "legal fiction" and attempts to substitute his own biological father with a literary forefather (Shakespeare); in doing so, he implies that the creative individual may create himself *ex nihilo*. Nabokov's Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, too, elects a predecessor—Pushkin—but strictly as a means to merge the biological with the literary and to come closer to both through his art. Leva, on the other hand, systematically explores the possibility that his origin has been a lie. He considers replacement father figures—Uncle Dickens, Modest Platonovich, Blank—as a means to challenge his personal history. (Literary predecessors play an equally important role in Leva's conception of paternity as evidenced by his "Three Prophets" essay, which we will analyze below.)

Leva feels estranged from his father from a very early age: "it seemed to Levushka that he didn't love his father. Ever since he could remember, he had been in love with Mama, and Mama was always and everywhere, but Father would appear for a minute, sit down at the table,

an extra without a line, and his face as if always in shadow" (18-19). This schism between generations and parents parallels that of Stephen's with Simon Dedalus. As Morris Beja notes, throughout *Ulysses* Stephen's mother acts as a "vital *presence* in his life," while his father, Simon, is "most notable as an absence" (217). This condition need not be considered a paradox as Beja suggests; rather, the father's absence drives the two protagonists' search for a replacement. They wish their fathers to resemble idealized versions of themselves instead of the real people with real faults who unnerve them. This repeated image of the absent father functions as a negative energy strangely desired that comes to define them and many of their actions.

In *Ulysses* Stephen mentions that "the man with [his] voice and [his] eyes" conceived him (32). Their corporeal likeness reminds Stephen of the similarities between himself and his father that lie beyond the surface level; for example, the physical markers—voice, eyes—are signs of an inner nature that Stephen hopes to avoid but often expresses. He is furthermore embarrassed by Simon's habit of wasting money on alcohol while his family suffers. Leva, on the other hand, has the benefit of being *dissimilar* from Nikolai Modestovich when it comes to appearances: "features, eyes, hair, ears — here they really had little in common" (21). Instead, symbolic indicators, such as intonations in his father's voice and gestures, what he considers the "authentic, elusive, true family resemblance," bother Leva (21). It is not enough to look dissimilar from his father; instead, he must also *act* differently to challenge paternity. Indeed, he seeks out other kinds of similarities to fuel his rebellion precisely because there does not seem to be any real likeness.

Perhaps hypocritically, Leva toys with a conception of paternity that takes physical likeness into consideration when it suits him. His father's perceived absence, as well as the revulsion that springs from it, leads Leva in *Pushkin House* to imagine that Uncle Dickens, an

old family friend recently returned from the camps, is actually his father. He examines a faded photograph of Uncle Dickens before a mirror and, making faces, envisions a certain resemblance (31). This twin image—a mirror reflection and a photograph—reveals the lengths to which Leva will go to deceive himself in the search for his substitute father. When it comes to disowning resemblances between himself and Nikolai Modestovich, Leva rejects the physical. However, he uses precisely this same evidence to "prove" paternity in Uncle Dickens's favor. The mirror itself suggests Leva's inability to see himself from an outsider's perspective; he cannot truly achieve this vantage point and must employ mental acrobatics to produce the desired result. In *Ulysses*, Stephen and Bloom also look into a mirror in the "Circe" episode and experience a shared vision: "*The face of William Shakespeare, beardless, appears there, rigid in facial paralysis, crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hatrack in the hall*" (463). The narratological peculiarities of this particular moment notwithstanding,[166] Joyce, too, uses the mirror image to signal a merging of spiritual father and son.[167] Bitov departs from his model, however, in deploying similar imagery but making Leva betray himself by changing the terms of his argument when convenient. This significant difference reflects the manner in which Bitov transforms the Joycean model.

Bitov uses a similar method with reference to a now familiar podiatric trope. Recalling both Joyce and Nabokov, the author-narrator focuses on his protagonist's feet and movement in a passage before his momentous meeting with his grandfather:

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[166] Do both Bloom and Stephen witness the same vision? Whose perspective is this? Is it Stephen's because he *needs* it more?

[167] Harold Bloom reads this scene as a sign of anxiety of influence: "the precursor Shakespeare mock[s] the ephebe Joyce: 'Be like me, but you presume in attempting to be too much like me. You are merely a beardless version, rigid in facial paralysis, lacking my potency and ease of countenance" ("Introduction" 5). While Bloom takes matters too far here, the reindeer's horns certainly emphasize the characters' feelings of having been usurped and cuckolded.

> A feeling of aching pity, having been conceived within Leva, did not surface; rather much more strongly he felt at that moment some unclear triumph over his father and here, at the threshold of the very study at whose doors since childhood he had switched to a whisper with his father, said unexpectedly loudly: 'Very well, Father.' His voice cut throughout all that comfortable silence and darkness and seemed to Leva himself unpleasant. Turning sharply, he stepped over the threshold; his father somehow trembled awkwardly and ran forward as if to shut the door behind Leva; his father's shadow was flung under Leva's feet, and it seemed to Leva that he stepped over his father.
>
> Чувство щемящей жалости, зародившись, так и не проявилось в Леве, а гораздо сильнее почувствовал он в этот момент некое неясное торжество над отцом и тут, на пороге того самого кабинета, у дверей которого он с детства переходил на шепот, сказал неожиданно громко: «Хорошо, отец». Голос его прорезал всю эту уютную тишину и темноту и показался самому Леве неприятным. Повернувшись резко, он перешагнул порог, отец как-то неловко покачнулся и забежал вперед как бы для того, чтобы затворить за Левой дверь, тень отца метнулась Леве под ноги, и Леве показалось, что он перешагнул отца. (43)

Bitov conveys Leva's assumed ascendancy through this image of a life-altering footstep over the shadow of the father(-past-history). He extends this theme a few pages later when the narrator uses the same wording to refer to Leva's relationship with Uncle Dickens, his first potential replacement father: "And it seemed to Leva that he stepped over Uncle Dickens as well" (47). These scenes mark a dramatic change of relations. Leva tries to render former relations null, and now he ostensibly steps into a new state of being.

On the other hand, Bitov carefully, if emphatically, underscores Leva's questionable understanding of both situations. First, the narrative adopts Leva's perspective during these key scenes: "it *seemed* to Leva that he stepped over his father" and "it *seemed* to Leva that he stepped over Uncle Dickens as well" (my italics). In a novel that deals with all types of lies and delusions, these narratological nuances place great restrictions on Leva's delusions of grandeur. The narrator introduces a similar sense of doubt through other, more symbolic means that recall Joyce, too. He challenges Leva's point of view with the image of strained feet when Leva heads to Modest Platonovich's apartment: "all his sensation became concentrated in his feet: he wore new shoes for the occasion; they pinched. His feet froze and ached, and Leva stood as if not on

his own feet but on prostheses" (53) Like Stephen's borrowed shoes in *Ulysses* ("His boots are spoiling the shape of my feet. Buy a pair"), Leva's footwear constricts his movement (173). Stephen considers the shoes he has taken on loan a mark of his self-betrayal and his dependency upon Buck Mulligan. Similarly, Leva's feeling that he stands upon "prostheses" emphasizes his disoriented state. He has taken on a role—that of the son who denounces his biological father—but cannot find his footing, so to speak. Even while his shoes and steps symbolize Leva's desire to challenge and move beyond his predecessors, they reveal a peculiar artificiality inherent to his project.

This brief scene illustrates Bitov's overall method by which he engages with Western models while altering them to reflect his own cultural-historical situation; as long as Leva struggles to change the past by finding a new father and to play into the anxiety of historical belatedness, he will fall short of his goals. In fact, the shoe/step motif only further unites Leva and his father. One of Leva's most vivid childhood memories features his father coming home and "step[ping] into a puddle with his white shoe" (19). Leva recalls how he "stared hard at his father's shoe" and the way he cleaned it afterward. Stephen and, figuratively, Leva then sport borrowed shoes. The former acknowledges the connection between his pinched feet, Mulligan, and the past, allowing him to begin transcending them. Leva fails to recognize the situation for what it truly is: an allusion to an earlier scene from his life that only the reader can bring together. The solution to his problem, Bitov suggests implicitly, will not to be found in denying one's father and, thus, playing into the system of Soviet repressions that has disrupted Russian culture. Doing so only props Leva up on "prostheses."

Leva's fixation on the idea that Nikolai Modestovich might not actually be his biological father clouds his vision to other possibilities. Just before Leva abandons his "second father

hypothesis," he turns to Uncle Dickens for advice and comfort. Unlike at previous visits, however, Leva finally perceives Uncle Dickens's personal suffering. This scene, of course, foreshadows Leva's recognition of Faina on the Neva's embankment later in the novel; his perspective expands, though only temporarily, to allow him to become aware of others' feelings and needs: "Have I really burdened him with so much?.. Uncle Dickens, father, grandfather — Uncle Dickens alone fulfilled them all" (46). He continues in a particularly Joycean vein: "And, really, what kind of father could he be to me… how could he possibly be father, son, and holy ghost?" (47). Leva comprehends that he has mixed up all his categories. Uncle Dickens has become father to Leva in relationship, grandfather in age, and ghost in miraculous return.

Stephen uses the same formulation to a different end when in "Scylla and Charybdis" he explains to his listeners how Shakespeare became father, son, and ghost all at once:

> When Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote *Hamlet* he was not the father of his own son merely but, being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson who, by the same token, never was born, for nature, as Mr Magee understands her, abhors perfection. (171)

Shakespeare, according to Stephen, played the role of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, while placing a great deal of himself into the character of the son, Hamlet, and "fathering" his art *ex nihilo*. In other words, he actualized himself into being as he produced a work of art that serves as his legacy. With these remarks Stephen refers to the Sabellian heresy, which suggests that the three figures of the Trinity make up a cohesive essence, and applies this formulation to his version of the god-artist (Gifford, *"Ulysses" Annotated* 26).

Bitov parodies this idea through Leva's thoughts and actions. When Leva attempts to rewrite his lineage by casting his family friend in the roles of "Uncle Dickens, father, grandfather" and "father, son, and holy ghost," he misreads the situation. This was, in fact, part of the Soviet intelligentsia's dilemma throughout the middle of the twentieth century. Suddenly

faced with entire segments of culture that had been forcibly excised from historical records and family accounts, Leva and his generation felt the burdens of belatedness as the floor opened up beneath their feet. The young scholar attempts to bind the present to the past, though not in any organic way. In his commentary to *Pushkin House*, Bitov carefully explains his position on hidden links in literature. He proclaims, "literature is a continuous and uninterrupted process" (389). Missing or omitted links indicate an "end, not a rupture," so those who wish to make a contribution must then "discover, restore, invent, reconstruct" the old ones before proceeding. The shock of the Thaw leads Leva to believe that both Russian culture and his family history, which are extremely intertwined in the novel, were indeed ruptured irrevocably. He responds by denouncing his father and attempting to find a replacement in Uncle Dickens. But while this project may be feasible for Stephen (Joyce), Leva's situation is much different. He fails to realize that by struggling against his belatedness in this way, he only exacerbates the problem and casts someone else in roles that Stephen adopts for himself. What is more, he betrays his actual father in the process. Modest Platonovich, the voice of (drunken) reason in the novel, recognizes his duplicity immediately: "There's already treachery in the seed! In the seed!" (85).[168] However, before Leva can realize that he should focus on his own development rather than the past, he develops his theories of alternative paternity.

Tellingly, negative father-child relationships dominate in *Pushkin House*. Modest Platonovich disavows his son after his betrayal. Mitishat'ev says to Blank, perhaps facetiously,

[168] Later in the novel, Leva and Mitishat'ev part ways after a party. The former feels "relief and joy" as he begins to doubt his suspicions about Mitishat'ev becoming romantically involved with his girlfriend Faina (164). Leva feels that "at the core" of his being stands "the kernel, the seed" (*iadryshko, zernyshko*) amid a bright light (164). The irony of the situation, evident only to the reader, is that Mitishat'ev probably returns to Faina's for an assignation. The two words for seed used in these separate passages may be different, and yet the results are dire for Leva. Even the language of Bitov's novel implicates Leva in the system of belatedness and treachery, embodied by his tormentor and double-rival.

that he does not know his own father (275). Unlike Leva, he is truly fatherless and very much the self-made man. Other characters' fathers have also been removed from the picture. Neither the fiery Faina, nor the meek Albina have a father in their lives. As usual, the former takes things to an extreme: "it seems that [Faina] didn't have one at all" (179). Among his peers, then, his father's existence actually distinguishes Leva, but, unlike the others, he seeks to renounce his father. Even when Nikolai Modestovich remains physically present, he is not at all a part of Leva's life as the son would have it.

All things considered, Albina's situation resembles Leva's more closely than Faina's or Mitishat'ev's. In contrast to Faina, she "never had been and never was alone." Among other things (her mother, cats, photographs, a tender love for Leva), she possesses "the legends about her father." Her tale serves as an inversion of Leva's. Though her father truly disappeared, she retains the anecdotes about his accomplishments as positive mementos, and they, the narrator explains, help save her from solitude. They represent organic links that cannot be severed. Leva, as Stephen does before him, chooses to invent his own paternal legends, creating lies in the process. The result for him turns out to be isolation. Stephen welcomes this loneliness as part of his project for self-fulfillment, while it deeply troubles Leva. Bitov therefore demonstrates a key difference between his protagonist and Joyce's: Leva's hunt for a second father only further deprives him of any sense of resolution. He misses the opportunity to rethink his generation's situation. Instead, Leva discovers too late that "his father was his father, that he, Leva, *also* needed a father, as it turned out one day that his father needed *his* father, Leva's grandfather, his father's father" (22).[169] In a particularly Bitovian move, the idea of fatherhood consumes the

[169] "В общем, лишь к тому далекому времени, что приближает нас к печальному концу Левиной повести, только тогда мог понять Лева, что отец — это его отец, что ему, Леве, — тоже нужен отец, как оказался однажды нужен и отцу — его отец, Левин дед, отец отца."

narrator's prose as it trips over genitive constructions, emphasizing the omnipresence of fathers in Leva's life. His father cannot be replaced, but Leva *can* choose a course other than denial and emerge from the dialectical struggle to overcome the pressures of the past.

THE GRANDFATHER HYPOTHESIS

If the allusions to Joyce in the opening chapters of *Pushkin House* are largely implicit, then many of the ones that appear in the ones featuring Modest Platonovich are much more overt. After a botched effort to make Uncle Dickens his father, Leva moves a step beyond Joyce's project: "Father had been born to the son. Grandfather is being born to the grandson" (49). Again his actions imply an exclusionary gesture; Leva digs deeper into the past to cut out his father from his heritage, symbolically taking on ("birthing") his grandfather in the image he devises for him. Leva's "grandfather hypothesis" therefore builds upon Stephen's theory and suggests that by reaching back to his *father's father* he can enact a cleaner break. By raising the stakes, Leva will simultaneously circumvent his father and bring himself closer to his grandfather's generation.[170]

Coming to terms with the reality of his grandfather's "resurrection," Leva begins to clarify his "grandfather hypothesis." He raids his predecessor's scholarly work to deploy another model of paternity based on intellectual pursuits: "Grandfather, for Leva there remained no doubts, was undeniably a Great Man, and, in that rank, the formulation 'Grandfather and Grandson' turned out very nicely" (50). In his Shakespeare speech Stephen hoists his experiences as an exile and the victim of usurpation upon Shakespeare in a creative reading/writing of the Bard's texts. Leva wants very much the same thing from his newfound

[170] For a Freudian reading of Leva's experience with "absent" fathers and grandfathers and the ensuing desire that troubles him, see Vladiv-Glover's "The 1960s and the Rediscovery of the Other in Russian Culture: Andrei Bitov."

relationship with Modest Platonovich: "[…] he and Grandfather will be together — as man and man! Grandfather will help open them [the shutters within him] even wider and will explain what's there, and a completely new life will begin for Leva" (51-2). Joining himself to a valuable representative of the past will strengthen his self-image and will make him feel less burdened by his position as a latecomer, much as Stephen's Shakespeare project provides him with confidence. The latter, though, uses the playwright as a springboard to define himself and his art, while the former gets caught up in the tangles of history. Leva fails to recognize that he "live[s] off of the old man's ideas" instead of creating his own body of work like Modest Platonovich (Nakhimovsky 202).

Leva believes he will succeed if he can only place himself next to his grandfather, a representative of the lost modernist generation that is now coming back into fashion: "He dreamed of a sudden friendship that would emerge from themselves from the first glance, bypassing his father, as if over his head, as if a bridge over a generation" (51).[171] In this way Leva seeks to trump Stephen's project. The situation naturally becomes more complicated when he actually meets his grandfather. As John Freedman [Dhzon Fridman] notes, Leva mistakenly "expects that his grandfather will see his continuation" in him (203).[172] Bitov recognizes that links must be reestablished, but Leva pursues this task in the wrong ways, blinded by his hubris.

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[171] The same class of imagery—bridges, steps, gaps—frequently appears in connection to Leva's anxieties throughout the novel. Near the end of the third section, Mitishat'ev accuses Leva of being unable to admit that he is "attached to [his] father's footsteps, that [he and his father] are together eating away at [his] grandfather" (305). Modest Platonovich's suggestion that Leva is "following in his father's steps [*po stopam ottsa*]" as a literary scholar frightens Leva (81). Close to the end of the novel, Leva stands on a bridge "in the middle of the contrast" (323). Bitov uses these liminal spaces to underscore Leva's precarious situation.

[172] Cf. Kavalerov's language in *Envy*: "I recognized my father in myself. It was a similarity of form—no, something else: I would say sexual similarity: as if I suddenly felt my father's seed within me, in my substance" (34).

At the end of Leva's first and only conversation with his grandfather, the young critic becomes fixated on the "word 'father,' black and frock-coated like a fly" (84). He believes that if he reveals his negative feelings about his father Modest Platonovich will recognize a fellow victim. The actual result of his words, however, astounds Leva: "…O-O-OH! O-O-OH! You're talking about your FATHER!.. To me! TO HIS FATHER… Vo-o-o-o-o! […] There's already treachery in the seed! In the seed!" (84-5). Leva inadvertently—and not only because of the alcohol—invokes his grandfather's most dreaded memory, that of his betrayal by his own son. The key difference between Leva and Stephen in this sense is that Leva's subject can respond; Stephen's Shakespeare cannot. He is only as actualized as the young artist's arguments. In other words, this exchange between grandfather and grandson represents another example of Leva's inability to sense others' feelings: "He had told his grandfather everything all wrong and not what his grandfather *wanted* to hear" (83). The path that Leva sets out upon resembles Stephen's, yet Leva ignores the differences in context. First, he lives in a system rotten to the core with treachery. Joyce, too, took up his nation's vices in his works ("the special odour of corruption" as he put it in a letter regarding *Dubliners*), but his focus remained on social ills that prevented Ireland from progressing, the moral "paralysis" of the Irish people (*Selected Letters* 79, 22). The Soviet background of corruption and treachery yielded different consequences, including imprisonment and death in many cases, than those seen in Joyce's texts and consisted of a series of betrayals enacted generation after generation. By denouncing his father, Leva performs a by now stale action.[173] Likewise, by constantly focusing on the past, he cannot make his way.

[173] The responses by the two authors' protagonists are also significant. Stephen seeks a way out of paralyzed Irish culture, unlike Leva who only burrows deeper into the corrupt Soviet system, while Bloom argues that "[l]ove," not violence or force, defines life (273). In *Dubliners* the results of the various characters' vices and ill-doings are largely much less serious than those depicted (or implied) in *Pushkin House*. In fact, many characters, such as the boy in "Araby" or Eveline of the eponymous story,

Leva's attempts to unite himself with his grandfather's ideas—or, rather, his *conceptions* of those ideas—will not materialize.[174] Richard Borden writes that "one of Bitov's foremost concerns is the transcendence of solipsism, the escape from the imprisonment in one's self" (296). Leva, though, almost always ensnares himself.

One of Modest Platonovich's most infamous claims is that Russian culture did not perish with the 1917 Revolution; instead it was forever preserved as a Sphinx-like monument. Though Modest Platonovich focuses on the Russian classics—Derzhavin, Blok, Turgenev, Lermontov, Tiutchev, Fet, Pushkin, Tsvetaeva—Western exemplars, including Joyce, were also dislodged in time. Throughout Leva and Modest Platonovich's conversation, several Joycean strains and a few allusions to *Ulysses* appear. Bitov deploys these references throughout this frenzied section to throw into greater relief his ideas regarding connections to the "originals" of the past.

The most notable among these allusions, of course, occurs when Modest Platonovich explicitly refers to *Ulysses* as a novel Leva's generation "will read in 1980" (73). He selects *Ulysses* as a representative example of Western modernist literature from which Leva and his generation have been cut off. This fact alone would be enough to suggest Bitov's close engagement with his Irish predecessor, but a close reading of this particular passage within the context of the entire chapter ("Father's Father. Continued.") introduces fascinating points of

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in the end simply remain downtrodden, worn by the "corruption" of the city that takes many forms and the "paralysis" that keeps them from taking action.

[174] While Leva tries to make an intellectual connection between grandfather and grandson the basis of his hypothesis, he also turns to physical appearances to justify his relationship. He pores over old photographs to find shared features: "Leva proudly perceived his grandfather's face in his own" (41). With excitement Leva does the same when he meets Modest Platonovich: "The similarity with Uncle Mitia and the attentive ('good') look confirmed that this might be his grandfather: 'If Uncle Mitia looks so much like Grandfather, then there's no doubt that he's my father! […] 'If Uncle Mitia is my father, then he automatically becomes the son to Grandfather Odoevtsev, but I, fool, don't cease to be grandson to him!'" (55). Not without irony, the author-narrator carefully points out these moments when Leva betrays himself.

comparison related to issues such as belatedness, primacy, history, and time. Modest Platonovich understands these subjects with far greater acuity than Leva, producing original thoughts rather than anxieties.

Directly before mentioning *Ulysses*, Modest Platonovich rails against Leva's generation: "Take a look, they've constructed the world for themselves—not for you! You've constructed nothing for yourselves!" (73). He suggests that Leva and those like him in turn take the small protests that they are allowed, "as if by ration cards," to be a mark of their freedom. They do not carve out their own real existence, instead letting the Soviet powers dictate even their illusions for them. This cycle feeds upon itself: As long as "they" demarcate the limits of permissible culture, Leva's generation will forever be in their grasp. Simultaneously, Leva only contributes to the corrupted system with his thinking and repeats existing models. In this way Leva follows Stephen's model of filial substitution but fails, just as he mimics Yury Tynianov's ideas in his article "The Three Prophets" without being aware of it.

Ulysses, "a work," according to Komaromi, which "Modest Platonovich dangles in front of Lyova," stands for precisely this sort of repression in *Pushkin House*. Modest Platonovich, and Bitov behind him, mentions Joyce's novel by name, both because of its reputation and because it deals directly with issues of primacy and history. The newly rehabilitated ex-scholar mocks his grandson:

> In 1980 you'll read *Ulysses* and argue and think that you have won back this right… I'm telling you this in the "second half of the fifties," and you verify it. At this point the end of the world will arrive. Imagine, the end of the world and you haven't had time to get Joyce. Your modernity will be more permissible to Joyce than to you. The thought of your dependence is beyond reach for you. You're enviers, losers, you haven't accomplished anything, neither in the past, nor the present, nor the future…
>
> Вы будете читать «Улисса» в 1980 году, и спорить, и думать, что вы отвоевали это право… Это я вам говорю во «второй половине пятидесятых», — а вы проверьте. Тут-то конец света и поспеет. Представляете, конец света, а вы не успели Джойса достать. Джойсу будет более дозволена ваша современность, чем вам. Мысль о

> вашей зависимости вам недоступна. Завистники вы, неудачники, несостоявшиеся вы, ни в прошлом, ни в настоящем, ни в будущем… (73)

Joyce's *Ulysses*, then, is emblematic of this generation's failure to catch up. Leva may feel that he rebels against his father and the past at large, and yet without a complete understanding of modernity, as embodied by *Ulysses* and the tradition it represents to the rest of the world, Leva mistakes his dependence on the system and the past for freedom and originality. Modest Platonovich prophesizes that the times will change, that Leva will be able to read *Ulysses* in a couple of decades.[175] This event, to a man of Leva's making, will signify a "right" earned for committed rebellion. In reality, it will only prove Leva's inherently delayed nature. As a result of the breaks in Russia's cultural history, Leva cannot exist in the past, because he can never make full sense of it, nor in the present because he constantly directs his gaze backward, nor in the future because he will always feel a step behind.[176]

Modest Platonovich suggests that a radical shift in perspective is necessary for Leva. He will never "catch up" with Joyce, just as Achilles will never catch the tortoise. By envying the past,[177] Leva remains bound to the system designed by those in power to suppress him. As Modest Platonovich says, Leva's "modernity will be more permissible to Joyce," meaning that the writer's persona and ideas concerning him have existed for over thirty years as a cultural phenomenon; Leva cannot come to it fresh, as if discovering *Ulysses* for the first time.[178] The

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[175] In the commentary, Bitov doubts Modest Platonovich: "I don't know whether this can be asserted with the same confidence now, fifteen years after Modest Platonovich's prophesies, in 1971" (366). According to him, people say all sorts of things, for example that Russia will soon see *A Portrait of the Artist* translated and that the Olympics will be held in Moscow in 1980.

[176] Harold Bloom's comments on the illusory nature of writers' identities speaks to Leva's situation as well: "We journey to abstract ourselves by fabrication. But where the fabric already has been woven, we journey to unravel. […] Identity recedes from us in our lives the more we pursue it, yet we are right not to be persuaded that it is unattainable" (*Anxiety* 64-5).

[177] Bitov may well have had Olesha in mind when writing Modest Platonovich's speech. See Priscilla Meyer (p. 10) and Shmid (p. 212) for some comparisons of Bitov with Olesha.

[178] Joyce scholars, of course, face an even more acute form of this challenge today: "*Ulysses* [is] one of those books which is always 'always-already-read,' always seen and interpreted by other people before

novel, which has amassed a great deal of meaning and interpretations over this period, will define Leva's epoch as belated if he treats it as something newly discovered.

Another key Joycean allusion in this section concerns the idea of sources. When Bloom turns on the faucet in "Ithaca," the narrator attempts to explain the origin of the water in an absurdly long list (548). Within *Ulysses*'s context, the answer, as well as the information regarding what Bloom sees in water that follows, firmly establishes Bloom's hydrophilic tendencies in contrast to Stephen's aversion. Simultaneously, Joyce mocks the idea of complete verisimilitude and absolute knowledge in a third-person narrator, as the passage pushes the idea of the "original" to the brink.

Modest Platonovich offers a direct rejoinder to this exact passage. In the middle of his conversation with Leva, he brings up water on two occasions. On the first, he suggests that phenomena like gas and electricity are beyond comprehension, but he asks: "But water! From where did it come here?.." (70). He continues: "So, about water: I want it and I don't understand it and don't want to understand—that's happiness. All right. It can be explained to me, taking water as a given, that there's a spring, a pump, a tower, a pipe—plumbing. I'll understand that a man wants to explain something to me, this I'll understand. But why does it flow to *me*?" (71). Bitov, once again, builds upon what Joyce has laid before him. Even if the source of water can be explained, as Joyce's catechism endeavors to do, the *reason* behind this flow of water cannot. Analogously, even if Leva reaches back into the past to find a forefather—his real father, Uncle Dickens, Modest Platonovich, Blank, even his superior at the literary institute[179]— to define himself in the present, *something* remains missing. Modest Platonovich argues that all the efforts

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you begin [… It is] hard to see it afresh and impossible to read it as though those interpretations had never existed" (Jameson 174).

[179] The latter speaks to Leva in a "fatherly way [*po-ottsovski*]" (249).

to find a true root source (as in the passage from Joyce) result in nothing more than a "gibberish of words" that covers the concept at hand,[180] despite the "pleasure, […] clarity, and efficiency." *Ulysses*'s presence in *Pushkin House* highlights the discord experienced when Leva tries to catch up with the past.

Leva's desire to find and reconcile himself with his sources affects all aspects of his life. From his family relations to his work as a graduate student at the Pushkin House, these various levels (and roles)[181] often mix. In the section that recounts Leva's article "The Three Prophets," the author-narrator takes stock of his protagonist's relationship with Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tiutchev. Lamenting his inability to meet Pushkin, the author-narrator makes a telling connection between the poet and Modest Platonovich: "Oh, if only it had been Leva! Then he would have embraced, then he would have pressed Aleksandr Sergeevich to his heart… but enough. He has already embraced his grandfather once" (242). Here, the head of Leva's family, Modest Platonovich, blends with the "father" of Russian literature, Pushkin. This move, conveyed through the narrator but clearly reflecting Leva's ideas, recalls Fyodor's in *The Gift* when he equates Pushkin with his father, Konstantin Kirillovich and, by extension, Stephen's in *Ulysses*. The narrator's remarks make explicit what Leva has been after all along: a close relationship with a father figure that will justify his existence. Despite all these exertions, Leva obviously cannot make real contact with the fathers he chooses for himself.

A reference to "Shakespeare's *role* in Lear's tragedy" further alerts the reader to the Joycean subtext (78, my italics). On a purely textual level, the description is apt: Lear has no sons, just as Modest Platonovich finds himself figuratively without son; Nikolai Modestovich

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[180] This type of irony is of course present in Joyce's text as well.

[181] Natal'ia Ivanova has examined the wide-ranging presence of "roles" in Bitov's work (173, 183). Much of Bitov's fiction chronicles his characters' attempts to reconcile themselves with the roles they have taken on consciously or otherwise.

denounced him years ago, and now Modest Platonovich refuses to have anything to do with him. Furthermore, the reference calls to mind Stephen's insistence on Shakespeare's having played King Hamlet: "A player comes on under the shadow, made up in the castoff mail of a court buck, a wellset man with a bass voice. It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied *Hamlet* all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre" (155).[182] Thus, Stephen and Leva position their respective forefathers in roles that support their own personal agendas, and this oblique reference to Joyce's novel demonstrates Bitov's tactic. A slightly different reading of the construction "Shakespeare's role in Lear's tragedy" would implicate Shakespeare as the "author" of Lear's misery. The subtext, then, suggests that Leva is guilty of causing or, at least, perpetuating Modest Platonovich's tragedy by "writing."

The author-narrator notes that the break between son and grandson, Modest Platonovich's death, and ten years finally bring together father and son (88). However, he questions what remains of Leva following these experiences at the conclusion of the first "Version and Variant" chapter:

> FATHER – FATHER = LEVA (Father minus Father equals Leva)
> GRANDFATHER – GRANDFATHER = LEVA
> We transpose according to the algebraic rule to obtain a plus:
> LEVA + FATHER = FATHER
> LEVA + GRANDFATHER = GRANDFATHER
> But, after all:
> FATHER = FATHER (Father is equal to himself)
> GRANDFATHER = GRANDFATHER
> To what is Leva equal?
> And we stand at the board in Einsteinian reverie…
>
> ОТЕЦ – ОТЕЦ = ЛЕВА (отец минус отец равняется Леве).
> ДЕД – ДЕД = ЛЕВА. Мы переносим, по алгебраическому правилу, чтобы получился плюс:
> ЛЕВА + ОТЕЦ = ОТЕЦ

[182] We have not found evidence of Shakespeare having played a particular role in performances of *King Lear*.

> ЛЕВА + ДЕД = ДЕД, но ведь и:
> ОТЕЦ = ОТЕЦ (отец равен самому себе)
> ДЕД = ДЕД
> Чему же равен Лева?
> И мы стоим у доски в эйнштейновской задумчивости… (103-4)

These formulations suggest that in his defiant paternal quest, Leva has defined others but has not defined *himself*. Taking on a predecessor, whether his biological father or Uncle Dickens, proves to be an exercise in futility. Likewise, when he attempts to link himself to his grandfather, he only misreads the situation, and Modest Platonovich's personality takes center stage. This process becomes tangible as the old man's rambling speech effectively pushes Leva out of the narrative. The result, once again, is that by constantly pursuing his antecedents, Leva sublimates his person to that of father and grandfather figures in his life, whereas Stephen places his own image into that of Shakespeare. However, Leva's epoch, if not his personality, is far different than Stephen's. As the narrator states, "Time itself was Father. Father, Papa, Cult — what other synonyms are there?.." (48). The idea of an omnipotent father figure embedded itself into Soviet historical and cultural fabric early on. Stalin, who goes unnamed in Bitov's novel, is of course the obvious culprit here.[183] However, the problem is more endemic: the very concept of fatherhood became corrupted over time through shifting expectations and treachery within families and generations. In these conditions, Bitov intimates, the son who chooses to abandon his father as Stephen does will only perpetuate the system of repression. This partly helps to explain why Bitov would place the various references to Joyce and *Ulysses* throughout *Pushkin House*. He adopts a Western modernist model only to subvert it, in the process showing an alternative means to self-actualization.

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[183] Like Stalin, Leva's father is not explicitly named in the novel. As Bogdanova notes, the reader can only piece his name together from Leva's patronymic and his father's first name (28-9). See Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, in particular the chapter "The Stalinist Myth of the 'Great Family,'" for a classic analysis of father/son dynamics in Socialist Realist novels.

THE HEROES SPEAK

A comparative reading of Leva's "Three Prophets" article (or at least as it is described by the author-narrator) and Stephen's Hamlet theory demonstrates yet another aspect of Bitov's engagement with Joyce. Both authors choose to pause their respective novels roughly at the midway point in order to highlight these similar ideas. After the ninth episode, "Scylla and Charybdis," Joyce launches into his more radical narrative experiments, and after the section that contains "The Three Prophets," Bitov's narrator finally takes up the real subject of the novel, Leva's duel with Mitishat'ev. Stephen's thoughts filter into the episode's narration. Of course, they reveal his various apprehensions, but the hero manages to explain his theory in his own voice. On the other hand, Bitov's narrator relates how Leva's article has essentially been lost to the ages. A.B. undertakes to describe what he remembers of it.[184] The characters' agency in these scenes differ a great deal. Stephen can defend himself against his interlocutors' responses, while Leva's perspective depends entirely upon the words and whims of his creator. These differences reflect the most pertinent issues at hand: Leva's loss of control when it comes to his identity and history.

After mentioning its existence in the early parts of the novel,[185] Joyce lets Stephen deliver his full performance in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode. The speech is not without contradictions and inconsistencies, personal bias and loose interpretation, but it reveals a great deal about its speaker's personality and state of mind. It also helps explain some of Stephen's choices throughout the novel. As Karen Lawrence remarks, "Stephen's stress on both the fictionality and power of fatherhood derives, at least in part, from his own personal situation, in

[184] The narrator of *The Symmetry Teacher* adopts a similar tactic in his "translation" of A. Taird-Boffin's novel, which is part translation and part "recollection of a forgotten text" (Bitov, *Prepodavatel'* 199).
[185] In "Telemachus" Buck mocks Stephen's theory: "He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (15).

particular his ambivalence toward his father" (233). The story he tells, that of Shakespeare's betrayal, is really the tale of his own isolation from those around him. Additionally, Stephen proposes that Shakespeare, "being no more a son" after his father's death, felt able to write *Hamlet* and be reborn as a father (of art) himself. He implies that if he gives up his ties to his father (and Dublin), he can consequently become "father" to his writing.

Bitov's choice of a profession for his hero sets Leva on a similar path: "To not be a writer, but nevertheless to write. To live by literature, on literature, with literature, but not in it" (226).[186] Leva seems very much to live *in* literature as the protagonist of a heavily intertextual novel. He does live by and on literature as a graduate student and critic, and he lives with literature on his mind at all times.[187] So what makes him not live *in* literature? And by contrast, does Stephen live in it? In part through the Shakespeare speech itself, Stephen does take a major step forward to rewrite his past and make fatherhood into a "legal fiction," thus transforming himself into a literary creation of a sort: "Once dispossessing his real father, Stephen can trade filiality for fatherhood and biological paternity for literary paternity […] Finally, the mystical estate of fatherhood preempts the role of the mother and leaves the male artist self-sufficient, free to create his world" (Lawrence 234). He lives "in literature" as he turns the fabric of his life in Dublin, as well as his abortive escape to Paris, into the reality of his proposed art. Leva, then, tries to achieve something similar, but, due to his misreadings and egocentrism, he cannot manage what Stephen accomplishes. Beyond being a writer, living "in literature" involves the

[186] Leva, of course, is not a writer in the same sense as Stephen, who, in any case, actually writes very little in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. However, even his articles demonstrate a creative streak and a less "scholarly" approach than may be expected from a literary critic.

[187] For example, see Ronald Meyer's "Andrej Bitov's *Puškinskij dom*" (pp. 136-7) and Shaw (p. 188) for contrasting readings of the scene in which Leva looks out the window in light of Dumas's *Three Musketeers*. Anna Schur also analyzes Leva as a modern-day superfluous man, crippled by his "inauthenticity" and literary "simulations" of real life (573).

ability to rework one's epoch. Leva breathes literature, but he understands his connection to it much differently than Stephen: as a bind rather than an escape.

Nevertheless, Leva's article shares many significant parallels with Stephen's speech and general project. Most importantly, "The Three Prophets" is, as the narrator suggests, "not about Pushkin, not about Lermontov, and, moreover, not about Tiutchev, but about him, about Leva," much as Stephen's version of Shakespeare's life corresponds with his own experiences and feelings of betrayal (227). All major events and relationships in Leva's life show up in some form in the article's convoluted and highly personal argumentation. The coincidence that all three poets composed the poems under consideration when they were 27, the age at which Leva writes his article, spurs on the young critic.[188]

One key difference is that Stephen consciously associates himself with Shakespeare, while Leva becomes a modern-day Tiutchev. Stephen in this way aligns himself with the father of modern English literature in order to augment his own stature. Metafictionally, Joyce also announces his status as a new Shakespeare or Homer. In *Pushkin House*, Leva idolizes Pushkin (the equivalent of Stephen-Joyce's Shakespeare), but through his article he links himself more closely with Tiutchev, the envier and unrecognized rival. Leva writes "with knowledge and passion" and without direct reference to Tiutchev about the emotions that the poet must have felt in his "duel" with Pushkin (237). The author-narrator explains that Leva's "sad love for Faina" can be felt in these pages. Leva's "attempt at rapprochement with his grandfather" and his "'devaluation' of the very object of attraction," too, mirrors Tiutchev's relationship with Pushkin. Slobodanka M. Vladiv-Glover argues that according to Leva's article, Tiutchev craved "recognition by the Master (Pushkin) that was never granted" and, furthermore, "as he was for

[188] Lermontov (1814-41) was in fact 26 when he wrote "The Prophet" (1841). However, Leva asserts that 27, "give or take a year," is close enough (228). Bitov (1937–) also began *Pushkin House* at this age.

Tyutchev, Pushkin is also Lyova's desire" (56). It might be even more accurate to say that Tiutchev sought not Pushkin's recognition but also the *primacy* Pushkin represented that he could never possess. Following René Girard's system of triangular desire, Leva reenacts the same conflict in his article: "The mediator's prestige is imparted to the object of desire and confers upon it an illusory value" (17). Leva can comprehend Tiutchev's desire precisely because he feels it himself. The object (primacy, recognition, prestige) eludes him, so he feels discontent in his relationship with the mediator (Pushkin, Tiutchev).

The author-narrator maintains that "in Tiutchev [Leva] openly hated someone (we don't know whom)" (239). The context, though, strongly suggests that because he has so closely, if unwittingly, linked himself to Tiutchev, the mystery source of Leva's hate must be *himself*. Alternatively, Mitishat'ev would seem to be the Tiutchev to Leva's Pushkin, the plebian to his aristocrat: "They were of the same class, but Pushkin was more aristocratic: he *had* it, without thinking about where it came from; Tiutchev was already more the *raznochinets*, he *wanted* to have it, but he did not have it" (234). In spite of these relations, Leva's constant need for recognition propels him to sink to Mitishat'ev's level, in turn leading him to experience self-loathing. In Tiutchev, and in *writing* about Tiutchev, he gradually recognizes his own fate made up of betrayals and disastrous connections. Leva cannot admit to himself that this is the case, but through his writing he opens up his mind for closer scrutiny. Indeed, the evidence is damning: "[Tiutchev] is to blame only for […] Leva's recognition of himself, his impartial confrontation with his own experience. […] he is to blame that, like Leva, he was born and emerged too late (each in his own time), and Leva the latecomer, having turned with his heart to another epoch, won't forgive Tiutchev his 'contemporary' existence in it" (241-2). In Tiutchev, Leva eventually recognizes his own desire to catch up with the past: "but Pushkin didn't see his [Tiutchev's]

back, while Pushkin's back always loomed, even maniacally, before Tiutchev" (234). Leva sympathizes with Tiutchev's sense of displacement; he even considers writing another article on the subject, "The Latecomer Geniuses." Due to his distorted sense of the historical moment, Leva feels the need to place himself on the same level as Pushkin in order to justify his posterior existence. The past for Leva, unlike for Stephen, represents a barrier that cannot be surmounted. Stephen believes that he may outmaneuver time with his art and, thus, overcome any perceived deficiencies:

> In the intense instant of imagination, when the mind, Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be. (159-60)

While it may seem that the past exists outside of the artist's control, he can change it. Bitov himself has written as much: "The past is utterly defenseless against our attempts to reorganize it. I think that for aesthetic reasons it is better not to disturb it" (Preface 15). Those "aesthetic reasons" may include the dangers that come with toying with history as experienced by Bitov's generation. With Stephen as his mouthpiece, Joyce suggests that by playing ghost, father, and son all at once, and by weaving past, present, and future into a single literary object, the artist creates his eternal art, thus breaking free of any ties that bind him to history.[189] The failure to be recognized in his own time, whether by contemporaries or father figures, will not prevent his

[189] Cf. Mandelstam's "The Word and Culture": "But I say yesterday has not yet been born. […] I want ` Pushkin, and Catullus all over again, and the historical Ovid, Pushkin, and Catullus don't satisfy me. [...] Thus, there has not been a single poet. We are free from the burden of recollections" (169-170). Comparing Mandelstam with Pound and Eliot, Clare Cavanagh writes that these poets championed the idea that dead poets "will remain dead to the present age unless their potential is tapped by a self-proclaimed 'spiritual heir' and translated into a new idiom for another generation, another tradition or nation" (26). This engagement with the past—a well-worn modernist trope developed in the early 1920s—clearly defines Joyce's work as well. On the subject of Mandelstam in Bitov's writings, see Chances 2005.

ultimate success. Leva, however, simply deifies the past, forcing himself into a subservient position relative to the "fathers."[190]

Pushkin House's author-narrator offers a poignant image to describe Leva's situation: "An embodied experience stings itself, like a scorpion, and sinks to the depths. […] don't personify it, as it will repeat you, rather than you it!" (242). Leva's perpetual gaze backward, a paradoxical glance at his forefathers' *backs*, forces him to repeat instead of invent, to perpetuate instead of create. Leva can only form a circle that will lead to his doom. As the author-narrator states, "It's the same thing as usual: hating authorities, you lay yourself down for their glory." When Leva challenges predecessors for his right to primacy, he only ensures his sacrifice in the elevation of their names.

THE TORMENTOR AND THE WOULD-BE SAVIOR

In the third and final section of the novel proper, "The Poor Horseman," Bitov introduces some particularly rich Joycean character and situation rhymes. This tactic recalls that developed by Olesha in *Envy*. There, Olesha imbues his characters Andrei Babichev and Nikolai Kavalerov with elements of Buck Mulligan, Leopold Bloom, and Stephen Dedalus in order to develop his argument regarding the inability of the artist to overcome the historical situation in the early Soviet Union. Likewise, this intertext in *Pushkin House* provides a background against which to read Bitov's characters.

Although the true extent of Mitishat'ev's role as sinister double and tempter only becomes clear late in the novel, his presence within its second part, "A Hero of Our Time," helps

[190] Even Leva's most impressive accomplishment, "The Three Prophets," closely resembles ideas already expressed by the Formalist critic Yury Tynianov. The best Leva can offer is a slight adjustment: "Leva, perhaps, first *reversed* the problem: in place of 'Pushkin and Tiutchev' — 'Tiutchev and Pushkin'" (236). This superficial change reflects Leva's relentless anxiety regarding primacy.

define a great deal of Leva's character. Introduced as no less than Leva's "friend-enemy," Mitishat'ev torments Leva as he reminds him of his belated nature, his failed rebellions, and his exposure to treachery (137). These patterns of behavior share a great deal with the tense relationship between Stephen and Buck in *Ulysses*.

In these two novels with so many unusual names, it should not be a surprise that both rivals use their counterparts' surnames to target the respective heritages to which they may be linked. Buck says to Stephen, "The mockery of it! […] Your absurd name, an ancient Greek!" (3). Mitishat'ev, too, takes up the "absurdity" of Leva's surname, Odoevtsev, as a subject for ridicule; he frequently refers to him as "Prince Odoevtsev" (195-6, 254-8, 300, 304, 307-9). Leva's surname is a clear reference to Odoevsky, a family that included the writer Vladimir Fedorovich and poet and Decembrist Aleksandr Ivanovich.[191] Stephen's last name indicates his connections to the Greek tradition, developed by Joyce throughout both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and Leva's name intimates his status as a man out-of-time. His "royalty" is no longer valid in the Soviet Union, even if, as Mitishat'ev jokes, "you're certain to find yourself next to an ancient scion" at all parties (257). Leva's name, then, is a reminder that he belongs to a tradition over which he has no control. Moreover, it links him to a past that cannot be recouped as he might have it. Stephen, on the other hand, learns to "use his heritage as a defense against forces that threaten him" through his rhetoric and allusions (Gillespie 127). Leva does not achieve the perspective required to defeat this belatedness, going so far as to smirk and agree that he, too, prefers the title, playing into Mitishat'ev's double-edged flattery (257).

[191] On the subject of Bitov and the Odoevskys, see Chances's *Andrei Bitov* (pp. 224-5, 254).

Money links the pairs as well. Even while Stephen pays the rent for the Martello tower,[192] Buck demands more: "Hurry out to your school kip and bring us back some money. Today the bards must drink and junket" (13). In the past Stephen has also borrowed both money and belongings, such as the ill-fitting shoes, from Buck. Similarly, Leva feels that in his youth he "wasn't so much lending money to Mitishat'ev as he himself was becoming indebted to him forever" (139). Precisely this sense of inverted indebtedness fuels Stephen's conflict with Buck; the more Stephen and Leva give to Buck and Mitishat'ev, and the greater the demands made in return, the more they feel bound. While initially this dynamic makes Stephen subservient to Buck, it later enflames his desire to rebel, to go into exile, and to transform himself. In *Pushkin House* it only leaves Leva feeling confused and awestruck before Mitishat'ev.

Bitov likewise constructs his own version of Bloom through the character of Blank. Beyond the phonetic similarity of their names, the two express a remarkably positive outlook despite being constantly derided by others. In his dramatic debate with the Citizen, Bloom champions "[l]ove," that is, "the opposite of hatred," as the true essence of real life (273). Similarly, the author-narrator claims that Blank "could not speak ill of people" and that "he spoke of life as a divine gift" (262). This optimistic perspective defines them as potential models for emulation for their "adopted" sons; they do not perpetuate the system of hate that they experience on a daily basis and maintain their personal dignity.

Both characters know such animosity firsthand due to their shared Jewish heritage. In fact, the most significant and related parallels between them are this shared ethnic history and their status as potential father figures for Leva and Stephen. Arguably, these traits serve as the

[192] Which of the two actually pays the rent for their lodgings has been the subject of debate. See Osteen (pp. 38-44) for an astute reconsideration of this subject.

defining features of the two characters. While Joyce can devote a great many more pages to Bloom, Bitov carefully constructs a precise portrait of his Jewish hero in just a few passages.

As in *Envy*, both novels feature a kind, older man who attempts to provide moral and practical guidance to a young writer. For his part, Leva initially welcomes Blank's advances:

> Leva eagerly became the person Blank wished to see in him—a person of "breeding," of that culture and decency which are in the blood and you cannot substitute, cannot dislodge it… Leva played along, of course, but it afforded him that pleasure, as if Leva remembered something about himself, and there was some truth not yet manifested in his life. He felt natural in this role […].
>
> Лева охотно становился тем, кем его хотел видеть Бланк человеком «породы», той культуры и порядочности, которая в крови, и ничем ее не заменишь, никак уж ее не выбьешь… Лева подыгрывал, конечно, но это доставляло ему то удовольствие, как будто Лева вспоминал что-то о себе, И была в этом какая-то не проявившаяся в его жизни правда. В этой роли он чувствовал себя естественно […]. (262)

In contrast, Stephen resists the desire to "become the man," or perhaps more accurately the child (an alternative Rudy), Bloom wishes to see in him. Leva takes up his "role" with relish, as it affords him the opportunities to regress into his past and to be charmed with the attention of father figure. One would be hard pressed to argue that either Bloom or Blank functions as a particularly negative influence; they both advocate generosity, kindness, and understanding, each in his own way. The problem, however, is that by accepting a father figure so readily, Leva renounces his right to self-fulfillment by "becoming his own father." Stephen understands this point well, even if not consciously, explaining why he departs into the night at the end of "Ithaca" and rejects the security offered to him by his Jewish substitute father.[193]

Indeed, Bitov introduces another crucial inversion of the Joycean model by having Leva at first accept Blank's "temptation" and then turn against him. The Jewish theme thus extends throughout the entire novel. One of its early formulations appears in the chapter "The Myth of

[193] Stephen maintains a neutral, if not positive view of Jews. In "Nestor," for example he challenges Mr. Deasy's anti-Semitic remarks: "A merchant, Stephen said, is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?" (28). He likens them to the culturally, politically, and linguistically subjugated Irish.

Mitishat'ev," in which the anti-Semitic Mitishat'ev questions Leva about who in their grade school class was and was not Jewish. Leva finds the inquisition tedious, particularly when Mitishat'ev even accuses him of being Jewish, but as usual he gives into Mitishat'ev's foolishness. Despite this, Leva triumphs over his rival by bringing the Russian classics into the equation:

> "Well, and Fet? You won't deny Fet, will you?"
> "Fet was slandered."
> "Well, and Pushkin?" Leva brightened up. "What about Pushkin?"
> "What does Pushkin have to do with it?" Mitishat'ev shrugged. "He's a Negro."
> "But do you know what a Negro is? An E-thi-o-pi-an! And the Ethiopians are Semites. Pushkin's a black Semite!"
>
> — Ну, а Фет? От Фета-то ты не отречешься?
> — Фета оклеветали.
> — Ну, а Пушкин? – озарило Леву. – Как – Пушкин?
> — При чем тут Пушкин, – пожал плечами Митишатьев. – Он – арап.
> — А арап – знаешь что? Э-фи-оп! А эфиопы – семиты. Пушкин – черный семит! (197)

This outlandish conversation has its clear counterpart in "Cyclops," where Bloom must combat the tyrannical Citizen's screed against the Jewish people. Bloom's final blow to his enemy sounds a great deal like Leva's: "Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God" (280). They both refer to great men of history as being exemplary models "despite" their Jewish heritage. Bloom, of course, takes this to the very limits by extending it to the Citizen's ("Your") God for rhetorical effect. In *Pushkin House* the "father" of Russian letters replaces the Christian God in the argument but delivers the same blow upon Mitishat'ev. The symbolic father trumps any possible retort as the apex and summation of primacy.[194]

[194] On the subject of Pushkin's alleged Semitic heritage, it should be noted that Dmitry Anuchin published an 1899 ethnographic study, *Pushkin (Antropologicheskii eksiz)*, on Pushkin's racial origins with particular emphasis on his great-grandfather, Abram Gannibal (1696-1781), and his potential Semitic roots in Africa. My thanks to Irina Shevelenko for bringing this connection to my attention.

Blank's Jewish background continues to be a point of contention for Mitishat'ev when they finally come into direct contact. The interrelated question of paternity arises here as well, as Leva must choose between the two: "Mitishat'ev killed Leva in Blank's eyes, and Blank killed Leva in Mitishat'ev's eyes" (264). The root cause of Leva's problem, which he characteristically misses, is not that he must now make a choice but rather that he has split his personality into two halves at all. In other words, he has not developed an authentic sense of self. Constantly seeking the approval of father figures, he took on the role of the son that Blank offered him. Unable to absolve himself of Mitishat'ev's influence, he continues to play the role of the rival-cum-coconspirator. The equivalent in *Ulysses* is Stephen's choice between a return to the Martello tower and the dominion of Buck, on the one hand, and a stay at Bloom's house and the acceptance of a new father figure on the other hand.[195] Earlier, Bloom's presence in "Scylla and Charybdis" foretells this dilemma: "A man passed out between them, bowing, greeting" (179). He represents the wedge that can split the toxic relationship shared by Stephen and Buck; Blank, too, symbolizes such a force in Leva's life. The trade-off for Stephen, however, would essentially be his acceptance of Bloom's patronage. In the end Stephen opts at least to begin making his own path in life; this decision represents a third, *alternative* option. The need to make a similar decision, though, cripples Leva and eventually leads to his betrayal (yet another!) of Blank and his own "death" at the hands of Mitishat'ev. All the relevant parties gather at Pushkin House during the November holiday. According to the narrator, they discuss a number of topics, including "freedom, poetry, progress, Russia, the West, the East, the Jews, the Slavophiles, the liberals" (266).[196] Undoubtedly Mitishat'ev brings up the topic of the Jewish people in an effort

[195] Stephen does consider other solutions such as his aunt's house (34).
[196] Their list of conversation topics (266) brings to mind the infamous Joycean lists from *Ulysses*, particularly those in "Ithaca," such as Bloom and Stephen's items of discussion on their walk (544). A

to make Blank and Leva uncomfortable. For example, Leva misquotes Modest Platonovich, to which Blank counters that Leva and his friends "distort the true meaning of the great man's words" (267). Mitishat'ev follows up with the non-sequitur, "America is a Jewish land" (267-8). In this brief exchange, Blank is linked implicitly to Leva's grandfather, another father figure, by his defense of the latter's words, while Mitishat'ev attempts to counter Blank's remarks with his caustic anti-Semitism.

Finally, the confrontation between Blank and Mitishat'ev finds its resolution in Leva's betrayal. At some point in their conversation—the chronology loses shape in the chaotic narration—Mitishat'ev offends Blank, who turns to Leva for support but finds none. Mitishat'ev continues: "You hinted that in that case I myself might turn out to be a Jew, too… Right! I might. I don't know my own father after all. […] In that case, you might turn out to be my father. […] An original variant of *Fathers and Sons*" (275). The narrator explains that Leva seems to forget what follows, but the next time his consciousness picks up, Blank has disappeared. Only Mitishat'ev remains.

There are several important points to be drawn from such a dramatic, yet understated exchange. First, the issue of fatherhood continues to sound clearly in connection to the Jewish theme. Mitishat'ev's statements crudely expose the artificiality of Leva's relationship with Blank when Leva fails to stand up for his friend. All of Leva's relations with his "fathers" are thus marked by various strains of treachery. Second, Leva's silence and tacit approval of Mitishat'ev's words reveal his inability to overcome his contemporary's negative influence. Leva denies his substitute father, but in a way far crueler than what Stephen does at the end of *Ulysses*, simply perpetuating a system of repression.

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number of overlapping themes—national identity, literature, society, change, etc.—suggest that both Joyce and Bitov had similar issues in mind when crafting their novels.

This ambiguous scene features what Hugh Kenner calls "narrative silences" in his study of *Ulysses* (48). At certain key moments throughout his novel, Joyce omits pieces of information for seemingly undisclosed reasons. From these instances, Kenner argues, "we may learn how largely *Ulysses* is a book of silences despite its din of specifying and may notice how eloquent is the Blooms' rhetoric of avoidance and also the author's" (48). For instance, the narrative does not record the exact moment at which Bloom learns of Blazes Boylan's scheduled arrival time for his meeting with Molly. Kenner furthermore maintains that Bloom's desire to remain in the dark regarding his wife's infidelity prevents this scene from manifesting itself. Bitov deploys a similar device in the "non-scene" of Leva's betrayal. This critical incident remains unexplained until later recounted by Mitishat'ev. Describing Bitov's early heroes, Olga Bakich writes that these young men often display "well-developed mechanisms for suppressing all unpleasant and disturbing thoughts" (127). The same applies to *Pushkin House*. As in "Calypso," Leva's reluctance to face the truth about his behavior motivates the narrative gap. Bitov adapts this technique from Joyce to reveal the depths of Leva's self-denial in an oblique manner. Bitov's novel, like Joyce's, is in many ways all about silences and omissions, and the things that remain unsaid often wield the greatest power over the characters.

MODERN-DAY ODYSSEYS

At many other times, though, the characters refuse to remain silent, and the narrative similarly seems unable conclude itself, producing "versions and variants" that propel the novel forward.[197] Several chapters under the very title "Version and Variant" offer varying accounts of the same event, such as Modest Platonovich's return to St. Petersburg, and challenge the

[197] Skoropanova suggests that Bitov uses the "open ending" narrative code to compel the reader to consider Leva's development and compare it to his/her own ("Klassika" 140).

legitimacy of any one report with their multiplicity. This anti-mimetic technique can also be observed on a metaliterary level, as Bitov's reworking of *Ulysses* (and other texts) provides "versions and variants" of familiar events from other traditions and literatures.

Following the author-narrator's analysis of "The Three Prophets," a second version of *Ulysses*'s library scene in *Pushkin House* takes place at the titular literary institute itself. Here, the discussion of Pushkin's life held by the revelers eventually leads Leva to his final confrontation with Mitishat'ev. This dynamic series of exchanges between the characters mimics the discussion between Stephen, Buck, John Eglinton, A.E., Lyster, and Best in Dublin's National Library. Moreover, it emphasizes Leva's desire to link himself with Pushkin, much as Stephen does with Shakespeare. Throughout the course of the novel, Leva's efforts to define himself by moving between father figures culminate with his death defending Pushkin's honor.

Leva's comments about Pushkin and his wife parody Stephen's regarding Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. The latter denounces Anne as a traitor and temptress: "If others have their will Ann hath a way. By cock, she was to blame. She put the comether on him, sweet and twentysix" (157).[198] Leva's interlocutors make similar accusations against Natal'ia Pushkin, implicating her in Pushkin's death. Leva comes to her defense, arguing that no one (except perhaps him) could have understood Pushkin's genius and that Natal'ia was "innocent and not guilty" (270). Leva's position on the poet's marriage yet again shows his desire to be on equal terms with Pushkin. One of the discussants argues that all the "poetesses" of the twentieth century who idolize Pushkin "can't forgive [Natal'ia] only because they were born too late to correct his mistaken choice. They would have appreciated his genius!.." (269).[199] Leva feels compelled to defend Natal'ia as he both envies and sympathizes with her; Leva wishes *he* could

[198] Note the Bitovian number: 27, give or take a year.
[199] He likely has in mind Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva. See Ronald Meyer 2007.

have been there to admire Pushkin, to protect his art, to be remembered side-by-side with the father of Russian poetry. Stephen, on the other hand, uses Anne Hathaway as an argument for the artist's need for self-creation and independence. Bitov in this way constructs a complex, inverted situation rhyme with *Ulysses* to make his point about Leva's concern with belatedness. If he can justify Natal'ia's relationship with Pushkin, then he can feel better about his own.

By constantly wishing for mutual recognition from Pushkin, obviously an impossible task, Leva places himself in a trap from which he cannot escape. Again, using a Joycean model, Bitov literalizes this process. The theme of keys plays a central role in both *Ulysses* and *The Gift*, novels that influenced Bitov's text a great deal.[200] Bloom finds that he has misplaced his key at the end of *Ulysses*, and Stephen turns over his key to the Martello tower in the novel's first chapter. Both events symbolize the characters' status as wanderers deprived of what they consider to be rightfully theirs. In *The Gift* Fyodor feels confident that he "took away the keys to [Russia]" when he went into exile (E350/R526). He believes that he will remain happy and free as long as he possesses these links to Russian literature that his talent provides him.[201]

Keys play no less a symbolic role in *Pushkin House*'s conclusion. Following Leva and Mitishat'ev's flight from a policeman, the former struggles to lock the door to the Pushkin House "like [an] inexperienced thie[f]" (286). His clumsy actions imply that he has locked himself into

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[200] Bitov has the following to say about Nabokov in the commentary to *Pushkin House*: "For good or ill, there would be no *Pushkin House* had I read Nabokov earlier […]. At the moment I opened *The Gift*, my novel was definitely written until page 337, and the rest, to the end, was in scraps and drafts. I read in succession, although in English translation, *The Gift* and *Invitation to a Beheading* and fell silent. Another six months passed before I recovered from the […] blow and started to finish the conclusion. From that moment, I could no longer rightfully deny neither an aerial influence, nor a direct one" (388-9). Nabokov himself would seem to be a sort of absent literary father figure for Bitov, one who had to be recouped after a long silence. See von Hirsch 2000/2001 for an analysis of Nabokov's presence in Bitov's art.

[201] For a thorough treatment of this theme, see D. Barton Johnson's "The Key to Nabokov's Gift." Johnson outlines the gift and circle themes before turning to keys and their three thematic dimensions in the novel: "the gift of the Russian language and literary heritage" as it shapes "Fëdor's individual talent" and its literary manifestations (195), a plot that resembles a "chess problem" (196), and, finally, Russian literature as "heroine" and her ties to Zina (200).

the system that binds him. In *The Gift* Fyodor has been banished from Russia, but he continues to open up its vistas with the keys he took with him. Stephen supports the creative individual choosing an artistic father figure but projecting his own image onto the past through art. He turns over his keys, begrudgingly to be sure, but with the knowledge that he steps into the world on his own terms. Bitov himself accomplishes a similar project by means of *Pushkin House*: "Bitov [here] suggests a conscious possession of Pushkin's House in light of other possible, Western, cultural constructions" (Komaromi, "Window" 95). Bitov, in other words, takes up the mantle of pre-revolutionary Russian literature without feeling beholden to it. Leva, on the contrary, remains trapped inside the house that Pushkin built and that has been appropriated by historical forces for their own purposes long before his time. The keys do not free Leva. He behaves like a "thief," as if he attempts to steal this repository of culture, the Pushkin House, that in fact "owns" *him*.

Leva responds to Mitishat'ev's accusations of cowardice, duplicity, and dependence on his father by impulsively destroying various items from the Pushkin House museum. He draws the line, though, when Mitishat'ev breaks Pushkin's death mask. Leva's emotional response demonstrates how he cannot untangle his ties to the past unlike Stephen, who manipulates what he finds—or even invents—in Shakespeare's life in order to shape his own destiny. Here, as Ol'ga Bogdanova notes, "Leva's image […] suddenly merges with Pushkin's" when his hair seems to become curly (56). For once, he seems truly to fuse with a chosen "father" as he becomes Pushkin in this duel scene.[202] Stephen does the opposite: he considers Shakespeare *his*

[202] Furthermore, Leva says to Mitishat'ev, "A duel […] implies the total impossibility of two particular people existing on the same earth" (307). The primary reference is to Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*. Before their duel, Pechorin says to Grushnitsky, "There is no room on Earth for the two of us" (305). At the same time, Leva may be also referencing Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" (1833) in a likely conscious move to emulate his hero: "Two fixed ideas can no more exist together in the moral world than

forerunner, paradoxically a *past* model of his *future* glory upon whom he places his image. So while Leva may take up Pushkin's visage or words, in doing so he only becomes a simulation of the past. Perhaps for these reasons, Mitishat'ev's bullet strikes Leva down. Modest Platonovich writes in a fragment from his "God Is" that the "People's Artist d'Anthès casted Pushkin from his bullet" (349). Leva faces the same fate—death by dueling pistol—in part because of his desire to emulate his father figures without transforming the experience into something new of his own creation. Leva's life throughout the novel has consisted of repetitions of past stories and models, so why would his death be any different?

In the three epilogues that follow, Bitov provides an alternative not only for Leva but for himself as a contemporary author as well. While he recognizes the importance of links in history and literature in his commentary, here he speaks about the need to strike out on one's own:

> *For whether our hero perished or has risen from the dead in the last line — nothing but personal taste*[203] *guides the rest of the narrative — the logic of development has been exhausted, it's all gone. In fact, our whole useless attempt at a continuation is an attempt to prove to oneself that continuation is impossible; it's an attempt rather of literary criticism than literature […].*
>
> *Ибо погиб или воскрес наш герой в последней строке — ничто, кроме личного вкуса, уже не руководит дальнейшим повествованием — логика развития исчерпана, вся вышла. Собственно, и вся наша негодная попытка продолжения — как раз и есть попытка доказать самому себе, что продолжение невозможно, попытка скорее литературоведческая, чем литературная […].* (315)

Read on a metaliterary level—as *Pushkin House* demands from its reader—Bitov's admission regarding the epilogues announces his intention to cut a new path in Russian literature (315).[204]

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two bodies can in the physical world occupy the same place" (Pushkin, *Sobranie* 5:258). He continues to use the monuments of the past to position himself as their legitimate heir.

[203] Bitov's formulation recalls Nabokov's famous maxim from his introduction to *Bend Sinister*: "death is but a question of style" (*Novels and Memoirs* 169).

[204] Marina von Hirsch's series of articles (2005, 2007, 2008) on Bitov's metafiction and metacommentary provide great insights into several devices central to the writer's oeuvre.

If Leva could not avoid making serious missteps because of a desire to find and then be acknowledged by a chosen father figure, then Bitov *can*.

To the very end Leva tries to take on altered primacy and paternity. He remains unaware that in his epoch pursuing Dedalus's project promotes the system of oppression under which he lives. Only when "resurrected" from the dead can Leva begin to recognize his mistakes. One of the first items he picks up amid the carnage in the Pushkin House is a scrap from a manuscript on *The Iliad*. The conclusion of quoted sample ("*Of no less interest to us is another poem of Homer's, the* Odyssey...") leads directly to Leva's epiphany: "And here everything becomes clear to him: *where*, to *whom*, and *what* he has done and what *they* will inflict upon him for it" (320). Soon after, the narrator compares Leva's own "wanderings" to an "*Odyssey*" as he rushes around Leningrad in search of supplies to make repairs (321). Of course, after *Ulysses* it is difficult to read any modern-day comparison to Homer's poem without thinking of Joyce's novel. Here, Bitov, makes that comparison explicit. Like *Ulysses*, his own novel demonstrates the power of the everyday, the depths of the human mind, and the struggle with the past that each individual faces. The novels' shared "network of classical sources" from Homer to Zeno's paradox helps expand these important themes and ensures their links to Joyce (Komaromi, "Window" 97).

Leva's resurrection is a pyrrhic victory for the young hero. While Leva cleans up the institute with Albina's help, he "perceives the full sorrow of crushed rebellion" as he repairs the damage he wrought in the institute in order to avoid punishment (324). The events still provide Leva with valuable insight. Later, when he takes a visiting American writer on a sightseeing tour, they have trouble finding the site of Pushkin's duel. A parenthetical aside in this section unites Pushkin and Modest Platonovich, two of Leva's treasured father figures: "(for Leva, the circle

closed—that frosty visit to Grandfather)" (335).[205] This sense of closure suggests that Leva finally understands the futility of chasing after the past. Komaromi writes that "Bitov actively strove to trace anew the lines from present to past and from Russia to the West" ("Window" 82). However, she stresses that Bitov does not advocate a blind repetition. Rather, as Modest Platonovich suggests, the past exists as a preserve: "To our descendants Russian culture will be the same sphinx as Pushkin the sphinx of Russian culture. Death is the glory of the living!" (349). Seemingly tucked away, functionally absent, Russian culture's greatest monuments remain there, providing the "secret freedom" of inspiration to those that recognize them and in turn construct something *new*. Leva takes his inability to find the location of Pushkin's duel as a positive sign; it proves to him that the spot remains "visible only to the devoted, only to the worthy," recalling Nabokov's views on the "real" and the "plausible" Pushkin (335).[206] In this epilogue that only takes place after his "death," Leva escapes his fear of the absent father. The historical circumstances that cut him off from the past cannot be altered, nor can Leva really change his lineage. The best he can do is step away, following his grandfather's advice to let the past lie. Pushkin will forever be the absent father to Russian writers.

Pushkin House embodies precisely such an undertaking. It builds upon the connections to the past, just as it explores new possibilities. Bitov recognizes his Russian antecedents (Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Nabokov), even as he dismantles the need to challenge them. Likewise, Komaromi suggests that in *Pushkin House* "he aims to revive in a new context the Pushkinian model of Russian culture, which draws inspiration from the West to develop as a uniquely Russian entity" ("Window" 80). Pushkin drew from Western models to give shape to early

[205] Modest Platonovich's face also appears to Leva when he writes about Pushkin at the literary institute before Mitishat'ev's arrival (252).
[206] The narrator of Bitov's *A Georgian Album* (*Gruzinskii al'bom*) describes how witnesses to Pushkin's duel changed the location of the event in their descriptions after the fact (312).

Russian prose; in parallel fashion, Bitov makes contact with Joyce, among other Western modernists, but does not copy them outright. Instead, he develops his dialogue with Joyce to give a more original and ultimately Russian shape to his own novel. *Ulysses* and in particular Stephen's experience exemplify the project against which Bitov argues throughout *Pushkin House*. The hierarchical demarcations in culture and history that Stephen can uphold and use to his advantage no longer function within Bitov's epoch. Sven Spieker offers a useful dichotomy: the modernist (Joycean) subject is "marked by its preponderance over historical time," while the later (Bitovian) subject "searches for (its own) history without being able to find it" and "loses the modernist hegemony over the realm of history" (138-9). Bitov's (and Leva's) belatedness requires that he find new means of coming to terms with the past, as direct rivalry and denigration of father figures only implicates him within the system against which he rebels.[207] His ingenious solution is the museum-novel that quotes but misreads, adopts but transforms.

POSTSCRIPT: HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

In light of what we have already said about *Pushkin House* and *Ulysses*, a brief excursus into "Pushkin's Photograph (1799-2099)" and its recycling of themes, characters, and images will demonstrate the centrality of ideas related to Joyce in Bitov's art. As an amateur photographer and "hereditary Pushkinist," Igor' Odoevtsev, Leva's grandson, is selected to travel into the past to take a photograph of Pushkin and record his voice on tape ("Fotografiia

[207] Scholars have produced a wide range of interpretations regarding Bitov's relationship with past Russian authors, particularly Pushkin. V. V. Karpova, for example, believes that the national poet represents for Bitov "the standard of beauty, harmony, and the true nobility of spirit" (82). Stephanie Sandler, on the other hand, argues that Pushkin, according to Bitov, "cannot stand as some recoverable, authentic point of origin" and that throughout *Pushkin House* the author "bring[s] him into all-too-human contexts" (279). Generally speaking, Russian commentators have perceived Bitov's glorification of Pushkin, while Western scholars note his subversive tendencies. On the subject of Bitov and Pushkin, see also Ivanova (p. 194 in particular), Komaromi 2005 (esp. pp. 89-92 and 94-6), Ronald Meyer 1988 (pp. 381-7) and 2007, and Sukhanova (pp. 13-16).

Pushkina" 408).[208] Igor', however, encounters many difficulties, not the least of which involves coming to terms with his place in history. John Ivanov, one of the Pushkinists who sends Igor' on his mission to "capture" the poet's image, envisions even greater accomplishments: "We will restore all of former culture to the tiniest details… Homer will sing *The Iliad* to us… Shakespeare will at last tell us his autobiography…" (407). Bitov here equates Pushkin with two very Joycean literary father figures.

Sven Spieker's comment that Igor' confronts "the anxiety that there may not be an influence" applies just as well to his grandfather in *Pushkin House* (161). He calls Igor''s search for Pushkin "the narratological equivalent of the Freudian primal scene desire." In his search through time, the young scholar also aims to fashion a direct link to an absent original. In *Pushkin House*, the repressed Stalinist history—personified by Uncle Dickens and Modest Platonovich and their returns—can finally be apprehended by Leva's generation, and yet it fails to materialize in any real sense. In the first place, this dissonance occurs because history has been co-opted by the Soviet state. Gaps in the historical record distort Leva's sense of time, creating a perplexing perspective. Furthermore, as proven by its many appropriations, the past constantly shifts; despite Leva's and Igor''s attempts to pin it down, it will forever be shaped by historicized narratives. Much to their chagrin, Leva learns that his version of personal history is no less subjective than others and Igor' learns that he cannot permanently recover Pushkin, the elusive "original" he seeks. Stephen's mantra to "[h]old to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past" is essentially no longer a possibility for the post-war subject such as Leva and Igor' (153).

[208] All further references to "Pushkin's Photograph (1799-2099)" ("Fotografiia Pushkina (1799-2099)") refer to the version included in the second volume of the *Imperiia v chetyrekh izmereniiakh* edition.

Bitov's narrator also ironically comments on the peace of mind that a photograph provides: "the print of this moment will always signify that the moment passed, but will comfort those who fell into the frame with the thought that the moment existed" (404). The desire for such certainty fuels Igor''s primary task—capturing a photograph of Pushkin—and Leva's attempts to recognize his own visage in the photographs of Modest Platonovich. The photographic image serves as a mnemonic tool that allows the present to connect itself with the past. However, Bitov's narrative demonstrates the illusiveness of such an endeavor. Indeed, as Igor' eventually learns, he cannot "hold" to the past any more than to the present in any real sense: his photographs turn blurry, his relationship with Pushkin never solidifies, and he remains doomed to simulate elements from Pushkin's plots.

As in *Pushkin House*, Igor''s downfall partially stems from his self-absorption, which "leads a culture to feed parasitically on its own legacy and, ultimately, to collapse into narcissistic stasis" (Baker 605). Igor', like his ancestor, feels a sense of primacy over the past:

> First of all, […] he automatically considered his own time to have *outstripped* previous times. He had descended *from above*, with a head start of three centuries. He was three hundred years *older*, he knew, finding himself among these blind kittens, what *will* happen to them. The supreme rank of observer shaped indubitable feelings in him of strength and condescension.
>
> Во-первых, […] он автоматически предполагал свое время опережающим времена предшествующие. Он спустился сверху, с форой в три века. Он был на триста лет старше, он знал, находясь среди этих слепых котят, что с ними будет. Верховное звание наблюдателя подготовило в нем заведомые чувства — силы и снисхождения. (417)

Later, Igor' begins to sense his own relative belatedness when he tries in vain to establish a relationship with Pushkin. He follows the poet to the Caucasus, where he descends down a mountain pass as Pushkin makes his way up. Bitov once again offers a striking metaphor for his hero's "descent": he travels *back* in time, just as he condescends to the level of the nineteenth century, moving "downhill" as it were. Pushkin, though, continues to rise, unimpeded by the

Igor'’s presence, and surpasses him. Even knowledge of Pushkin’s future (Igor'’s relative past) does not grant the scholar-photographer any kind of superiority.

As evinced by these scenes, both Odoevtsevs suffer from a temporal arrogance that Bitov carefully combats through his fiction. As Komaromi notes, “Bitov deplored the crude teleology of Soviet ideological explanations and the smug hubris of its presentist orientation” (“Andrei” 395). It would appear, then, that 150 years have not changed the Odoevtsevs’ pretentious view of themselves. Leva searches for a father with the same teleological drive as Igor', and they both fail to recognize the subjective nature of their projects. What Leva experiences figuratively, Igor' confronts in a literal form: “Pushkin would turn around and laugh” (416). The past always remains one step ahead, smirking at those that attempt to overtake it. At least from Bitov’s perspective, the past cannot not be arrested as it was during the modernist epoch by Joyce (and Stephen). Even if Pushkin and Igor' (or Leva) meet on the mountain ridge, they will not become equals. The past, the tortoise, and the poet will continue on their way.

CONCLUSION

In an ironic footnote, Bitov writes that he considered naming *Pushkin House* “Hooligan’s Wake” (342). Komaromi calls this and other alternatives that the author mentions “authorial encroachments” that suggest the presence of past authors in Bitov’s work (“Window” 95). The rejected “Hooligan’s Wake” furthermore underscores Bitov’s engagement with the West, not just Russian literary history, and Joyce in particular. In the myriad ways that Bitov experiments with Joycean motifs, recalling and inverting, echoing and subverting, he produces a fertile intertextual layer of *Pushkin House* that has heretofore remained largely understudied. This Joycean presence

also makes its way into later texts such as "Pushkin's Photograph" and *The Symmetry Teacher*.[209]

Bitov turned to Joyce and wove his ideas and themes into his own work because of their shared interests: literary lineages, the oppression caused by political and cultural regimes, and so on. Joyce offered his Russian counterpart—and other writers like him—an alternative option, that of the creative individual who fashions a new personal history. In the composition of *Pushkin House,* we see an author coming to terms with his place in a tradition that extends far beyond him and his understanding of shifting historicized accounts. These same tensions, largely misunderstood by Leva, drive many of his actions, too, but produce far different results.

At the same time, Bitov's place in a generation that had begun to awake from its particular nightmare of Soviet history ensured that his way be different than Joyce's. As Garry Leonard writes, "Joyce favors apparently ephemeral 'moments' of ever-present 'now' because any 'awakening' from history will necessarily be experienced as a 'schizophrenic,' identity-fracturing moment. Far from being ahistorical, such moments expose the phenomenon of 'history' to be a fictional construct" (20). Precisely this energy drives Igor' to madness and Leva to his death. Only in the miraculous epilogue, when Leva is resurrected by the author-narrator does the young scholar begin to change.[210] He experiences epiphany after epiphany that alert him to the gaps in his understanding. Stephen, troubled as he may be, can still be confident in his construction of a *personal* metanarrative to explain his role in the development of Ireland and

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[209] The latter features a few explicit references to Joyce. For example, the writer Urbino Vanoski accuses Joyce, a "puffed-up, unreadable Irishman," of stealing everything from him except his last novel (365).

[210] Alternatively, Komaromi writes that a "pair of scenes preceding the duel suggests […] the creative and ethical potential Lyova possesses and which might be realized in life" after his resurrection ("Andrei" 405). She does admit that Bitov leaves the ending open-ended; Leva may "collapse back into mindless conformity" or he may become "more perceptive, ethical, and creative." Indeed, Bitov tends to emphasize the *process* rather than the final *result*. In Leva's case, the experience of recognizing his mistakes and then being allowed to awaken into "real life" would suggest that he will come to terms with reality.

Irish literature. While Stephen can speak with confidence, however exaggerated or premature, when he says that Ireland belongs to him, Leva remains ensnared by his own complicity and Igor' only feels how "Pushkin and Petersburg filled him" (418). Bitov's plot demonstrates the challenges that face Leva when he attempts a very similar project, while his novel's very composition reveals the necessity of turning away from such metanarratives and approaches.

In his commentary Bitov expresses a desire to describe the everyday things that escape the contemporary writer (351). He wishes to commit to posterity the "elusive, random, [and] unimportant" items of his era, as Viacheslav Kuritsyn describes them (4). These elements symbolize that which has not been co-opted by grand metanarratives such as Socialist Realism. In this existence Bitov sees the possibility of overcoming both oneself and one's cultural heritage. So while both Bitov and Joyce believe in the transcendent nature of the commonplace, the possibility of the "insignificant" to become consequential, Bitov suggests that this step is sufficient, letting go of Stephen's model of warring with the past. Stephen's project is no longer feasible for writers such as Bitov who would only be betraying themselves to a system that calls for duplicity and the abandonment of paternal ties. Furthermore, Bitov suggests with his novel that "authorial encroachments," whether Russian or Western, are intrusions only if one feels paralyzed by the awareness of one's secondary nature. Joyce's presence in *Pushkin House* underscores precisely this point. Bitov's generation will remain forever displaced from the modernist era epitomized by *Ulysses*, and Leva cannot fully borrow Stephen's methods for his own purposes. *Pushkin House* as a whole, then, represents Bitov's endeavor to live and to write in the "middle of the contrast": a state of being championed by Modest Platonovich that accepts the past for what it is and recognizes that the future is yet to be created. For Bitov, the present must define itself independently.

Chapter 4 — Sasha Sokolov: "Here Comes Everybody" Meets "Those Who Came"

as were it sentenced to be nuzzled over a full trillion times for
ever and a night till his noddle sink or swim by that ideal reader
suffering from an ideal insomnia…

– Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

and they marveled:
but in fact what's right about it, pardon us, if it's so delicate,
and he answered them, the envious and fearful:
where there is more delicacy – there is more virtuosity

и удивились:
да что же тут, извините, правильного, если настолько
трепетно,
и отвечал им, завистливым и боязливым:
где трепетней, там виртуозней

– Sokolov, "Gazebo"

Introduction

Hearing the initial critical response to *A School for Fools* (*Shkola dlia durakov*, 1976) following its publication in *tamizdat*, Sasha Sokolov was surprised to learn that Vladimir Nabokov had influenced him. Although he claims never to have read his fellow émigré at any great depth before leaving Russia, Sokolov himself nonetheless saw some similarities in style and technique. This recognition in turn led Sokolov to seek a new path in his second novel. As D. Barton Johnson, one of Sokolov's earliest and most astute critics, describes the situation, "Sokolov's language-obsessed novel arose in part as a conscious reaction against Nabokov's style—not in the sense of a rejection (for Sokolov greatly admires Nabokov) but in a successful attempt to sound a voice utterly distinct from that of the older writer" ("Saša" 155).

The result was *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* (*Between Dog and Wolf*, 1980), a novel of wild imagination, immense verbal density, and an incredible concentration of cultural referents.[211]

[211] Lisa Wakamiya argues that while Sokolov's second novel serves as his denial of Nabokov's style, his "essay 'Trevozhnaia kukolka' may be read as a conscious repudiation of Nabokov's authorial persona and

Until recently considered untranslatable,[212] *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* tells the story of a murder: one night the drunken knife-grinder Il'ia Zynzyrela kills a dog that he mistakes for a wolf. In retaliation, the animal's owner, the game warden Iakov Palamakhterov, steals the one-legged Il'ia's crutches, leading Il'ia to kill two more dogs. This Gogolian cycle of violence concludes with Iakov and his friends drowning Il'ia. However simplified—and therefore misleading—this brief summary may be, the real impression the novel delivers is much different. Characters blend into one another and even submit letters of complaint from the land of the dead; the reader witnesses several, different versions of these characters' lives play out. Language itself takes center stage as puns turn into "reality,"[213] and Sokolov delivers a linguistic tour-de-force in prose and poetry, *skaz*, and stylized parodies of the classics. Perhaps not surprisingly, numerous scholars suggest that the novel "has claim to being the *Finnegans Wake* of Russian literature" (Johnson, "Saša" 155).[214]

Here, at the intersection of *Finnegans Wake*'s Joyce and the modernist Nabokov of his Russian period, we find a curious blend of influences. Though Nabokov expressed great

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the assertion of his own" ("Transformation" 326). In other words, both might be considered literary "exorcisms" of different kinds.

[212] Alexander Boguslawski's translation of the novel will soon be published by Columbia University Press.

[213] As has been noted many times, the novel's title refers to the period between day and night when the farmer has difficulty telling the difference between his dog and a wolf.

[214] Picking up on Johnson's passing comment, Richard Borden provides an extended list of the basic similarities between the two texts: "Aside from its perceived inaccessibility, its extremely disjointed narrative, its profound elusiveness and allusiveness, the fundamental timelessness of its narrative, its seeming to operate more according to the laws of dream than of waking experience, its wealth of neologism and, in particular, of complex paronomasia, *Between Dog and Wolf* resembles *Finnegans Wake* in its forking characters, in the way characters seem to dissolve one into the other—or evolve one from the other (the way in which, for example, Sokolov's Orina is also (as well as not also) Marina, Maria, and Masha, much as Joyce's Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker—HCE—is also (as well as not also) all the other 'HCEs' of his dream (and of Joyce's narrative), including Haveth Childers Everywhere, Haroun Childeric Eggeberth, Huges Caput Earlyfouler, Hermyn C. Entwhistle, Hunkalus Childared Easterheld, and, most importantly, Here Comes Everybody" (*Art* 389). Elena Kravchenko also observes that *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*'s "linguistic, semantic, and cultural density, which leaves an almost physical impression of viscosity," reminds her of *Finnegans Wake* (8).

admiration for *Ulysses*, he called *Finnegans Wake* Joyce's "tragic failure" of a novel: "I detest *Finnegans Wake* in which a cancerous growth of fancy word-tissue hardly redeems the dreadful joviality of the folklore and the easy, too easy, allegory" (*Strong Opinions* 151, 102). As Sokolov sought a new language in *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* to escape Nabokov's pull, he tapped into a vein of twentieth-century literature that his Russian forebear explicitly denounced. While we do not suggest that Sokolov did so intentionally after reading Nabokov's comments, it does reflect a fascinating fusion of traditions. Sokolov, in essence, moved from one extreme to another.

And yet, Sokolov's use of the Joycean model extends further back. If in *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* his engagement with Joyce's devices, techniques, and language achieved its full realization, then this literary dialogue can be felt even in *A School for Fools*. The present chapter will demonstrate the connections between the two authors' writings at this early point in Sokolov's literary career.[215] Furthermore, studying Sokolov's nascent Joycean influence in *A School for Fools* can help us better understand both his themes and techniques, for more so than the other authors already analyzed in this study, Sokolov took up Joyce as a stylistic alternative in art.

POINTS OF CONTACT

As described in chapter 3, beginning with the Thaw in the 1950s, discussions regarding Joyce took place in the Soviet Union once more:

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[215] Before completing *A School for Fools* during his time as a game warden on a hunting preserve in the Kalinin region, Sokolov penned shorter works, sketches, and non-fiction. *Novorossiiskii rabochii* published his first story, "Going for Milk" (*Za molokom*) in 1967 while he was enrolled in the Journalism Department of Moscow State University. The next year saw the publication of "All the Colors of the Rainbow" (*Vse tsveta radugi*) in *Our Life* (*Nasha zhizn'*), a magazine for the blind. Further stories followed on topics such as construction workers, villagers who live on the Volga, and a blind helmsman. See Johnson's "Sasha Sokolov: A Literary Biography" (pp. 204-7) and Litus's "Sasha Sokolov's Journey from 'Samizdat' to Russia's Favorite 'Classic': 1976-2006" (pp. 396-8) for more detailed accounts of these early writings.

> The Thaw period, under Krushchev, inevitably brought a new generation of scholars of English literature and a new generation of textbooks on western writing. This continued into the Brezhnev era, as a gradually more tolerant attitude to foreign literature began to hold sway; works and authors previously anathematised began at least to be discussed in rather more reasonable terms, while translation policy over works by western authors also began slowly to be re-thought. (Cornwell, *James* 114)

D.G. Zhantieva, for example, published a short monograph, *Dzheims Dzhois*, in 1967, and Ekaterina Genieva submitted her dissertation—the first on Joyce in the Soviet Union—in 1972.

It was in this shifting atmosphere that Sokolov, who was born in 1943, came into his own as a writer. On February 12, 1965[216] he joined a public reading organized by a group of avant-garde writers calling themselves SMOG (*Smelost', Mysl', Obraz, Glubina* [Courage, Thought, Image, Depth] or *Samoe Molodoe Obshchestvo Geniev* [The Youngest Society of Geniuses]). Among this crowd, Sokolov developed his interests in Western and counterculture literature. In a 2011 interview with Irina Vrubel'-Golubkina, Sokolov recounts that at this time he read Joyce alongside figures such as Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman, and Guillaume Apollinaire. He adds that the "formal innovations" he sought as a new writer were not to be found in works by writers such as J. D. Salinger, William Faulkner, or even Andrei Platonov (n. pag.).[217] Instead, he turned to Joyce and Edgar Allen Poe, "names that cannot be ignored" according to Sokolov (n. pag.). Firmly establishing his status as a European cosmopolitan, Sokolov elevates Western writers over Russian ones: "Joyce and company are more important to me than Platonov" (n. pag.).

Curiously, Sokolov's stance on Joyce's role in his literary development has shifted over the past few decades. Speaking with John Glad in 1986, Sokolov maintained that he had actually *not* read Joyce, Nabokov, or Borges in his youth (183). These contradictory statements may be

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[216] In an interview with Irina Vrubel'-Golubkina, Sokolov recalls the date as February *19*.
[217] Nonetheless, Aleksei Tsvetkov ranks Sokolov with Platonov and Bely, even while comparing him to Thomas Pynchon. On Sokolov and Faulkner, see Tumanov.

read in two ways. Either Sokolov was dissembling in 1986 when he was still a young writer at the height of his fame and, perhaps, the peak of his anxiety of influence (however one defines these terms), or he is dissembling now (i.e., in 2011), using Joyce as a means to associate himself with an elite strain in world literature. However, given both the texture of *A School for Fools* and the cultural milieu from which he sprang, it seems that Sokolov originally distanced himself from Joyce to ensure that his work did not seem derivative. Here, perhaps, Harold Bloom's modified definition of influence as "*literary love, tempered by defense*" sounds most fitting (*Anatomy* 8).

Sokolov has elsewhere used Joyce as an example to defend the complexity of his work. Thus, when asked by Viktor Erofeev in 1989 if he believes that *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* can ever be translated into other languages, Sokolov responded, "they even translated Joyce. A translation is without a doubt possible, but one has to spend several years of one's life" ("Vremia" 199). He almost certainly has in mind the formal complexities he shares with Joyce. Indeed, in his essays he makes such a connection explicit. For example, in "The Key Word of Belles-Lettres" (1985), he, perhaps oversimplifying matters, suggests that…

> The conversation concerning *what* and *how* is an echo of an eternal discussion between materialists and idealists. What came first, argue these philosophers: matter or spirit? Substituting matter with the concept *what* and spirit with the concept *how*, we attain the formula for our problem. The obvious advocates of the latter in art are Kandinsky, Flaubert, Rimbaud, Joyce, Shostakovich, and other idealists. Supporters of *what* are Socialist Realists and Capitalist Primitivists.
>
> Разговор про что и как — отзвук извечной дикуссии между материалистами и идеалистами. Что первично, спорят эти философы, — материя или дух? Заменив материю понятием *что*, а дух понятием *как*, мы получим формулу нашей проблемы. Очевидные поборники последнего в искусстве — Кандинский, Флобер, Рембо, Джойс, Шостакович и другие идеалисты. Сторонники что — это социалистические реалисты и капиталистические примитивисты. (*Trevozhnaia* 154-5)

Sokolov firmly aligns himself with the camp of artists, writers, and poets who champion, in different ways, "art for art's sake" and technical proficiency over art with a message and an

emphasis on content. In "A Portrait of an Artist in America: Waiting for the Nobel" (1985), he says that his and Valery Afanas'ev's generation "idolize[s] Nabokov, Beckett, Joyce, and Borges," precisely those writers whose impact he downplayed in his conversation with Glad from around the same time (*Trezvozhnaia* 73).[218]

Again, this connection between Sokolov, Joyce, and their stylistic tendencies has not been lost on commentators. Upon publication of the Khinkis-Khoruzhy translation of *Ulysses* in *Literaturnaia ucheba*, one translator wrote to thank the journal's editor and "asked him to acquaint readers with Joyce's heirs—Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, and Sasha Sokolov" (Tall, "Behind" 188). In a review of *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*, Igor' Burikhin mentions Joyce along with Nabokov, Salinger, and Heinrich Böll among the sources of Sokolov's "literary confidence [*literaturnaia uverennost'*]" (273). In conversation with Aleksandr Genis, Ellendea Proffer refers to this same novel as "pure Joyce" and untranslatable (345). Tellingly, Johnson has remarked that knowledge of Russian writers such as Pil'niak and Tertz provide no better preparation for Sokolov's art than a familiarity with the works of Joyce and Robbe-Grillet ("Sasha Sokolov's *Between*" 174). More specifically, Arnold McMillin suggests that his long, punctuation-free passages of "rhythmical prose" recall Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner (234-5).[219] Fred Moody, referring back to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, superficially compares *A School for Fools*' protagonist's method of constructing his world according to his aesthetics to Stephen's experiences as he "seeks indications and answers to his own predicament as a Catholic and emerging artist by structuring his world around internally significant images of water and flight" (15). From this brief survey, it is clear that comparisons have remained cursory. We will

[218] Sokolov's essays have only relatively recently become the subject of critical enquiry. See, for example, Johnson 2006 and Wakamiya 2006.
[219] Likewise, Karriker calls *A School for Fools* "an ingenious contribution to a genre graced by Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner" ("Double" 613).

consider many of these parallels, along with others that have so far gone unconsidered, at much greater depth below.

Perhaps the most extended, though indirect, consideration of the connections between Joyce and Sokolov to date is Sergei Oroby's recent article, "Istoriia odnogo uchenichestva (Vladimir Nabokov - Sasha Sokolov - Mikhail Shishkin)." He suggests a line of development between the three figures with Joyce as an important corollary. For example, Oroby compares the use of mythology in *Finnegans Wake* to *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* (299-300).[220] Focusing on their intense interest in the word (along with memory and language) as a creative principle, Oroby ultimately proposes that Shishkin is proceeding along the "classical realist metatextual" tradition that his predecessors, both Russian and Western, built (306). By this term he means the attention to (classical) form and experimental approach to metatextuality shared by all four writers.

Although the heavily intertextual nature of Sokolov's work has been noted in a number of studies, they have largely focused on domestic contacts. Alexandra Karriker (1979), for instance, traces Russian sources including Pushkin, Gogol, and *byliny*, while Ludmilla Litus (1997, 1998) draws linguistic parallels to Gogol and discusses the generally intertextual nature of *A School for Fools*. Analyzing more recent points of reference, Olga Matich (1987) suggests that Sokolov's personification of nature can be linked to Pasternak's poetry; she also comments on his connections to Youth Prose (Bitov, in particular), the Scythian group, and other contemporary

[220] On the role of myth in Sokolov's fiction, particularly his second novel, see Ashcheulova 1998 (p. 139), Johnson 1984 (p. 212), and Lipovetskii's "Mifologiia metamorfoz: Poetika *Shkoly dlia durakov* Sashi Sokolova" (1997). Meletinsky has also demonstrated how mythification has gone far beyond Realism and Modernism in writers' quest to "mythicize the prose of daily life" (xix). No matter Sokolov's engagement with myth, he does not come close to Joyce's experiments in creating a "meta-mythology" (312); his interests lie elsewhere.

authors (Venedikt Erofeev) in "Sasha Sokolov's *Palisandriia*: History and Myth."[221] According to Richard Borden, the narrator's conception of time in *A School for Fools* has its roots in Kataev's work.[222] Western sources have clearly received less critical attention despite the fact that Sokolov, like Nabokov before him, opened his art to European traditions.[223] Given that tendency, tracing the Joycean strain in Sokolov's fiction more closely will expand both our understanding of his poetics and the scope of his engagement with European culture and cultural myths.

SOKOLOV READING JOYCE

Although Sokolov's *A School for Fools* contains fewer of the explicit references to Joyce than can be found in Nabokov's and Bitov's novels, his style as well as key details suggest a potent Joycean presence. In short, this novel *reads* more like Joyce. While Sokolov's style has been occasionally identified as "Joycean," no extended study of this connection exists.[224] Points of comparison in the present chapter will include: stream of consciousness, structural play, and so-called "forking characters." Our first aim will be to determine which stylistic elements Sokolov drew from Joyce, why he did so, and how he made them his own—or not. There are of course other potential sources for all these devices and techniques, so our analysis will use the

[221] The Russian version of this article, "*Palisandriia*: Dissidentskii mif i ego razvenchanie," can be found in *Sintaksis* 15 (1986): 86-102.
[222] Cf. Johnson's "The Galoshes Manifesto" (pp. 176-9).
[223] See Tumanov and Freedman (especially pp. 265-7) for some exceptions. Writing about *A School for Fools*, Moody provides a wide-ranging list of allusions and possible allusions that includes Russian, Western, and classical writers ("Gogol, Leonardo, Homer, Avvakum, Esenin, Verne, Voznesensky, Hemingway, Radishchev, Lugavoi, Gorky, Fofonov, Lermontov, Belaev, Tolstoi, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Lenin, Poe, Oleinikov, Nekrasov, and Gàrcia-Lorca") and believes that "the importance that allusion plays in characterizing the narrator and enabling the reader to gauge the degree of his madness cannot be overemphasized: the question should be gone into in great detail" (32).
[224] Other studies that treat Sokolov's style in various ways include Johnson (1980), Boguslawski (1983), Simmons (1986, 1993), Brainina, Egorov (2002a, 2002b, 2006), and Orobii.

evidence at hand (statements, clear allusions, parallels, etc.) to prove Joyce was, at the very least, one such key source.

Strong thematic connections—the creation of an artistic identity, generational relationships, language, and writing—also unite Sokolov's and Joyce's experimental novels. In terms of the present study's principal narrative thread, we find an even more advanced dissolution of Joyce's paternal project in Sokolov's novel. Again, as with Bitov, approaching Sokolov with a combination of theories will prove beneficial. For example, Gérard Genette contrasts the parodist, who focuses on content rather than style, with the pastiche writer, who emphasizes a borrowed style rather than any specific elements of plot. Thus, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* act as "a means of actualization" through style from which Sokolov can weave his own tale (82). Moreover, it should be recalled that the Soviet/Russian context is not isomorphic with the Western one; these writers are belated, but their cultural milieu is as well. While *A School for Fools* continues to draw on modernist models and Sokolov engages with Joyce's *Ulysses*, plot and character are dissolved almost entirely, much as in *Finnegans Wake*. Sokolov imbibed the lessons of the *Wake*, ones that were not yet written by Olesha's time, rejected by Nabokov, and apparently still unavailable to Bitov.[225] Furthermore, writing his novel in the early 1970s, Sokolov could not help but respond to Joyce in ways different from those that preceded him. The protagonist, Nymphea or Student So-and-So,[226] struggles with his own identity as well as his relationship to his father, but Stephen's project takes a remarkably different form here.

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[225] Cf. Bitov's statement from the commentary to *Pushkin House*: "The author doesn't know French, and he hasn't read or seen *Finnegans Wake* (he's not alone)" (386).

[226] We will use both names interchangeably. Any patterns that exist in their usage throughout the novel to distinguish the protagonist's identities are ultimately destabilized by exceptions and discrepancies.

This transformation of Joyce's Shakespeare theory involves two distinct operations. First, the search for the father becomes a disappearance into style or texture. In general, both the Student and Stephen face a generational gap that cannot be bridged; the younger artists have an idealized view of the world that contrasts with the fathers' practicality and materialism. However, whereas Stephen adopts a literary father to escape his present conditions, forging his identity as an artist in the tradition of a particular forebear, Student So-and-So escapes into language itself. His story is less about his identity as an artist coming into his own through revisions of the past than it is about language's playful potential to transcend the mundane. Language and the many forms it takes in the Student's narrative become a means of substitution. The search for the father—both filial and affilial—dissolves away as Sokolov points out the relativity of all cultural values, including literary lineage, and the power of the literary imagination. Sokolov takes up and modifies Joyce's stylistic devices in order to transcend the sense of belatedness that plagues a writer of his generation. Here, language trumps the artist as "hero."

This not insignificant revelation brings us to the second component of Sokolov's revision of the Joycean model. *A School for Fools* recapitulates *Ulysses*'s penultimate episode, "Ithaca," which features the young artist vanishing into the early morning to find his own way.[227] However, Sokolov now has the Student meet his (authorial) maker. Lipovetsky claims that "the dissolution of the boundaries between the author, the narrator, and the main character" takes place at this point (*Russian Postmodernist Fiction* 25). Bearing this point in mind, we can see how *A School for Fool*'s ending represents a paralogical move on Sokolov's part. By inserting himself (or his avatar) into the textual fabric of his own novel, he averts the need to complete

[227] References to *Ulysses* are to Joyce 1986, and those to *A School for Fools* to Sokolov 1990.

Stephen's project on his terms. Though his use of a Joycean subtext motivates his own endeavor and manifestly demonstrates the importance of the Irish writer for Sokolov, he chooses no explicit literary father figure by the end of the novel; Sokolov instead breaks the boundaries between character and author, asserting his own primary position in the history of literary-cultural values.

HOW SOKOLOV "TRANSLATED" JOYCE'S LANGUAGE

The most pressing and in some ways obvious correspondence between Joyce and Sokolov is their use of language. Of course, "Joyce's language" can refer to a multitude of styles: the deceptive realism of *Dubliners*, the episodes in *Ulysses* inflected with free indirect discourse, the phantasmagoric drama of "Circe" that presages *Finnegans Wake*'s dense, pun-heavy prose. This fact applies just as well to what we call "Sokolov's language," which is remarkably diverse even in only three novels.

One stratagem shared by Sokolov and Joyce is the stream-of-consciousness technique.[228] Though at first glance it does away with logic in favor of immediacy and emotion, stream of consciousness belies great technical skill and attention to form in the two writers. Here, we will take two primary examples: the passages in which Student So-and-So's narrative morphs into an even looser form of its already frenzied state and Molly's famous soliloquy at the end of *Ulysses*. McMillin, in his brief comments on Sokolov's brand of stream of consciousness, also makes this comparison explicit: "Sokolov resembles such leaders of Western modernism as Joyce, Woolf and, perhaps, Faulkner. The punctuation-free, often alliterative musings of Sokolov's narrative show great rhythmic variety, with sounds merging and echoing in a hallucinatory manner that at

[228] See, for example, Borden 1999 (p. 313), Erzsébet (p. 428), Johnson 1980 (p. 221), and Lipovetsky 1990 (pp. 88, 90).

times resembles, for example, the monologue of Molly Bloom, with the additional element of some Russian folk cadences" (234-5). Examining the two extended passages together, the similarities McMillin notes become just as telling as the differences.

In the first example of this prototypically modernist technique from *A School for Fools*, the Student's words serve as an incantation that brings the character Veta into existence:

> […] but the branch is sleeping, having closed its flower petals, and the trains, stumbling on switches, will not wake it for any reason and will not shake off a single drop of dew from it — sleep sleep branch smelling of creosote in the morning wake and bloom then wither scatter petals in the eyes of semaphores and dancing to the beat of your wooden heart laugh at the stations sell yourself to passersby and to those departing weep and yell baring yourself in the mirrors to the train compartment what's your name I am called Vetka I am Vetka of the acacia I am Vetka of the railroad I am Veta pregnant by the tender bird called Nightingale I am pregnant with the coming summer and the crash of the freight train here take me take me I am ceasing to bloom no matter what it's not at all expensive I cost no more than a ruble at the station I am sold by tickets but if you want go without paying there won't be a conductor he's sick wait I will unbutton myself see I am all snowy white well shower me all over shower me with kisses no one will notice the petals aren't visible on white and I'm bored of it all sometimes I seem to myself simply an old lady who has spent her whole life walking along glowing engine slag on the mound she is all old ugly I don't want to be an old woman […]
>
> […]но ветка спит, сомкнув лепестки цветов, и поезда, спотыкаясь на стыках, ни за что не разбудят ее и не стряхнут ни капли росы -- спи спи пропахшая креозотом ветка утром проснись и цвети потом отцветай сыпь лепестками в глаза семафорам и пританцовывая в такт своему деревянному сердцу смейся на станциях продавайся проезжим и отъезжающим плачь и кричи обнажаясь в зеркальных купе как твое имя меня называют Веткой я Ветка акации я Ветка железной дороги я Вета беременная от ласковой птицы по имени Найтингейл я беременна будущим летом и крушением товарняка вот берите меня берите я все равно отцветаю это совсем недорого я на станции стою не больше рубля я продаюсь по билетам а хотите езжайте так бесплатно ревизора не будет он болен погодите я сама расстегну видите я вся белоснежна ну осыпьте меня совсем осыпьте же поцелуями никто не заметит лепестки на белом не видны а мне уж все надоело иногда я кажусь себе просто старухой которая всю жизнь идет по раскаленному паровозному шлаку по насыпи она вся старая страшная я не хочу быть старухой […] (16)

On one level, in Sokolov's hands stream of consciousness functions as a means to explore the connections the mind creates and the rhythm of thoughts themselves, at least within the imagination of his narrator. On another level, Sokolov adapts this technique from Joyce as a means of escape from fossilized artistic and linguistic forms that define his era. Amid Socialist

Realism's calls for fiction that concerns itself with social questions and places an emphasis on content rather than form, Sokolov turned to modernist models. Incidentally, in an interview with Olga Matich, Sokolov proposes—not without a hint of self-defense—that he learned a great deal from the "modernist" Tolstoy, who "used stream of consciousness as a device long before Joyce" ("Beseda" 12). True as this may be, Sokolov's stream of consciousness resembles Joyce's much more closely than Tolstoy's. On a purely visceral level, the two modern writers manifest stream of consciousness through the use of non-standard punctuation and syntax; this holds true even in comparison to the Faulkner of *The Sound and the Fury*, in which stream of consciousness is restricted to thoughts and logic, much more than to the text's structure or syntax. Sokolov may have learned from both the proto-modernist Tolstoy and the high modernist Joyce, but the product of these literary mentorships resembles the latter. Molly's soliloquy is precisely the sort of "formal innovation" that Sokolov describes in his interview with Vrubel'-Golubkina and represents a release from formal strictures.

By making this device the central technique of *A School for Fools*, Sokolov comes closer to the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* than of *Ulysses*'s final episode. Here, language itself, rather than plot or character, dictates the progression of the novel. As has been noted previously, in the passage quoted above, the railway branch (*severnaia vetka*) transforms into a branch of acacia (*vetka akatsii*) and, finally, into the multi-faceted character Veta/Vetka, teacher, railway prostitute, and beloved all at once. While Joyce's heroine does not perform exactly the same sort of linguistic sorcery, her soliloquy features similar jumps in thoughts that carry one idea onto the next: "[…] then you have to look out of the window all the nicer then coming back suppose I never came back what would they say eloped with him that gets you on on the stage the last concert I sang at where its over a year ago when was it St Teresas hall […]" (616). But in

Finnegans Wake this principle can be found on nearly every page: "Dogging you round cove and haven and teaching me the perts of speech. If you spun your warns to him on the swishbarque waves I was spelling my yearns to her over cottage cake. We'll not disturb their sleeping duties. Let besoms be bosuns. It's Phoenix, dear. And the flame is, hear!" (620.33-36–621.1-2).[229] Puns, homonyms, suggestive roots, and all sorts of sound play build up the impression of a text that has become both overwhelmed by the power of language itself and self-consciously captivated by its own possibilities, much as in Sokolov's *A School for Fools*.

It is by now a commonplace of Joyce scholarship that Molly's language is not particularly aberrant beyond its lack of punctuation.[230] Periods, commas, and other marks can easily be inserted to produce entirely lucid, if colloquial, prose. Derek Attridge in "Molly's Flow: The Writing of 'Penelope' and the Question of Women's Writing" suggests that Joyce in effect "exploits readerly habits to fuse speech and writing, or more accurately to demonstrate the inseparability and interdependence of speech and writing in a literate culture" (*Joyce* 104). Molly's speech thus represents not simply the rapid thought processes of a woman in a restless state but rather a *transcription* of those thoughts in the semi-educated style that would have marked a woman's writing of the time. In other words, it approximates a strange mixture of speech, thought, and writing rendered over some thirty-seven pages.

To our knowledge, a comparable approach has not been considered in Sokolov scholarship with regard to the Student. The tendency to view his narrative as an unstructured, unnatural speech or thought act, as with Molly's "flow," tends to exaggerate its deviancy.

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[229] All further references to *Finnegans Wake* are to Joyce 2012 with both page number and line cited; most editions of *Finnegans Wake*, however, are paginated identically.

[230] As an introduction to his scathing critique of stream-of-consciousness as device in "Penelope," Nabokov suggests that "[r]eaders who want to break down the flow of this chapter need to take a sharp pencil and separate the sentences" (*Lectures* 362).

Indeed, while logical connections may frequently blur, to say the least, inserting punctuation marks, along with tracking the surrealistic connections, can easily clarify a great deal within passages such as the one above. As with Joyce's "Penelope," Student So-and-So's narrative, particularly these highly stylized sections, paradoxically emphasizes the constructed nature of the novel's *text*ure by disrupting typical writing practices. The Student's stream of consciousness records not so much his thoughts directly as a physical, frenzied *transcription* of those very ideas that flitter through his mind. In this way, just as Molly is "embodied" by her text, so too is Student So-and-So. His peculiar language becomes the only "concrete" thing the reader can identify with a character who remains so nebulous in many respects—age, mental capacity, occupation, identity—throughout the novel. It is in this enigmatic state—"fluid" language, "textualized" character identity—that Joyce and Sokolov overlap most in terms of style.

While Sokolov appropriates the Joycean stream-of-consciousness technique, he does stray from the original model through several important inversions of images present in Molly's famous soliloquy. Sustained, mostly unpunctuated stream-of-consciousness narration often appears in *A School for Fools* whenever the narrator begins thinking about his love, Veta.[231] This technique certainly reflects Student So-and-So's convoluted state of mind, but it also directly recalls "Penelope" and its associations with the feminine, passion, and a natural life force. In the passage quoted above, Veta, at least in the Student's imagined recording of her words, refers to herself as a flower whose blossoms are falling.[232] This is an association shared by Molly, whom Bloom once christened a "flower of the mountain" (643). In contrast to Molly, though, Veta here suggests that her falling blossoms, representative of the passage of time, have taken a toll on her.

[231] Cf. pp. 16, 80, 82, 97, 113, 118.
[232] Sokolov's play with "branches" and "leaves/blossoms" also reminds one of Kavalerov's description of how Valia "rustled past [him] like a branch full of leaves and flowers" in Olesha's *Envy* (38).

The former, on the other hand, resists the idea that she has aged: “its a wonder Im not an old shrivelled hag before my time living with him” (639). Traditional symbolic associations aside, these flowery images punctuate the two women’s discourses, demonstrating the changes Sokolov has made to the Joycean model. Language itself here overwhelms the Student’s narrative, and despite his love for Veta, she is revealed to be not only a haggard ideal, but in fact non-existent, or at least present only in his imagination.

These examples illustrate how language itself becomes an intertextual referent in Sokolov’s fiction. In using the stylistic register of a forebear, he transcends it through various strategies: imitations, extensions, and inversions. Simultaneously, his tactic furthermore permits Sokolov to overcome the strictures of any “official” language of Soviet literature.

BUILDING A JOYCEAN NOVEL

Language being the fundamental building block of both Sokolov and Joyce’s art, the manner in which they employ it to give shape to their novels deserves closer inspection as well. With reference to Sokolov’s *School for Fools*, three particular Joycean elements should be examined more closely: the use of lists as a simultaneously organizing and disrupting principle; a catechistic exchange that complicates the text’s epistemological foundations; and a chapter that challenges expectations through a series of short vignettes featuring different perspectives on familiar characters and scenes.

In his detailed formal analysis of *A School for Fools*, Johnson argues that Sokolov’s catalogues, which number over sixty and enumerate items from the single digits to more than a hundred, “display an enormous variety in terms of subject matter, internal conceptual organization, and grammatical format” (“Structural” 230). Indeed, as we have observed in previous chapters and as Johnson mentions, the use of lists as a literary device extends from

Homer to Joyce.[233] Borden also links the Sokolovian list to Valentin Kataev's literary experiments (*Art* 314). While Sokolov's lists do not necessarily allude to Joyce alone, they exhibit the same modernist interest in the enumeration of the everyday and the mundane that is present in *Ulysses*. For example, the Student describes the items dacha commuters carry in their bags: "Tea, sugar, butter, salami; a fresh fish with whipping tail; macaroni, buckwheat, onions, prepared foods; more rarely — salt" (11-12). Johnson observes a "phonetic and rhythmic, rather than […] logical or semantic basis," for this list and most others in the original Russian (230).[234] A not dissimilar example details the contents of Student So-and-So's mother's purse: "a little case for glasses, keys to the apartment, a pincushion, a spool of thread, matches, a compact and the key *to grandmother*" (156).

In *Ulysses* lists can be found in numerous episodes, providing one consistent structural device across a range of styles and points of view. The most comparable to the catalogue of the commuters' belongings examines Bloom's drawers, where items such as a "handwriting copybook," "an old sandglass," and "1 prospectus of The Wonderworker, the world's greatest remedy for rectal complaints" intermingle (592-3). Others, such as those in "Cyclops" and "Oxen of the Sun," both emphasize the phonetic play built into the lists and foreground the device as such. For example, the narrator in "Cyclops" provides the following roster of imaginary wedding guests:

> Lady Sylvester Elmshade, Mrs Barbara Lovebirch, Mrs Poll Ash, Mrs Holly Hazeleyes, Miss Daphne Bays, Miss Dorothy Canebrake, Mrs Clyde Twelvetrees, Mrs Rowan Greene, Mrs Helen Vinegadding, Miss Virginia Creeper, Miss Gladys Beech, Miss Olive

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[233] Sokolov himself refers to Homer when Student So-and-So says, "[…] we cannot enumerate a single ship […]" (17).

[234] Cf. "Ч*а*й, с*ахар*, м*а*сло, колб*аса*; св*еж*ая, бью*щ*ая *х*востом рыба; ма*к*ароны, *к*рупа, лу*к*, полуфабри*к*аты; реже – соль" (my italics). This brief passage might be read as a more concrete, even literal, example of Sokolov's desire to "elevate Russian prose to the level of poetry" (Voronel' 185). A similar paranomastic technique may also be observed in Olesha's *Envy*: "*pechka*" + "An*echka*"/"*P*ro*k*opov*ich*," *val*/"pro*val*it'sia" + "Ka*val*erov"/"*Val*ia," and so on.

> Garth, Miss Blanche Maple, Mrs Maud Mahogany, Miss Myra Myrtle, Miss Priscilla Elderflower, Miss Bee Honeysuckle, Miss Grace Poplar, Miss O Mimosa San, Miss Rachel Cedarfrond, the Misses Lilian and Viola Lilac, Miss Timidity Aspenall, Mrs Kitty Dewey-Mosse, Miss May Hawthorne, Mrs Gloriana Palme, Mrs Liana Forrest, Mrs Arabella Blackwood and Mrs Norma Holyoake of Oakholme Regis (268)

Here, alliteration ("Mrs *Mau*d *Mah*ogany, *Mi*ss *My*ra, *My*rtle"), assonance ("Miss Bl*a*nche M*a*ple, Mrs M*a*ud M*a*hog*a*ny"), rhymes ("Mrs Glor*iana* Palme, Mrs L*iana* Forest"), and all kinds of other stylistic markers augur Sokolov's engagement with catalogues. Such play, of course, is nonetheless largely rooted in the two authors' belief in the power of the word to create a reality. Sounds and words in their texts, particularly *A School for Fools*, *Ulysses*'s strictly non-mimetic sections, and *Finnegans Wake*, conjure up images that come to life as if on their own. In an interview with David Remnick, Sokolov—perhaps idealistically—stresses this transcendent power of language: "Language is more important than life. So if you deal with language, you are creating not only texts, but also something more important than life. It's been said many times, of course, but it is true that first there was the Word, and God created the Word, the Word is God, and God is more important than life" (D01). Both Sokolov and Joyce take pleasure in the freedom that language provides and in the irony that by creating these textual worlds, the sound-play only emphasizes their constructed nature.

Their inventories achieve this goal in other ways, too. In nearly all cases, whether brief or extended, lists derail the narrative, forcing the reader to work through a dense net of references that switches the focus from what precedes it. Often ornamental to the point of being emptied of any "real" meaning, such lists also contribute to the fabric of the novels on a level beyond plot. This tendency is precisely the sort of stylistic lesson that would have drawn Sokolov to Joyce, if, perhaps, through Kataev as a local intermediary. Under the guise of coherence and verisimilitude, their lists do more to disrupt the reader's progression through the novels than to

organize the textual worlds for easy consumption. In this way, too, Sokolov departs from Soviet standards.

Sokolov's and Joyce's lists frequently stem from another device that functions as a structuring principle: the catechism. The most famous example of the modernist catechism is, of course, Joyce's "Ithaca" episode. Here, as Karen Lawrence describes, "the book seems to interrogate itself, implicitly promising to fill in the blanks by telling us the present and past perceptions, actions, and feelings of the characters" (*Odyssey* 181). She goes on to affirm the view that while the events can be clarified, the cold, yet somehow comic language the narrator(s) use(s) obscures much of the emotional content:

> Alone, what did Bloom feel?
>
> The cold of interstellar space, thousands of degrees below freezing point or the absolute zero of Fahrenheit, Centigrade or Réaumur: the incipient intimations of proximate dawn.
>
> Of what did bellchime and handtouch and footstep and lonechill remind him?
>
> Of companions now in various manners in different places defunct: Percy Apjohn (killed in action, Modder River), Philip Gilligan (phthisis, Jervis Street hospital), Matthew F. Kane (accidental drowning, Dublin Bay), Philip Moisel (pyemia, Heytesbury street), Michael Hart (phthisis, Mater Misericordiae hospital), Patrick Dignam (apoplexy, Sandymount). (578-9)

The Ithacan catechism is presaged by more succinct examples in other episodes, such as Stephen's exchanges with his students and headmaster in "Nestor" or some of his self-interrogation on the beach in "Proteus."

Sokolov's catechistic device, though, runs throughout the entirety of *A School for Fools*, starting from the very first line: "So, where to begin, with which words? It's all the same, begin with the words: there, at the station pond" (11). In Sokolov's novel, the very act of cross-examining an interlocutor drives forward what is traditionally called the "narrative" in its quest for meaning. That the novel begins with a question is telling. From this very early point the

reader is alerted to the fact that Sokolov is *not* interested in concrete matters, tidy solutions, or incontrovertible "facts." This text can shift at will as the author denies standard practices when it comes to character, plot, and all other elements as necessary.

On one level, the Student's interactions with his teacher, Norvegov, and the scientist Akatov represent a typical catechism, as the disciple is tested even as he gains knowledge from his experienced tutor: "'What did you understand?' asks Akatov, 'share it'" (124). The Student seeks to understand better his surroundings and the people that populate it. As in Joyce, however, there is little that is "typical" about the novel and its devices. For example, his (self-)catechism raises important questions regarding epistemology. Speaking of the dacha commuters, his two voices question their actions: "But why didn't they go to the river? They were afraid of the whirlpools and main channels, the wind and the waves, the deep spots and bottom reeds. And maybe there just wasn't any river? Maybe. But what was it called? The river did have a name" [*nazyvalas'*, lit. "was called"] (12). The act of naming the river essentially calls it into being in the Student's strange narrative, much as Veta morphs into a character by means of his linguistic play. Both Sokolov and Joyce, then, use the catechism as a means to explore the power of the imagination. T. V. Kazarina calls this function—"the movement from the world of reality to the world of the imagination"—the essence of Sokolov's "lessons" for the reader (191). Each couplet builds on the previous one to construct a richer world in which rivers have names and thus exist and in which a long explanation of the piping system explains the source of water.

There are, however, important differences. In *Ulysses*, "Ithaca"'s structure probes and interrogates the very limits of absolute knowledge as it simulates the most complete and scientific answers possible. The mass of words that spill out, supplemented by overly complex syntax, often obfuscates the "reality" behind the language. Joyce thus demonstrates language's

inherent ability to deceive or, at the very least, to remain lacking through quasi-scientific detail. Sokolov certainly addresses this possibility with the Student's exchanges with himself, but the epistemological (and ontological) tension is weaker. Whether or not the river truly exists matters less than the fact that Nymphea *believes* in this river and that the language of the novel brings it into being. Sokolov therefore adopts Joyce's model but also an attitude that more readily dispels any anxiety regarding the reality of the situation. The two sides of the Student may debate the veracity of each one's claims, but ultimately no resolution can be found: They are both right in their contradictory, conversational exchange.

Such fiercely anti-mimetic techniques, used early in chapter 1 ("Nymphea"), make the appearance of chapter 2 ("Now: Stories written on the veranda") all the more perplexing. After having established the novel's (at least) dual-voiced quality, Sokolov suddenly shifts to a series of vignettes told from a number of perspectives. In twelve short scenes he explores the same dacha community environs and portrays the same characters as in the rest of the novel; the key difference is that Nymphea recedes from the novel's narrative foreground, becoming more of a "traditional" character in the process.[235]

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[235] Johnson has offered two explanations for this strange chapter drawn from conversations with Sokolov himself. First, the "author" may be the subject of "The Last Day," a young man discharged from the military who now writes the short stories and, later, the extended tale of Student So-and-So that makes up the rest of the novel. Alternatively, Sokolov suggests that a "'third force' behind the screen" composed some parts ("Background" 334). Here, Sokolov's second theory, as reported by Johnson, recalls the concept of the Arranger first proposed by David Hayman in 1970 to explain *Ulysses*'s narrative distortions and intrusions. He calls the Arranger "a figure or a presence that can be identified neither with the author nor with its narrators, but that exercises an increasing degree of overt control over increasingly challenging materials" (84). The Arranger inserts bits of the narrative that neither characters, nor narrators would be able to supply or be likely to do so in any case. Applying this interpretation to *A School for Fools* more broadly, we can gain insight into its seemingly chaotic framework. In the case of chapter 2, if we follow Sokolov's suggestion, the "third force" is a Sokolovian version of the Arranger, one who is closer to the Joycean Arranger from the second half of *Ulysses*: more explicit than implicit, taken by linguistic/narrative play, and strikingly self-reflexive. Mark Lipovetsky argues against Johnson's reading of the stories as the products of the Student's imagination. He instead suggests that they are written by the "healthy" author who describes similar scenes in the first chapter and that this "polyphonic structure of

This device has its precursor in *Ulysses*'s tenth episode, the equally disorientating "Wandering Rocks." After nine episodes that trace Stephen's and Bloom's physical and mental peregrinations, "Wandering Rocks" disrupts the reader's expectations by turning to number of short descriptions featuring Dublin personages and their actions during a single hour on June 16, 1904. The reader's task, or at least one possible task, is to trace the correspondences between scenes in order to delineate the entire picture, as it were. What Joyce does on a grand scale throughout *Ulysses*, he completes in a smaller form in "Wandering Rocks." Joseph Frank in his landmark essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," argues that Joyce "composed his novel of a vast number of references and cross references that relate to each other independently of the time sequence of the narrative. These references must be connected by the reader and viewed as a whole before the book fits together into any meaningful pattern" (16). Thus, in the episode's second section Corny Kelleher converses with an acquaintance as "a generous white arm from a window in Eccles street fl[ings] forth a coin" (185) and in the third a one-legged sailor receives a coin from a "plump bare generous arm." A similar principle applies to Sokolov's veranda stories. For example, the young girl in "The Tutor" later becomes the telegraph operator in "Amid the Wastelands," and a young man departs from the army in "The Last Day" and returns in "Now" at age 20. Elsewhere, in "As Always on Sunday," Sokolov provides another perspective on the Student's family, particularly his father's relationships with his wife and in-laws, thus extending the frame of the chapter further—another Sokolovian self-reflexive narrative move. This technique demonstrates how Sokolov and Joyce emphasize the subjective nature of reality.

Another related and equally potent connection between the two special chapters concerns narrative variability. By reducing his entire novel into a single episode, Joyce emphasizes in

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the narrative here becomes an embodiment of the peculiar 'garden of forking paths' (Borges)" ("Mifologiia" 178).

"Wandering Rocks" the sheer variability of plot. The many events that occur during the three o'clock hour reflect an entire series of possible tales for the narrator to address. These are stories that may all be told in different ways and that, in a sense, tell the very same story with similar themes: the degradation of man, loneliness, and societal roles in Dublin of the early twentieth century.

Sokolov uses this very same motif in his second chapter. With a few exceptions, the stories almost all feature a girl or young woman reminiscent of Veta or the object of Norvegov's infatuation, Roza Windova, who may very well be the same in any case. Thus, we see the hero's love ("The Last Day" and "Now"), an actor's daughter ("Three Summers in a Row"), an excavator operator's daughter ("As Always on Sunday"),[236] a girl taking lessons ("The Tutor"), the eponymous "Sick Girl," a girl whose mother works on dredging barges ("In the Dunes"), the cousin of a chemistry professor's wife ("Dissertation"), a repairman's daughter in a story that features a description of railway *branches* ("The Locale"), the cross-eyed telegraph operator ("Amid the Wastelands"), and a salesclerk ("The Guard"). The author links these female figures to each other and to Veta/Roza through a multitude of parallels: physical deformities, sickness and death, tedious labor, infatuations and obsessions, and their roles as daughters, wives, and lovers. In this way, Sokolov provides permutations of a single story much as Joyce does in "Wandering Rocks."

Taking a closer look at some of these stories, we find that the Joycean connections run even deeper, bringing together the novel's structure and thematics, and even further, reaching back to *Dubliners*.[237] Describing the chapter, Karriker mentions its "laconism and bare

[236] The operator himself—only mentioned by the narrator in "As Always on Sunday"—appears as the protagonist of "Earth Works," a story with a strong Shakespearean subtext.

[237] Of all of Joyce's works, *Dubliners* had been translated into Russian the most frequently and fully by this point. A version of "Sisters" appeared in 1926 in Paris, an edition (without "The Sisters," "Grace,"

sketchiness" and suggests that the narrator is "a withdrawn, detached observer of phenomena without emotional ties to characters or incidents," which "gives an existential quality to the excerpts" ("Narrative" 292). While it is true that a "writerly" narrator can be detected in several of the stories, particularly those that implicitly or explicitly give the impression of a sketch in the process of its composition, Karriker's descriptions of the chapter misconstrue its narrative construction. There is not a single narrator but several, from the woman of "The Tutor" to the Oleshian speaker in "Amid the Wastelands" and to the particularly cold and distant narrator who describes the death of the eponymous "Guard." The glazier in "As Always on Sunday," too, speaks in a particular brand of *skaz* as he complains about the Student's parents.

Amid this multitude of voices, Sokolov builds a series of tales interconnected, as noted above, through theme and mood. Indeed, the atmosphere that pervades these stories "written on the veranda" is one of degradation. If Sokolov here adopts Joyce's method of "scrupulous meanness,"[238] he does so to demonstrate more clearly the stagnation of these Soviet dacha-dwellers' lives. Thus, the courtship between the repairman's daughter and the young boy in "The Locale" is seemingly recounted without apparent interest, only the air of indifference or inevitability, much as Joyce's narrator describes the boy's failed romance in "Araby" or

"An Encounter," and "A Mother") in 1927 in Leningrad, "Eveline" in 1927, "A Mother" and "A Painful Case" in 1936, a complete edition in 1937, "Araby" in 1946, a reprint of the full 1937 translation in 1966, and "The Dead" in 1975. See Genieva 2005 (pp. 139-41) for complete bibliographic information on these publications.

[238] By this enigmatic phrase, Joyce had in mind a style that pulled no punches and provided penetrating insights into the ills of his countrymen. In a 1906 letter to Grant Richards, he wrote, "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. […] I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard" (*Selected Letters* 83).

Farrington's rage in "Counterparts." In fact, however, the sheer laconism of these scenes masks the authors' taut narrative construction.

This technique can be felt quite vividly in the framing stories "The Last Day" and "Now" from *A School for Fools* and "The Sisters" and "The Dead" in *Dubliners*. With the latter tales, Joyce contrasts two deaths: Father Flynn and Michael Furey. The young narrator of "The Sisters" attempts to come to terms with the death of his idol. He recalls how he would "[gaze] up at the window" as he "said softly to [him]self the word *paralysis*" (*Dubliners* 3). Joyce plays with this connection between the window and death when at the very end of "The Dead" he has Gabriel Conroy "turn to the window" as he considers his wife's former love (194). The omissions regarding Father Flynn's death (from what did he suffer? what caused his paralysis and suffering? why do the adults speak in half-finished thoughts around the boy?) are inverted here in "The Dead," where the blank space, the omission, of Gretta's past romance comes into relief for her husband and provides amazing new insights to him: "Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. […] His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling" (194).[239] In other words, Gabriel's newfound appreciation of *true* love leads to his understanding of other people beyond himself; he can now potentially break away from the moral, spiritual, and physical squalor that haunts the rest of the *Dubliners* stories.

[239] The Chekhovian undertones of this passage are also worth noting. Gabriel's musings recall Chekhov's description of Gurov's wistful thinking at the end of "Lady with a Lapdog": "And it seemed that in a little while a solution would be found, and then a new, wonderful life would begin; and it was clear to both of them that the end remained far, far away and that the most complicated and difficult part was only just beginning" (189). On the theme of Joyce and Chekhov, see Monas for some brief remarks (pp. 205-6).

In his own way, Sokolov picks up these same techniques in "The Last Day" and "Now." The former begins with a young man about to begin military service visiting a girl. Despite the fact that she does not reciprocate his feelings, he recalls how "in the evenings he had paced under her windows until very late, and when the windows went dark, for some reason he would keep standing there and standing there, glancing at the blackened glass" (60). Like Joyce, Sokolov uses the window as an image to symbolize the penetration (or non-penetration) of an admirer into the heart of the admired. It is at once a barrier that keeps the young boy and Sokolov's narrator from really coming into contact with Father Flynn and the girl, respectively, but it also allows careful observation. In "Now," though, Sokolov inverts the Joycean model. Having returned home from his service early due to a radiation accident, the young man takes up work as an attendant in a morgue. One day he realizes that a car crash victim is the same girl he used to watch:

> […] but later he recognized her, although for some reason he couldn't remember her last name and kept looking at her and thinking about how three or four years ago, still before the army, he loved this girl and wanted, very much wanted, to be with her constantly, but she did not love him, she was too pretty to love him. And now, thought the attendant, it was all over, it was all over, and it was unclear what would come next…
>
> […] а затем узнал, но почему-то никак не мог вспомнить ее фамилию, и все смотрел на нее и думал о том, что три или четыре года назад, еще до армии, он любил эту девушку и хотел, очень хотел постоянно быть с ней, а она не любила его, она была слишком хороша, чтобы любить его. И теперь, думал санитар, все это кончилось, кончилось, и непонятно, что будет дальше… (77)

The attendant's graphic encounter with the past in the form of his beloved's charred body produces mixed results. He resembles a combination of Gretta, who witnessed her love's sickness and death in the past, and Gabriel, who comes to terms with this romance and death in the present but looks forward to the future and his "journey westward" (194). Sokolov's hero loses the window, the protective barrier that separates him from death. He can neither come to a better understanding of the past ("he couldn't remember her last name"), nor of the future ("it

was impossible to know what the future would bring"). All he possesses, then, is the titular present, a not particularly solid foundation. The eponymous "Dead" of Joyce's collection bring about great revelations for Gabriel Conroy, while in "Now" they only undermine the character's stability. In this way, *A School for Fools*' second chapter offers a microcosm of the novel as a whole, particularly as it engages with and subverts Joycean themes, style, and structures.

FORKING CHARACTERS

If Sokolov disrupts plot, language, and structure in such myriad and radical ways, his approach to character only solidifies his status as an iconoclast. As evidenced by the essay "*Palisandre – C'est Moi*," Sokolov himself takes pride in these methods: "I want to take the loaf of *belles-lettres*, extract from it all the raisins of plot and cast them all as alms to the surrounding voracious masses. And the daily bread of the primordial, autonomous word I want to give to the humble in spirit, to the persecuted, and to the other chosen ones" (*Trevozhnaia* 52). Breaking away from mimetic representation, Sokolov asserts that he moves beyond the limits set up before him by literary history.

Indeed, it is by now a commonplace that one of the most distinctive facets of Sokolov's art is his use of "forking characters." Writing about *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*, Leona Toker observes how "characters of the novel form groups whose members merge into one another, so that each character seems to branch, or to fork into that of his neighbors" (354).[240] Thus, all women are a version of Orina (under various guises and names), and Il'ia and Iakov take on different forms that are also the same all at once. Naum Leiderman and Mark Lipovetsky moreover note that the characters frequently blend not due to "similarity" but because of

[240] Nabokov's jailers in *Invitation to a Beheading* behave similarly, shifting titles and adopting poorly fashioned costumes.

"proximity" (278). While critical similarities between character variants *do* exist, this reading helps explain how Veta in *A School for Fools* can be both train-station prostitute and teacher and how Student So-and-So both man and flower. Finally, as Hanna Kolb suggests, Sokolov uses these strategies "to escape the dictatorship of identity and to unmask it as mere appearance and deception" (203). As with his forking plotlines and conception of time as a simultaneity (discussed below), Sokolov exposes character as simply another tool of the writer by rendering his heroes as constantly shifting figures. Indeed, Johnson argues that Sokolov follows a Formalist view of character, one that proposes that "literary characters are merely by-products of the narrative structure, that they are compositional rather than psychological entities" ("Structural" 225).

Such self-aware play with character obviously occupies a greater role in *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* and *Finnegans Wake*. However, its roots can be observed in Sokolov's and Joyce's earlier novels, too. Nearly all of the characters have a double or triple iteration in *A School for Fools*:

> Student So-and-So, Nymphea Al'ba, Those Who Came (*Te Kto Prishli*)
> Norvegov, Pavel/Savl, *vetrogon*
> Arkady Arkad'evich Akatov, Leonardo da Vinci
> Trakhtenburg, Tinbergen
> Mikheev, Medvedev, the Wind-Sender

The degree to which each character variant differs from others fluctuates. Some are for all intents and purposes identical; others, such as the two halves of the Student's personality, can occasionally be distinguished. Likewise, in *Ulysses*, "Joyce begins to dissolve the boundaries of character […] willfully confounding the attributes of Stephen and Bloom" (Heller 162). Three key examples, previously noted in different contexts, come from the first episodes of the novel, "Circe," and "Ithaca." Early on in *Ulysses* the two protagonists unwittingly see the same cloud pass overhead (8, 50). In "Circe," Stephen and Bloom also look into a mirror and experience a

shared vision, united by their anxieties in this scene: "*Stephen and Bloom gaze in the mirror. The face of William Shakespeare, beardless, appears there, rigid in facial paralysis, crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hatrack in the hall*" (463). The phantasmagoric scenes at the brothel in "Circe" furthermore allow characters to blend into one another and to take different shapes. Thus, in the chaos of the bordello, the mistress Bella becomes Bello, a gargantuan, masculine, imperial force, while the prostitutes begin to refer to Bloom with the feminine pronouns "she" and "her" (432-4). All the characters—here reduced to types and figures—undergo numerous kinds of mergers and distortions.

Sokolov's method, however, also certainly recalls the Joycean model from *Finnegans Wake*, where "[u]niquenes of character is subordinated to narrative process" and the heroes "are reduced to names and those names are played against each other in a way that evokes the 'heroticisms, catastrophes and eccentricities transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past' (Heller 162-3). This technique is seen most vividly in Joyce's use of sigla for his characters, something he detailed in a 1924 letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver:

 (Earwicker, H C E by moving letter round)
 Anna Livia
 Shem-Cain
 Shaun
 Snake
 S. Patrick
 Tristan
 Isolde
 Mamalujo

 This stands for the [novel's] title but I do not wish to say it yet until the book has written more of itself. (*Letters* 213)

Through Joyce's play with symbols and initials, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (HCE) becomes Haroun Childeric Eggeberth, Haveth Childers Everywhere, and Here Comes Everybody

and Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) becomes associated with an entire list of river names and other figures. These modulations allow Joyce to transpose his characters easily from situation to situation. They are thus rendered as mere vessels for ideas, types, and archetypes. Shem the Penman, HCE's son, embodies artistic trickery, Shaun the Postman, his brother, the jealous, cautious man of society, and ALP a feminine life force.

Again, Sokolov's *A School for Fools* reflects many of these Joycean methods. First, Sokolov's transformations of characters are largely based on proximity and archetypal patterning. In the first chapter Student So-and-So undergoes his first (imagined) transformation, becoming "a white river lily with a long golden-brown stem" (31). Other mutations include Norvegov's tale of the carpenter who transformed into a bird (145-8),[241] the Student's numerous versions, for example an engineer (82), and Akatov's blending with Leonardo in the Student's mind. Veta, too, becomes a life force of sorts, associated largely with nature in her various forms. Likewise, many of the "positive" characters derive their names from the Russian *vetr* [wind]: Norvegov who is also known as *vetrogon*, Roza *Vetr*ova, Medvedev the Wind-Sender (*Nasylaiushchii Veter*). Johnson suggests the same may be said about Akatov/Leonardo, who is first introduced by way of a repeated sound "*le(t)*": *Le*onardo, let*aiushchiie nasekomye*, let*o*, Let*a* ("Structural" 223). These phonemes behave much as Joyce's sigla, creating incarnations of different characters that are united through shared traits and external associations such as phonetic similarities. Sokolov reduces characters to sounds, reflecting an approach that takes ideas, rather than content and plot, to be singularly important in his art.

In his various tales and recollections, both "real" and imagined, the Student recombines all these figures as he attempts to come to terms with the world around him. For example, in

[241] On Sokolov's "ornithic imagery," see Ziokolwski's excellent article.

times of distress Veta becomes the station-prostitute, rather than the beautiful, untouchable teacher, the bearer of knowledge, for the Student. In total, though, she functions as an archetypal feminine figure: both idealized and degraded, lacking true characterization if not embodiment. These features, of course, recall Orina from *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*, Molly, and ALP, all seductresses and female ideals in their own ways.

Turning to the artist figures in these novels, in the contrast between the two halves of the Student's mind—the artistic, free-spirited individual and the other, more demanding identity that tries valiantly to remain in control and to tame his more spirited "brother"—we can see echoes of the relationship between Shem the Penman and Shaun the Postman in *Finnegans Wake*, as well as parallels with Stephen's own experience in *Ulysses*. Shem has traditionally been associated with Joyce himself and Shem with his brother Stanislaus, the more pragmatic of the two.[242] Descriptions of the Shem/Shaun dialectic[243] could very well apply to the Student's divided self: "Shaun […] accuses Shem of refusing to be a proper member of society. Shem is accused of being a sham and a forger, […] constantly imitating others in his writing. His immense pride goes together with an absolute refusal to join in the patriotic struggle which would offer him the chance of achieving true manhood. Instead he prefers to occupy himself with the affairs of women" (MacCabe 28) and "Shaun is, first, the public that receives the poet's message, ridicules and belittles it when it cannot ignore it" (Frye 16). Indeed, the more obedient half of the Student's mind constantly questions the other's flights of the imagination and tries to temper any creative suggestions with references to reality and authority. The "patriotic struggle" in this case concerns the standards of Soviet society, something the Student fails to uphold in nearly every

[242] See, for example, Burrell (pp. 89-90).
[243] Cf. Brodsky's "Gorbunov and Gorchakov" (1965-8, pub. 1970).

regard. Less successful than Shem in romantic matters, the Student still devotes a great deal of his narrative to women, particularly Veta, and expresses an urgent desire to understand sex.

Both authors, though, complicate matters by constantly merging and splitting apart the two figures. In the *Wake*, Joyce's brothers undergo crisis after crisis, fight after fight, and yet they can become one: "With this laudable purpose in loud ability let us be singulfed" (306.05-06). The Student, too, experiences moments of complete internal discord ("Oh, I was mistaken, sir, that one, the *other* one, dreams of becoming an engineer," 170) as well as of agreement ("But why did you pluck it, was there really any need […] Of course, I shouldn't have, I didn't want to, believe me, at the beginning I didn't want to, never wanted to," 35). Stephen proposes a similar idea concerning the protean nature of identity in *Ulysses*'s "Scylla and Charybdis": "Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves" (175). He suggests that a person's character shifts and constantly reflects back on itself as it takes on new versions, often self-created iterations. This insight, of course, plays a great role in his Shakespeare theory, which is itself tied closely to his conception of art as a vessel for the creation of one's identity. Student So-and-So explicates a similar idea near the end of the novel: "The song of years, the melody of life. All the rest is not you, all the others are alien. Who are you yourself? You don't know. You'll only find out later, stringing the beads of memory. Consisting of them. You yourself will be memory" (151). Reduced to this state of being, one need only piece together recollections, artistically reconceived and joined together, to fashion a personality.

Elsewhere, though, Stephen and the Student consider the world external to their memory and mind and come to different conclusions. Walking along the beach in "Proteus," Stephen closes his eyes to pay attention to the noises around him. He notes various sounds, worries about

falling, and ultimately turns his gaze to his surroundings once again: "Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane. *Basta!* I will see if I can see. See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end" (31). Stephen learns two things here. First, he comes to appreciate the world of the audible more deeply with his vision removed from the equation. Second, and more importantly, once he opens his eyes and recognizes the beach around him, the fact that the world exists independently of his recognition of it strikes him with full force ("*Basta!*").

Sokolov includes a similar episode in the first chapter of *A School for Fools*. Here, the Student has just undergone his transformation into Nymphea, the river flower:

> Having taken several steps along the beach I looked back: nothing resembling my tracks remained on the sand. And nevertheless I still did not want to believe. You never know, as it happens, first of all, it could turn out that it's all a dream, second of all, it's possible that the sand here is extraordinarily firm and I, weighing a total of only so many kilograms, did not leave tracks in it because of my lightness, and, thirdly, it is quite probable that I didn't disembark from the boat onto the shore yet**,** but to this point still sit in it and, naturally, I could not leave tracks where I had not yet been.
>
> Пройдя по пляжу несколько шагов, я оглянулся: на песке не осталось ничего похожего на мои следы. И все-таки я еще не хотел верить. Мало ли, как бывает, во-первых, может оказаться, что все это сон, во-вторых, возможно, что песок здесь необычайно плотный и я, весящий всего столько-то килограммов, не оставил на нем следов из-за своей легкости, и в-третьих, вполне вероятно, что я и не выходил еще из лодки на берег, а до сих пор сижу в ней и, естественно, не мог оставить следов там, где еще не был. (32)

While his realization that external reality does not depend on his perception frustrates Stephen's ego, Nymphea examines the sand for "proof" of his existence and finds none, yet his response is not despair but bemusement. Setting aside the fact that this scene, along with all those in *A School for Fools*, is entirely "imagined" by the Student, Sokolov emphasizes the transient nature of reality, art, and character in what appears to be a direct allusion to Joyce's novel. If Stephen's certainty in structures and the artist's vision is (at least temporarily) disrupted by the incident on the beach, then Nymphea's dissolution comes into sharper focus in his. Sokolov's hero leaves no

marks in the sand—only on the page with his narrative—dissolving as it were into the truly protean stylistic texture of language and non-plot.

The Student's third identity, Those Who Came, subverts Joyce's texts further. Limited to five references in *A School for Fools*, this nickname brings to mind Joyce's "Here Comes Everybody" from *Finnegans Wake*. The most famous of Earwicker's monikers, Here Comes Everybody represents his universal character: "An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation" (32.19-21). He becomes all sorts of heroes throughout the novel. Kimberley J. Devlin describes him as a "composite figure" who "incorporates into his multiplicitous self Joyce's two most famous heroes, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, as well as more peripheral characters" and "an even richer panoply of analogical types" (20-1). Here Comes Everybody therefore is the complete embodiment of Joyce's extreme approach to character development. He does not maintain a stable identity as he shifts according to the story's needs.

Sokolov references HCE openly with Those Who Came.[244] The first appearance of TWC (*TKP*, ТКП) takes place during one of the Student's strange digressions regarding his efforts to learn the origins of a pair of pajamas, which in turn becomes a short tale about workers reading Japanese literature. Elsewhere, near the end of the novel, Nymphea speaks of the name with great elation: "And wherever we came, they said about us: look, there they are—Those Who Came. Greedy for knowledge, daring lovers of truth, heirs of Savl, his principles and declarations, we were proud of each other" (181). In both Joyce and Sokolov these names—

[244] Johnson offers an alternate explanation based on phonetic play: "The boy's identity as Te Kto Prišli apparently evolves from his response, *Te Kto Prišli*, to the official's *Kto*? when he answers the knock at his door. The following 'Japanese' section is presumably suggested by the vaguely oriental sound of the name, Te Kto Prišli, and so on" ("Structural" 214). Alternatively, Cynthia Simmons links it to the Advent and the Student's feelings of "martyrdom and alienation" ("Incarnations" 281).

TWC and HCE—represent a generalized presence rather than a particular character with individual traits.

However, Sokolov inverts the Joycean original with his character's name, suggesting a terminal point of development in one sense, but also challenging any definitive solution to the problem of primacy. Thus, Those Who Came is/are the result of Here Comes Everybody, a take on character that universalizes and breaks apart identity. In the words of Norvegov, they are "the future and past ones" (149). Devoid of any foundation in time, whether past or future, TWC simply exist in the present: arrived, existing, wrapped up in the moment. This conception of a character without past or future emphasizes Sokolov's guiding interest in escaping from any kind of conflict with literary history. As the all-in-all and totally present, TWC need not find a precedent.

Sokolov stresses this point at the very conclusion of the novel in two ways. First, he has his hero speak of the immortality of nature. He describes how each plant, particularly the rhododendron, feels no sadness at the thought of death, for their seeds bear them into the future. He notes that "all nature, excepting man, is one undying, indestructible whole […] it is only man, burdened by egotistical pity for himself, to whom dying feels offensive and bitter" (183). What Sokolov does throughout his novel, however, is present a single human capable of such a selfless unity with nature. Karriker argues that "metamorphosis provides the ultimate escape for the student because it enables him to transcend time, space and shape" ("Narrative" 299). Most importantly, the transformations the Student, who is also Nymphea Al'ba and TWC, undergoes bring him closer both to nature and to man in their symbolic connections, recalling again the universalizing aspects of both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.[245]

[245] In a brief but impressive sketch, Ashcheulova (1999) outlines the various symbolic functions of butterflies in the novel. She argues that butterflies represent the life-death-resurrection metamorphosis for

Second, Sokolov takes this maneuver even further by having his hero meet his author and become part of a crowd at the very end of the novel: "Happily chatting and counting again our pocket change, slapping each other on the shoulders and whistling silly songs, we walk out into the many-footed street and in some miraculous manner are transformed into passersby" (183).[246] Through this open-ended leap into the unknown, TWC become part of the fabric of life, while the author (Sokolov's stand-in) elects to join his character in the texture of literature. Rather than follow a past model, choosing a literary forefather as Olesha, Nabokov, and Bitov did before him, Sokolov here welcomes the effervescence of the present moment. In breaking so radically with a traditional approach to characterization, Sokolov, following in Joyce's *Wake*, continues to unravel the cultural hierarchies set up around him. He sees Joyce's deconstruction of character in *Finnegans Wake* as an appealing alternative that allows the author to slip, almost unnoticed, into the text, championing style rather than content, one's accomplishments rather than the anxiety caused by predecessors.

WRITING AND READING FATHERS

Given the centrality of alternative approaches to character in Sokolov's work, it is worth taking a closer look at his depiction of paternal relationships in *A School for Fools*. The Student's relationship with his father in particular has received some critical attention. Matich, for example, describes the father figure as a "standard literary representative of the conservative

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the Student, who treats the snow butterflies as a mechanism to face chaos and death. Butterflies, of course, are also a leitmotif in Nabokov's work.

[246] Cf. the ending of Nabokov's *Invitation*: "and Cincinnatus went, amid the dust and falling things, and the flapping scenery, heading in the direction where, judging by the voices, stood beings akin to him" (*Sobranie* 187). According to Johnson, "Sokolov's earliest contact with Nabokov's work was in 1960-1961 when a schoolmate […] surreptitiously brought a Nabokov novel to class. […] Sokolov succeeded in looking at only the opening pages before returning the volume to its owner. This, he says, was his only exposure to Nabokov until his arrival in the West fifteen years later. He is no longer certain but thinks that the book may have been an émigré edition of *Priglašenie na kazn"*" ("Saša" 153).

older generation" and notes the Oedipal subtext in their conflict ("Sasha" 305).[247] Building on Matich's analysis, Lisa Wakamiya argues that the father-prosecutor and other authorities throughout the novel serve as "representatives of a symbolic order who would impose their system of signification upon the narrator" (64). Before turning to the issue of writing (signification) as it functions in the novel at large, we will first explore how it relates to the father-son relationship in *A School for Fools*.

As has been previously noted, the Student's father attempts to curb his rebellious tendencies by making him copy articles from state newspapers. This act represents the father's imposition of a language and worldview upon his son, something against which the Student rebels. Wakamiya goes so far as to assert that the Student's refusal to accept his father's terms for things serves as a means to avoid death ("Overcoming" 64). This behavior, of course, takes us far from the paternal idolatry of Fyodor's projects in *The Gift*, wherein he uses the fathers' languages—Pushkin's prose and poetry, Konstantin Godunov-Cherdyntsev's scientific accounts—to escape his émigré plight. Bitov comes closer to Sokolov in this regard, suggesting that an overdependence on past culture restricts the movement of the present-day artist.[248]

Sokolov here also aligns himself with Joyce, who firmly recognized the power language holds over the creative individual. Compare, for example, Stephen's thoughts in *Portrait* during his conversation with the English Jesuit dean of studies:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master* on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be

[247] These kinds of relations are no less complicated in Sokolov's other novels. Johnson, for example, observes "an evolving Oedipal theme" throughout the three works ("Twilight" 644). For some interesting comments by Sokolov on his own father's presence in his life, see Remnick (n. pag.).

[248] Bitov has complimented Sokolov's art. In the very brief sketch, "Grust' vsego cheloveka" (The Sadness of All Man), Bitov praises *A School for Fools* very highly as an encyclopedic account of everyone's basic life experiences and recounts teaching it in a special school himself.

> for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (205)

Here, Stephen recognizes that the English language for him "is itself a symptom of external controls" and that he must find a way to "write in the language of the master [Roman Catholicism and British imperial rule] without acceding to the colonial influence of the master's own aesthetic" (Eide 301). Sokolov uses the Student's experience in *A School for Fools* to dramatize much the same process. Making matters worse, the father's language—one of oppression and creative restrictions—represents a hostile takeover of the Russian language from the inside, as it were. The history of colonialism haunts Stephen's use of English, while the specter of Socialist Realism looms over Sokolov's Russian.

To rebel in Nymphea's case means turning to not just any language but to a cry that "embodies the protest of the miserable" (Tumanov 141).[249] Even while his father attempts to stifle his efforts to give voice to his concerns, as Tumanov notes, Nymphea makes himself heard: "I roared so loudly as I had never yelled before in my life, I wanted him to hear and understand what the cry of his son means: a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a! wolves on the walls even worse on the walls people people people's faces these are hospital walls that is time when you die quietly and terribly a-a-a-a-a" (98). The yell disrupts any sense of logic, order, or teleology that might be present in the sort of Sovietized language that his father champions; it instead gives shape to the Student's and Sokolov's alternative approach to language, one that is totally individualized. As in Joyce's works, the Student must learn to use, or at least work around, the strictures of his paternal language to create something new.

[249] For an extended consideration of Nymphea's cries and their similarities to Benji's tormented screams in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, see Tumanov.

The related issues of language and writing bring father and son into direct conflict in another key scene from *A School for Fools*. In a moment that may be read as either lucid mischievousness or innocent naïveté, the Student uses his father's words against him. Told repeatedly that only "scoundrels" write, Student So-and-So asks his father why he bothers to read newspapers if that is the case. He notices the effect of this question immediately after when "two big flies, like two black tears, crawled across his big white face, and he couldn't even swat them because he was so taken aback" (51). Sokolov contrasts the father's pale face with the black flies to establish a sepulchral tone in this scene; the Student's words essentially render his father a corpse, left powerless after his hypocrisy is revealed. It will be recalled, of course, that Joyce populates his *Ulysses* with all sorts of dead and decaying parents. Inverting the Shakespearean model, Joyce has Stephen experience extreme guilt at the thought of his dead mother, while his father appears to him in "Circe" with "*strong ponderous buzzard wings*," recalling both the Icarus/Daedalus subtext and associations with death (466).[250] Bloom, too, is troubled by thoughts of his father, Rudolf Virág, on the way to Paddy Dignam's funeral:

> —But the worst of all, Mr Power said, is the man who takes his own life.
>
> Martin Cunningham drew out his watch briskly, coughed and put it back.
>
> —The greatest disgrace to have in the family, Mr Power added.
>
> —Temporary insanity, of course, Martin Cunningham said decisively. We must take a charitable view of it.
>
> —They say a man who does it is a coward, Mr Dedalus said.
>
> —It is not for us to judge, Martin Cunningham said.
>
> Mr Bloom, about to speak, closed his lips again. Martin Cunningham's large eyes. Looking away now. Sympathetic human man he is. Intelligent. Like Shakespeare's face. Always a good word to say. They have no mercy on that here or infanticide. Refuse christian burial. They used to drive a stake of wood through his heart in the grave. As if it wasn't broken already. Yet sometimes they repent too late. Found in the riverbed clutching rushes. He looked at me. (79-80)

However, if in Joyce these filial concerns beset the children without warning, in Sokolov Nymphea engages the father directly, and after he even "pities him a little" (51). This approach

[250] Cf. Pogorzelski (p. 98).

suggests a different attitude toward the past. The nightmare of history haunts Joyce's novel in many forms. Stephen's attempts to rewrite it come at the cost of warring with forebears and transforming himself with a new self-elected lineage. The Student, indeed, "confronts" his father but not with the goal of destroying him.

Nymphea describes a perhaps more aggressive approach when he details a classmate's plan to "dissolve [*rastvorit'*] parents" in a "barrel of acid" (152). The use of the word "dissolve" (*rastvorit'*) is telling, for that is precisely what Sokolov's narrative attempts to do: dissolve away barriers in time, tradition, and style to find a new path. Indeed, through other key image clusters, Sokolov exhibits the desire to stretch the boundaries set up around the creative individual. First, as in *Ulysses*, as well as in *The Gift* and *Pushkin House*, the domestic space acts a particularly potent symbol. Holding a conversation between his two identities, Nymphea implores himself: "Run from *the house of your father* and don't look back, for, if you look back, you will behold the grief in your mother's eyes, and all will become bitter to you" (86, my italics). Analogous phrases appear elsewhere: "why are you [*vy*] shouting here, in *my house*" (97, my italics); "otherwise it wouldn't be very easy for him to live in *that* house" (119, my italics); "I emerge from *my father's house* and walk quietly through the garden" (57, my italics); "You can't imagine how I'm going to miss you after we've unstuck the label and you apply the cancellation and I go back, to *the house of my father*: I will not find no consolation in anything or anywhere" (133, my italics). These cases emphasize how the Student feels that he must flee from his father's house to find his true self.

As demonstrated in chapter 3, the familial (and familiar) home of the father is no less perilous for Stephen, who comments in "Proteus," "Houses of decay, mine, his and all" (33). Of course, Stephen's perspective inverts the Homeric model in which Telemachus hopes to rejoin

his father in the domestic hearth, as well as the Nabokovian one by which Fyodor will fashion a new home for Russian culture with the keys he has taken with him. For both the Student and Stephen, though, too many ills abide in these spaces. They require new environs, and they intend to carve them out using the primary tool available to them: language. Tellingly, though, Nymphea uses his father's boat to transverse the river to reach Veta's dacha, "smear[ing] the oarlocks with thick dark water drawn from the river" (57). Symbolically, the water from the river represents his merger with nature, his departure from the father's materialistic, human-centric worldview.

Images related to his father's clothing, which again recall the other novels examined in the present study, further complicate Nymphea's paternal relationship. At different points he explicitly mentions how he wears his "father's cap" (107, 120), his "ordinary pants with cuffs, made out of hand-me-downs from [his] prosecutor father" (120), a "tie, watch, and briefcase. Like father's" (150), and "a dark duster with six buttons, made out of my prosecutor father's greatcoat" (157). All these items denote the father's attempts to control the son by implicating him in a particular system of signification.[251] They evoke Stephen's concerns regarding his borrowed shoes. These articles of clothing serve as constant reminders of a connection to an order from which the characters wish to disengage. The alternatives presented in Sokolov's novel—wearing galoshes, shoddy clothing, or simply nothing—have been examined at length by Johnson and Borden and linked to Sokolov's appreciation of Ivan Bunin and Valentin Kataev.

Details such as these make the Student's relationship with the father feel the most "real" in *A School for Fools*, alerting the reader to its import. He, like Stephen, is quite aware of his father's potential hold over him. At one particularly dramatic moment, he, in his typical manner,

[251] See Wakamiya 2005 (pp. 63-4) on this issue in connection to language.

both imagines and remembers a row with his father and the results of an extended reconciliation: "my life will come to a stop and will stand like a broken bicycle in the shed, where it is full of faded newspapers […] Yes, you didn't want any reconciliation with our father. That's why when mother shouted after you—*come back!*— you didn't go back" (52). By this point, Nymphea recognizes that to be reconciled with his father means to give up his worldview, his innovative language, and his atypical view of time. By returning to the paternal house, he will be "frozen" without the possibility of floating through tenses as he wishes. The "old newspapers," too, underscores the dual threats of stagnation and restrictions in knowledge and in writing.[252]

In depicting father-son relationships, Sokolov deploys similar themes and images as Joyce. Where they depart in method, however, is in Joyce's stress on the artist selecting a literary precedent to become a father himself. In Sokolov's case, this step is revealed to be unnecessary. While Nymphea may struggle against his father's influence, as embodied by his language, clothing, and house/dacha, he ultimately merges with author, effectively "choosing" himself.

DISCOVERING THE "KEY" TO THE PAST

All the same, in a manner reminiscent of Bitov's explorations of the connections between Leva's generation and the modernist era, Sokolov also probes the Student's relationship with his grandparents. These absent figures form a bridge to the past in the Student's narrative thanks to his special understanding of time. Nevertheless, their descriptions and his relationship with them are not devoid of ambiguity.

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[252] The bicycle image, which frequently appears in connection to Mikheev/Medvedev, the Wind-Sender and postman, functions as a multivalent symbol for change, nature's power, and shifting conditions in *A School for Fools*. Given Sokolov's expressed interest in Beckett, one wonders if the bicycle can be linked to *Molloy*, in which it plays a major role in Beckett's circular narrative. More importantly, the newspapers, along with the nonfunctional bicycle, come to signify life without true development. Newspapers—daily writing with a very short shelf life—become stand-ins for the father here. See Ermolina's "Vremia ot vetra" on the role of wind in Sokolov's novel.

Conversing with Norvegov, the Student explains that he can access the past, present, and future at will in a frenetic temporal simultaneity thanks to a "hereditary disease" inherited from his grandmother: "sometimes she lost her memory, it usually happened if she looked at something extraordinarily beautiful for a long time" (29). Indeed, such complete absorption into natural beauty plagues the Student, for example when he transforms into the lily, Nymphea Al'ba. More important for our analysis, though, is the connection that Nymphea shares with his grandmother because of this so-called disease. Perhaps more than anything else—his cries into barrels, his reading habits, his flights of fancy—this approach to memory and time sets him apart from his parents, particularly his father, who wields a strictly teleological, materialistic view of time. It links him to the modernist age with its explorations of alternative views of time and memory (Bergson, Proust, Nabokov, et al.). In this way Sokolov subtly challenges the status quo and stakes a claim for a particular lineage.

For Nymphea this process is not quite so straightforward. Recognizing his mother's suffering and self-denials, he says, "Grandmother, I try terribly, terribly hard, I'll definitely graduate from the school, please don't worry, and I'll become an engineer, like grandfather" (100). He mentions this profession several times. It is a vocation that emphasizes the creation of material things. And yet it represents the complete opposite of his other potential profession, that of the Akatovian biologist who studies *nature*, not machines.[253] This distinction recalls Stephen and Bloom's conversation regarding the role of the poet in the latter's imagined utopian state, where "the brain and the brawn" will work together (527). In both cases the artist figures clearly prefer the idea of an art independent of societal needs. Moreover, the reference to a career as an engineer serves as a potential allusion to Stalin's "engineers of the human soul." The image

[253] Cf. the student's aforementioned fear of the broken bicycle.

therefore gains ambiguous multivalency as a both positive and negative symbol for past ways of life represented in turn by Nymphea's two grandparents.

Nymphea's predecessors become the Scylla and Charybdis of his symbolic world. On the one hand, he may follow the materialist path of the engineer. If so, he will renounce his special relationship with the natural world, perpetuate his father's philosophy, and join the ranks of Soviet world-builders. On the other hand, he may link himself to a different tradition, though at the cost of great pain for his mother and complete isolation from his surroundings. Sokolov highlights this division with a reference to "the key to *grandmother*" in a list of the contents found within Nymphea's mother's purse during a trip to her grave (156). Keys, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, act as a potent symbol for authors writing about this particular theme. In *Pushkin House*, Leva traps himself in the past with the keys to the eponymous building. In *The Gift*, Fyodor takes the keys of Russian culture with him into exile, opening up unexplored vistas in the process. And in *Ulysses*, both Stephen and Bloom become keyless. For Stephen this event serves as a push toward self-fulfillment and self-creation. In *A School for Fools*, the Student's "key to grandmother" represents the connection to the past that he experiences thanks to his selective memory. The implication, however, is that this is no disease at all, but rather a gift.[254] Able to commune with the past, with the deceased,[255] his achronological perspective permits him to transcend any limitations brought upon by an overdependence on past models.

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[254] Cf. Nabokov's temporal "magic carpet": "I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip. And the highest enjoyment of timelessness—in a landscape selected at random—is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain. It is like a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love. A sense of oneness with sun and stone. A thrill of gratitude to whom it may concern—to the contrapuntal genius of human fate or to tender ghosts humoring a lucky mortal" (*Novels and Memoir* 479).

[255] Nymphea refers to his "former grandmother" as this phrasing "sounds better, softer and not as hopeless," as "*deceased*" to him (29).

Sokolov, in essence, levels the cultural playing field. Unlike Stephen, who must transform the past in his own image to overcome his anxieties, Nymphea believes he exists in the past, present, and future all at once, allowing him to come to a better understanding of his artistic essence, as both a descendent and a predecessor.

REVERSING THE FLOW OF TIME

Time undoubtedly ranks as one of both Joyce and Sokolov's critical concerns. How they play with time, giving it shape in their texts and complicating it through multilayered, non-linear plots, speaks to similarities in their artistic worldviews. Johnson calls time Sokolov's "dominant theme" and suggests that the author gives it a unique treatment in each of his three novels ("Twilight" 641). In *A School for Fools*, the Student suggests that his two halves "don't understand time properly" (19). Sokolov grammaticalizes the Student's wandering mind by having him speak/write in all three tenses:

> Dear Leonardo, not long ago (just now, in a short time) I was floating (am floating, will float) along a big river in a rowboat. Before this (after this) I was often (will be) there and am well acquainted with the surroundings. It was (is, will be) very good weather, and the river—quiet and broad, and on shore, on one of the shores, a cuckoo was cuckooing (is cuckooing, will be cuckooing), and when I put down (will put down) the oar to rest, it sang (will sing) to me of how many years of life I have left. But this was (is, will be) stupid on its part because I was quite sure (am sure, will be sure) that I will soon die, if I have not died already.
>
> Дорогой Леонардо, недавно (сию минуту, в скором времени) я плыл (плыву, буду плыть) на весельной лодке по большой реке. До этого (после этого) я много раз бывал (буду бывать) там и хорошо знаком с окрестностями. Была (есть, будет) очень хорошая погода, а река -- тихая и широкая, а на берегу, на одном из берегов, куковала кукушка (кукует, будет куковать), и она, когда я бросил (брошу) весла, чтобы отдохнуть, напела (напоет) мне много лет жизни. Но это было (есть, будет) глупо с ее стороны, потому что я был совершенно уверен (уверен, буду уверен), что умру очень скоро, если уже не умер. (28)

This process, moreover, allows him to die, live, and repeatedly return to life. Joyce uses the very same formulation in *Finnegans Wake*: "Teems of times and happy returns. The seim anew. Ordovio or viricordo. Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle's to be" (215.24). Here, as with plot and

character, the two writers take an innovative approach to time.[256] Their characters, Nymphea and Anna Livia Plurabelle, live multiple lives as they are born and reborn in the narrative fabric in various forms.

The fragment from *Finnegans Wake* quoted above ("Ordovio or viricordo") raises the question of Viconian cyclical time that, in fact, runs throughout both authors' oeuvres.[257] Scholars have noted that throughout his literary career, Joyce grew closer and closer to Vico's theory of historical recurrence described in his *New Science*.[258] According to Colin MacCabe, Joyce uses Vico not as an "artistic illustration of philosophical theses," but rather as "theory to oppose to dominant historicist accounts of history" (27). Citing Stephen's conversation with Deasy about God and history, MacCabe argues that:

> This historicism imposes on the individual a meaning in which he is already defined. Stephen refuses such a meaning and identity when he claims that God is simply a noise in the street, the undifferentiated sound from which we fabricate meaning. It is by plunging into this sound that we can unmake the meanings imposed on us and awake from the nightmare of history into the dream of language. By insisting on the infinite repeatability of any moment, by refusing a progression to history, one can refuse the ready-made identities offered to us in order to investigate the reality of the processes that construct us. By denying an end to history, we can participate in the infinite varieties of the present. Bruno and Vico are used in *Finnegans Wake* to aid the deconstruction of identity into difference and to replace progress with repetition. (27)

Joyce constructs *Finnegans Wake*—and potentially *Ulysses* as Margaret Church maintains in "The Language of Time" (509)—along Vico's cyclical patterns of the Divine Age (Joyce's age of the parents), the Heroic Age (the age of the sons), the Human Age (the age of the people), and

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[256] Cf. Attridge's summary of Joyce's destabilization of some of the standard elements of fiction: "Plot, character, moral argument, teleological structure, chronological continuity, symbolism, emotional coherence, depiction of place, observance of lexical rules, authorial presence, linearity, identifiable voices, monolingualism, all these and more are rendered relative, seen as options with certain effects and certain drawbacks, available to be used, ignored, problematized, and joined with or played off others in innumerable combinations" (*Peculiar* 233). A more apt description of Sokolov's own art would be difficult to find.

[257] Boguslawski comments on the similarities between Sokolov's depictions of time throughout his three novels, Nabokov's "time-spiral," and Joyce's Viconian experiments ("Vremia" 225).

[258] See, for example, Church (1962 and 1978) and MacCabe.

the *ricorso*. Even while Viconian time provides an alternative to historicist accounts, it also acts as a "a corrective to the uncontrolled flux of life" (Church, *Time and Reality* 53). In the chaos of time's passing, the recognition, conscious or unconscious, that one is a particular instance of an archetype may provide a sense of stability amid the flux.

Nymphea's musings on time evince a similar understanding of history as a combination of chaos (flux) and recurrence (stability). He believes that "the days come whenever it comes into one's head, and sometimes several come immediately. And sometimes a day doesn't come for a long time" (27). Nymphea's imagined interlocutor Leonardo puts this perspective in related terms: "*in time nothing is in the past and future and it has nothing from the present*" (26). Sokolov does not deny the past's influence. However, Leonardo here emphasizes that the past, as well as the future, mean nothing beyond how they are construed in the present. In an interview, Sokolov essentially expresses this same thought: "History simply does not interest me, I don't believe that you can extract the future from it" (Voronel' 184). This foregrounding of the present is central to Joyce's thought as well. Discussing his final novel with Jacques Mercanton, Joyce once said, "There is no past, no future; everything flows in an eternal present" (quoted in Bowker 301). In *Ulysses*, Molly's soliloquy reflects her immediate thoughts (her period, her singing career), and yet they constantly reevaluate the past, suggesting Molly's inability to overcome her love for the flawed Bloom. The reader witnesses how she simultaneously reevaluates the past and the past redefines *her*. In *Finnegans Wake*, Vico's theory of circular history structures the narrative as events—HCE's crime foremost among them—are retold in different guises. Past moments—history, understood broadly—seem to be taking place, as it were, alongside the present.[259] As Brian McHale writes, "Every expression belongs simultaneously to several frames

[259] Cf. Gary Saul Morson's similar notion of "sideshadowing" in his article "Sideshadowing and Tempics" (1998).

of reference […] there is a perpetual jostling and jockeying for position among a plurality of simultaneously present (and therefore simultaneously absent) worlds" (142). Finally, in *A School for Fools*, Sokolov uses a combination of these approaches. The Student's narrative is clearly obsessed with the present moment as it jumps from one idea to the next, and yet the circularity of the novel is difficult to miss.[260]

As in Joyce's texts, the flux of a time out of joint in the modern world is stabilized by Nymphea's *ricorso*. His chaotic story, which ebbs and flows, is grounded, among other things, by recurring motifs (transformations), situations (his bathroom conversation with Norvegov), and the structure itself (the second chapter's alternative perspectives on events/characters from the primary narrative). These various kinds of recurrences allow the Student to continue living in his world devoid of linear time, while simultaneously creating an artistic framework within it.[261] As Leiderman and Lipovetsky suggest, "An acceptance of chaos as the norm, rather than a terrifying

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[260] In her analysis of the novel's chronotope, Anastasiia Babulina starts from Bergson's notion of duration to analyze the "two worlds" of the narrator's existence, that is, the world of reality and the world of imagination, that influence the tensions felt by the Student when it comes to time. Alternatively, Jasmina Vojvodic examines Sokolov's play with grammar, punctuation, and language to explain his use of simultaneity, a device she considers eminently modernist (363-4).

[261] Sokolov presents a more negative view of this circularity of time in his third novel, *Palisandriia* (1985), in which the protagonist, Palisandr Dal'berg remains caught in an endless cycle of déjà vu. Unlike Nymphea's, his links to the past frequently disorient him. Larissa Rudova argues that Palisandr's "return to historical time" after a long gestation in an era of Timelessness is all for naught: "He is so confused about time that his memory becomes not only heavily retrospective but also reveals future events to him. Palisandr realizes then that people and events lose their originality and concreteness and seem to resemble something that has already been" ("Dystopian" 169). Anna Brodsky suggests that Sokolov uses Palisandr's experiences with time to parody "modernism's idealization of memory as securing individual autonomy from the chaos of history" ("Death" 287) and to convey "a deep and disillusioned sense of [art's] futility" (295). If she is correct, one is tempted to suggest that this disillusionment may be the reason for Sokolov's decision to publish very few works since *Palisandriia*'s release. Alexander Boguslawski, on the other hand, likens Palisandr's experiences to Indian reincarnation or, more pessimistically, to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence ("Death" 241-2). A view of time situated somewhere in between these two polarities in *School* and *Palisandriia* can logically be found in Sokolov's second novel, *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*, where the Itil'/Volga flows between two banks producing "a picture of incalculably (now quickly, now slowly) flowing time which destroys the categories of past, present and future, and, on the other hand, of the stagnation of human existence which is not in the least affected by this flow of time" (Kolb 199). Cf. Johnson's "Sasha Sokolov's Twilight Cosmos" (pp. 641-2).

abyss, as one's natural habitat, rather than the source of anguish and suffering, appears for the first time precisely in *A School for Fools*" (277).

Nymphea finds affirmation for his view of time in an article that his father immediately denounces: "The philosopher wrote there that in his opinion time has a reverse aspect, that is, it moves not in the direction we suppose it should move, but in reverse" (104). This image of time flowing backwards reappears several times in connection to the local river, the Lethe: "the Lethe, whose waters, always turned backward, bear out your boat" (141) and "We fell silent, one could hear the Lethe flowing backwards" (165). This conflation of time, memory, and river brings to mind Joyce's treatment of the same topics in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.[262] In the former, Stephen makes a claim for the power of his art and memory to overcome time: "You have spoken of the past and its phantoms […] If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call?" (339). This particular river, too, makes several appearances in the *Wake*, for instance in the following passage: "lethelulled between explosion and reexplosion (Donnaurwatteur! Hunderthunder!) from grosskopp to megapod, embalmed, of grand age, rich in death anticipated" (78.4-6). In all three cases the inability to recall the past brings on death, "anticipated" in Joyce, untimely in Sokolov. If Stephen fails to remember his classmates, or chooses to do so, they will remain stuck in a mnemonic death. Likewise, "lethelulled" suggests the stillness of Lethean forgetting, and numerous funereal images appear

[262] Borden has convincingly demonstrated that much of Sokolov's unusual treatment of time may be traced back to Kataev's fiction. He notes, for example, shared themes such as the "functions, or dysfunctions and capacities of memory" ("Time" 251-2), the "metempsychoses" that characters undergo (253), and, most importantly, a "rejection of linear time" that serves as a means for the protagonists' to overcome and activate creative potential (253, 257). While this literary apprenticeship is beyond doubt, Sokolov's emphasis on the role of Western literature upon his development as a writer suggests that Joyce may loom behind this conception of time, too. In fact, it would be worth exploring Joyce's impact on *Kataev* himself. Boris Volodin, for example, names Kataev, along with Olesha, as writers whose works possibly evince "echoes" of the Irish writer (165).

in the same paragraph (coffins, urn, decrepitude). Finally, the Lethe in *A School for Fools* is also a river of death, as Nymphea sees his teacher Norvegov stand across it following his death. As G. G. Ermolina writes, "if the hero is withdrawn into this memory, then this is where his salvation lies" (198). To consider time a river that can flow in multiple directions means to overcome death. Of course, the idea of time flowing backward away from death's grip finds its greatest treatment at the conclusion/beginning of *Finnegans Wake*: "a way a lone a last a loved a long the / riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs" (628.15-16/3.1-3). As the river ALP flows into the wider ocean, she recirculates back to the beginning of the novel, taking the narrative along with her in the process.[263]

The dissolution of time, then, enacts the end of various kinds of death: literal, figurative, artistic, spiritual. Nymphea metaphorically describes this process when he describes the trains that travel near his home: "The trains that go past our home move along a closed, and therefore infinite curve around our town […] one goes clockwise, the other counterclockwise. As a result, it is as if they mutually destroy each other, and together they destroy movement and time" (135). Having abolished character and plot, Sokolov also set his sights on time. In *Ulysses*, however, Stephen speaks out against the restrictions that come with a traditional understanding of time, and yet he remains trapped within the nightmare of history, particularly in its twin forms of British and Catholic rule and the image of his deceased mother. Nymphea, on the other hand, lives "unburdened by the reality of the past" as his extreme simultaneity goes far beyond what Stephen considers possible. Again, we may see in this narrative move a desire to break away

[263] Something similar occurs at the end of *The Gift* when the narrative seems to turn back on itself or direct the reader to its beginning but with newfound knowledge in tow.

from the need to live with a constant glance backward—the same glance that dooms Leva in *Pushkin House*.

WRITING NEW DIRECTIONS

If all these tactics and devices illustrate Sokolov's belief in a time without boundaries, best expressed thematically through Student So-and-So's selective memory, then Sokolov's approach to the theme of writing demonstrates his desire to merge traditions and thus symbolically to break the literary boundaries set up around him. Indeed, he denies "historicism," in favor of viewing all writers, from Gogol to Bunin, as contemporaries (Voronel' 184). Here, allusions to Joyce's fiction, as well as to Western fiction in general, establish the terms of Sokolov's polemics in his struggle against father figures and the Soviet system. Writing itself becomes a guard against historical narratives foisted upon a culture or a writer.

Before recounting a conversation between his mother and his literature teacher, Vodokachka, the Student describes a book publisher's logo: "a dark youth against the background of a white dawn, deliriously, a youth, dreaming of becoming an engineer, a youth-engineer if you like, curly-haired, quite curly,[264] book after book, he reads book after book" (82). The figure recalls Nymphea himself, the youth who dreams of diving into books/writing/language and never returning to the "real" world. His teacher, however, suggests to his mother than she should keep him from becoming "too well-read" and that he should avoid "the Western classics" in particular for they "distract." It goes without saying that Joyce's innovations—the epiphanies of *Dubliners*, the free indirect discourse of *Portrait*, the mythic method and stream of consciousness of *Ulysses*, the language-obsessed narrative of *Finnegans Wake*—require greater attention and deeper analysis than the Soviet works that Vodokachka

[264] As in *Pushkin House*, this description evokes Pushkin in the Russian cultural context.

would have her pupil read. She very likely has older classic works in mind when warning the Student's mother, but for Sokolov these distracting texts were classics as well. For him, though, modernist literature, as exemplified by figures including Joyce, embodies the limitless possibilities of the creative mind.

Another key image related to the theme of writing in Sokolov and Joyce is that of the literary forge. In the fourth chapter of Sokolov's novel, Nymphea tells Norvegov about his composition, "My Morning." In response, Norvegov bemoans the fact that he did not discover Nymphea's talents earlier when he was still in charge of his classroom:

> But, Student So-and-So, I'm afraid you will not escape those lessons, and with torturous pain you will have to memorize by heart excerpts and scraps of works that we call literature. You will read with disgust the filthy and petty freaks of the pen, and now and then it will be unbearable for you, but then, having passed through the *crucible* of this unhappiness, you will mature, you will rise over your own ashes like the Phoenix, you will understand — you will understand everything.
>
> Но, ученик такой-то, боюсь, вам не избежать этих уроков, и вам придется с мучительной болью заучивать наизусть отрывки и обрывки произведений, называемых у нас литературой. Вы с отвращением будете читать наших замызганных и лживых уродцев пера, и то и дело вам будет невмоготу, но зато, пройдя через *горнило* этого несчастья, вы возмужаете, вы взойдете над собственным пеплом, как Феникс-птица, вы поймете -- вы все поймете. (136, my italics)

The Student's teacher encourages his linguistic abilities, suggesting that he could have avoided many miserable moments in class had this talent only become apparent earlier. As Litus suggests, this exchange may be read metafictionally: Sokolov has come late and must work through the difficult lessons of literature, both the belated, positive ones from Modernism and the negative from Socialist Realism ("Saša" 124-6).[265] Through this process, he can come to a better understanding of his own art.

[265] See also Boguslawski 1983 for an analysis of *A School for Fools* as a political text written in response to Socialist Realism.

A quite similar construction can be found in Joyce's *Portrait*. Near the end of the novel, Stephen reflects on his experiences and announces to himself: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to *forge* in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (275-6, my italics).[266] Stephen intends to travel to Paris, where he can gain perspective and become a writer. By directly confronting the reality of the Irish, Stephen believes he will give voice to his nation and create a new national epic and art.

Norvegov's sermon highlights similar prospects. He says that the Student will need to work through his Soviet existence in order to become hardened by the world and then to produce his own individual art. Like Stephen, Norvegov acknowledges that this process can be a demeaning, painful one, full of setbacks, particularly given the state of the Soviet literary scene. An outspoken critic, Norvegov dunks his head in the Lethe to avoid hearing more about an unspecified writer: "I washed [my ears] in the waters of the reservoir you see before you, in order to purify them of the defilement of the aforementioned name and to meet the coming nonbeing in the whiteness of soul, body, thoughts, language/tongue, and ears" (48). These, then, are the two possible responses to the Soviet forge of writing as Norvegov describes it: willful ignorance or painful ordeal.

Nymphea, Sokolov's version of the artist as a young writer, however, offers an alternative. Having heard his master's words, Nymphea responds, "But dear teacher, we object,

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[266] This famous passage has been read a number of ways. Some scholars emphasize the potential for irony inherent in Stephen's formulation, particularly in light of Joyce's punning on the very same word ("forge") in *Finnegans Wake*: "But 'to forge' has another, less creditable meaning, of which Joyce was conscious, as we know from Shem the Penman of *Finnegans Wake*. This penman, Stephen's successor, is not only a writer but a forger in the sense of forging checks" (Tindall 67). Others, such as Charles Peake, are more sympathetic to Stephen's intentions and take Joyce's words at face value: "Although it has become a critical commonplace, I see no reason for supposing that he is [punning] here, where the meaning of the word is defined by the related 'smithy', and by its earlier use in the phrase, 'forge out an esthetic philosophy'" (83).

didn't the composition […] convince you that we long ago understood and that we don't have to pass through any kind of literary crucibles?" (136). Norvegov agrees that from Nymphea's "first words" he saw this test was a "false necessity" for his student (137). Nymphea in this way echoes Leva's sentiments from *Pushkin House* as he announces that the literary forge that is so crucial to Stephen, his literary antecedent, and Norvegov, his forebear, does not hold nearly as much weight for him. Norvegov, despite his close ties to Nymphea and his role as esteemed teacher, nonetheless belongs to the generation of the fathers by age, and for this reason he sees the only path to literary success as a struggle. The circumstances have changed, and Nymphea—with Sokolov as author before him—has recognized the literary forge as a false lead. He will undoubtedly face challenges along the way, but with the general relativity of cultural values[267] enveloping his generation, he might pursue his own art without concern for what surrounds him.

One scene of several describing Nymphea copying newspaper articles at his father's command puts the metaphorical, linguistic violence involved in direct view. As the father completes an inspection of his ward and domain, Nymphea's body is described in the following graphic terms:

> He sees how you sit at the desk and diligently—the diligence is expressed in the way you *bow your closely cropped head* to the side and *awkwardly bend your back*, as if someone had *smashed you*, yes, as if you were *thrown onto the rocks from a lofty cliff*, and then they had approached you and *smashed you some more* with the help of *blacksmith tongs*, which hold the white-hot ingots—write.
>
> Он видит, как ты сидишь за письменным столом и старательно — старание выражено в том, что ты *склонил свою наголо стриженую голову* набок и *нелепо изогнул спину*, будто *тебя всего изломали*, да, *сбросили на камни с высокого*

[267] Here, Heinrich Plett's definition of "relativistic intertextuality" seems appropriate: "If fixed conventions cease to exist and give way to a multitude of equally valid positions, positive and negative evaluation are both immaterial. Anything can be combined with anything. This is the field of *relativistic* intertextuality. Its manifestations are collage and montage, questioning everything, even their own status" (19). While his examples—collage, montage, etc.—do not quite describe Sokolov's art, this description of an intertextuality that constantly interrogates its own status and the text's place within a broader context certainly does.

> *обрыва*, а затем подошли и еще *больше изломали* с помощью *кузнечных щипцов*, которыми держат раскаленные болванки — пишешь. (110-11, my italics)

Everything that divides the subject ("you") and the verb ("writing") is caught up in the act of his writing, as it were. For the Student, this activity is simply torture. Rather than the liberating, special sensation that creative writing normally brings the Student, this repetition brings him suffering, at least in his imagination. It is the forge that he denies.

In a different scene, the Student argues with himself about a statue of a child. One half of his personality, clearly associating the statue with himself, proposes that it is actually a boy with metal in his mouth that he uses "to stitch his mouth shut in order to not eat his mother's sandwiches wrapped in his father's newspapers" (88). Nymphea again associates the newspapers with violence, here in the form of self-masochistic protection against the influence of his parents. The pitiable mother attempts to nurture the son, but this sustenance comes enveloped in the same newspapers that torment Nymphea with their implications of control and inertia.

One key difference between Nymphea and Stephen, among many, is their conception of the literary forge or crucible that they must endure—or not. Nymphea, despite appearances to the contrary, is quite cognizant of the hold his father wields over him.[268] Sokolov makes this point apparent in his use of recurring motifs, as well as the symbolic meanings attached to images, particularly ones related to violence and control. Despite these stultifying conditions, Nymphea opts to take the path of the artist, focusing on language itself rather than the struggle of the writer. Stephen, as has been argued throughout the present study, uses the challenge of

[268] In his strident denial of Nymphea, we can hear echoes of Simon Dedalus's taunts: "My consubstantial father's voice. Did you see anything of your artist brother Stephen lately? No? Sure he's not down in Strasburg terrace with his aunt Sally?" (32). Both fathers place some distance between themselves and their artistic sons through the use of modifiers ("*your* artist brother," "*his* aunt Sally," "*your* bastard") and insults ("your *bastard*"). In doing so they absolve themselves of responsibility over their sons' actions, as well as of direct filial attachments, seeing Nymphea and Stephen as a disgrace upon their families.

overcoming forebears, their languages, and the Irish experience as his forge of the literary spirit. For Nymphea, a creation from a much different epoch, it is enough to explore language, to elevate it on its own merits. The pull of the fathers to adopt their language/writing is equally strong in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. As MacCabe notes, for example, in the latter, ALP "remembers how much her husband […] wanted a daughter, hoping for a female in the family who would believe his stories, who would give him the respect that he feels is his due. But the father is inevitably disappointed for the mother teaches her daughter that beneath the stories and the identities lies the world of letters and desire. […] The father's yarns (stories) are displaced by the mother's yearns (desires)" (25). The fathers, whether they are Nymphea's prosecutor father, HCE, Simon, or Bloom, try to entrap their sons using writing as a tool among many. In *A School for Fools*, though, Sokolov finds a way out through a jocular, ludic attitude toward language that goes beyond even the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, who struggled with the need to overcome ancestors in his iconoclastic manner by remaking them in his image or enveloping all language and history within his texts.[269] Sokolov here suggests the relativity of *all* language. There may exist forms that assail his personal tastes—Socialist Realism and newspaper reports, for instance—but in the end language, too, permits Sokolov to transcend any self- or externally-imposed limitations. As Norvegov asks, "do words really prove anything," Sokolov interrogates the possibility of pinning down any one meaning to a word (125). In this way he dissolves the struggle with the father-predecessors in favor of sheer play within language.[270]

[269] Genette emphasizes "the manifest lucidity of parody or pastiche" (elements of intertextuality or hypertextuality) when he writes, "Using and processing a (hypo)text for purposes foreign to its initial program is likewise a way of playing with it, of having fun with it and making fun of it" (399).
[270] This attitude naturally prepares its own set of traps, particularly an acute sense of solipsistic posturing of which Sokolov has been accused.

CONCLUSION

If the references to Joyce in *A School for Fools* and even *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom* remain largely implicit or coded, then in *Palisandriia* (translated as *Astrophobia* by Michael Henry Heim) Sokolov treats Joyce quite directly.[271] In one scene Sokolov's hero, Palisandr Dal'berg, details a book entitled *The History of Water Closets*: "In it, written in magnificent free verse, is carefully but accessibly traced all sewage systems from ancient, cave, and — through the Roman aqueducts — to present-day waste recycling of recent eras" (*Palisandriia* 164). To make this already obvious parody of Bloom's bathroom habits and the catechism of "Ithaca" even less ambiguous, he adds that "Dublin's weekly *Finnegan's Week* called it 'the next *Iliad*'" (165). Elsewhere, he acknowledges his debt to Joyce in his *Reminiscences of Old Age*, where instead of describing a single day, he devotes hundreds of pages to mere minutes (234). Palisandr also undergoes a transformation that recalls the grotesqueries of "Circe" when he is revealed to be a hermaphrodite, and, finally, when he considers different options for his image of the Motherland, he refers to the "milkmaid, the type in which she appeared to Joyce's student [*studiozusu*] in his tower upon the coast of the stormy-foamy [*burnopennogo*] sea of Guinness" (285). These allusions, among others less direct, confirm Sokolov's familiarity and understanding of Joyce's texts.[272]

If not always in style, then certainly in spirit, *Palisandriia* itself recalls both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Modeled after the émigré memoir genre, the primary target of Sokolov's acerbic satire that became so popular directly before its composition, Sokolov's novel envelops

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[271] In her review of *Palisandriia*, Kira Sapgir compares the complexities of Sokolov's prose to Joyce's (388).

[272] Beckett's writings constitute an important related intertextual layer in *Palisandriia*. In one extended scene, Palisandr meets Beckett while abroad and offers him an "improved" ending to *Waiting for Godot* (136-40). Cf. Skoropanova 1999 (p. 290) and Johnson 1989 (p. 174).

all Russian history as Palisandr experiences multiple time periods at once through what he calls "*uzhebylo*," his personal brand of déjà vu or "alreadywas" (220). Time frames shift as they did in Sokolov's previous two novels, and characters likewise shift identities in Palisandr's episodic narrative.[273]

In this way, we see how in each of his three primary works Sokolov's literary dialogue with Joyce has shifted according to his aims and his changing attitude toward history, art, and time. In his first novel, *A School for Fools*, the ties are largely thematic and stylistic. He reconfigures elements of Joyce's texts, including *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, to construct his own portrait of the artist as a young man, as well as his novel of generational conflicts. In *Mezhdu sobakoi i volkom*, Sokolov turned to Joycean style to overcome his alleged links to Nabokov. This move, in turn, led to innovations in his treatment of character and time that can also be traced to Joyce's experiments. Finally, in *Palisandriia*, Joyce takes his place among many objects of parody in a narrative that also disrupts historical determinism, complicates the reader's understanding of character with its protean protagonist, and takes no prisoners in its satirical depictions of everyone from Russian émigrés and Soviet bureaucrats to Western cultural luminaries and historical figures.

In a telling passage, Borden notes that the novelty of *A School for Fool* has led scholars to seek influences outside of the Russian canon ("Time" 247). He suggests that this move is not necessary; domestic sources, such as Kataev, can illuminate our understanding of Sokolov's methods just as well. Johnson, too, has written that "Sokolov's writing is something of a pardox

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[273] On *Palisandriia*'s various parodic elements, see Booker and Dubravka ("All-Purpose Parody: Sasha Sokolov's *Astrophobia*"), Matich ("Sasha Sokolov's *Palisandriia*" and "*Palisandriia*: Dissidentskii mif i ego razvenchanie"), Rudova 2000 (p. 64), Ryan (p. 223), Skoropanova 1999 (p. 287-90), and Zholkovsky 1987 ("The Stylistic Roots of *Palisandriia*"). Lipovetskii (1996) and Matich in particular address its parodic treatment of autobiographies. On the novel's status as a picaresque novel, see Bereha's "The Last Rogue of History: Picaresque Elements in Sasha Sokolov's *Palisandriia*."

[sic]: in some ways it is radically divorced from Russian literary tradition, while in others it is unmistakably a part of that tradition. […] The novels are intensely and almost entirely Russian in the range of their cultural allusions" (215). And yet for all these warnings, the time is ripe for a closer exploration of Sokolov's ties to Western writers, particularly modernists such as Joyce.

For Sokolov, Joyce has meant a great number of things. In his early period, the subject of the present chapter, Joyce offered the novice writer alternatives in approaches to language, time, and writing itself. *A School for Fools* is replete with stylistic markers reminiscent of Joyce's methods. Where they differ, however, is in the critical theme of fathers and sons. Sokolov chooses to absolve himself of the dialectic that Stephen and Joyce so memorably engage in and that continues to play out in *Finnegans Wake*'s father-son struggles and Viconian recurrences. Even if by his own admission Sokolov tried to overcome the "fatherly" influence of Nabokov upon his language, his art reflects a desire to break away from these terms of engagement. It has been argued that Sokolov's novels demonstrate a move toward pessimism, toward a belief in the inescapability of time's hold upon man.[274] Should that be the case, then *A School for Fools*, as the earliest of Sokolov's major works, retains its optimism. The author is able to merge with his character, Student So-and-So, as they depart into the street, much like Stephen does at the end of *Ulysses*. This moment, full of freedom and hope, represents Sokolov's giving himself up to language. He does not fear his belated status like Bitov does, as he can see the relativity of art, literature, and, most importantly, historical time. By plunging into the fabric of the language itself, where, as Samuel Beckett put it so succinctly with reference to Joyce, "form *is* content; content *is* form," Sokolov avoids the need to choose a particular literary antecedent (14). Instead,

[274] See Rudova 2000 (p. 69) and 2006 (pp. 167-70).

the Russian language as a whole becomes the basis of his art and he—He Who Came—the equal of those who come before him.

Conclusion

It seems history is to blame.

History […] is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

– Joyce, *Ulysses*

Comparing the modern artist to the contemporary historian, Hayden White suggests that for the former, "history is not only a substantive burden imposed upon the present by the past in the form of outmoded institutions, ideas, and values, but also *the way of looking at the world* which gives to these outmoded forms their specious authority" (123). When unable to face the present epoch directly, the creative individual can become overwhelmed by the past. White goes on to suggest that the writer's struggle with history is in fact an attempted liberation from a worldview that stifles one's current reality with concerns about the past. Such a relationship with history can be manifested in a number of realms: interpersonal, filial, social, political, cultural. At least in the context of Russian literature, all these different facets of the same problem frequently take the form of the attempts by a young writer to find his/her place in time and in relation to antecedents.

This theme is central to James Joyce's fiction, too, particularly as concerns his own artist figures, Stephen and Shem. When Stephen calls history a "nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake," he has in mind the hold of the past embodied by his father, England, and Catholicism (28). He also means the weight of literary history that looms over him as a budding writer. Its alleged inescapability terrifies Stephen. *Ulysses* then represents a working through of these ideas, as Stephen attempts to shake free from the stranglehold of the "fathers" by means of his Shakespeare theory.

This dissertation has demonstrated how a series of major twentieth-century Russian/Soviet writers contributed to this literary narrative or trope by responding to Joyce throughout their own fiction. They, too, sought to curb White's "substantive burden" in a variety of ways and to different degrees of "success" in their fiction. They each found a different entry point into Joyce's writings, but this theme, along with other related ones, served as a catalyst for how they interpreted the Irish writer. Their readings of Joyce thus speak not only to their understanding of his work but also to the shifting cultural values around them.

Yury Olesha, for example, saw in Joyce a "solution" to his precarious state as an individualist writer in the newly formed Soviet Union. A man out of time, he wished to turn to the West, as symbolized by such figures as Joyce, and to escape stultifying conditions through art. However, his personal ambivalence, along with the immense political and social pressures of the era, halted his progress. *Envy* depicts precisely this struggle of the creative individual to deal with both history as a concept embodied by many different forces (societal change, father figures, etc.) and the desire to find one's place within this shifting, multifaceted dilemma.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how Vladimir Nabokov understood the problem differently. As an émigré writer, he sought to recover the past that the Revolution had taken from him. He, too, engages Joyce's texts and even adopts a Joycean model but inverts its function. If Olesha could not overcome history's limitations, caught up as he was in the tumultuous environment of the early Soviet Union, then Nabokov found a way out: his magic carpet of time that allowed him to transcend any losses through his writing. The paternal figure linked with the literary father serves as an access point to this culture left behind in Russia.

The next two figures, Andrei Bitov and Sasha Sokolov, likewise feel the increasingly substantial weight of literary history as more contemporary writers. Separated from the

modernist past with which they identify more closely than with any Soviet models, Bitov and Sokolov nonetheless see a way out in their fiction. Bitov opts to disengage from the war with the past, while Sokolov reveals that everything may in fact be relative. In both cases, however, they address Joyce directly and indirectly. Bitov, for instance, reformulates Stephen's Shakespeare theory within the context of mid-century Soviet Russia to demonstrate the dangers of playing loose with father figures and absent filial relationships. Sokolov picks up on several Joycean devices and stylistic methods to create the appearance of escaping the paternal model entirely.

The selection of these authors illustrates the range of voices that have contributed to the Russian response to Joyce. Although all four certainly share some traits and may very well be said to represent a particular lineage within Russian literature, their aesthetics and subjects vary widely in many respects. It is in these similarities and contrasts that we have seen what Joyce meant to these writers and to Russian letters as a whole.

In examining the topic of Joyce's "influence" from this vantage point, we have sought to remedy a large gap in the study of Russian literature. While Joyce's presence in the work of Russian writers has been previously examined to some limited degree, a larger critical study has remained lacking and the focus turned elsewhere study until this point. Given the Irish luminary's status as one of the major figures in world literature, this absence feels particularly striking. One hopes that this dissertation is a step in the right direction, an effort not only to explore uncharted territory but to improve substantially our understanding of Joyce's impact both broadly and within the Russian context.

FUTURE PROSPECTS: A FINAL CASE STUDY

Of course, a number of other significant areas remain to be examined. A more comprehensive study of Leonid Dobychin's debt to Joyce in the composition of *The Town of N*,

for example, would be of great value, particularly as his reputation continues to grow.[275] Boris Poplavsky, who so passionately praised Joyce in 1930, seems also to have responded to Joyce in his fiction and, perhaps, in his poetry.[276] Anthony Olcott's description of Poplavsky's prose speaks to this potential Joycean touch: "a distinctive blend of conventional narrative techniques, lyrical free-association, normal rhymed version printed as prose, street songs, and others, each succeeding the other in kaleidoscopic fashion" (282). This mix of styles and genres, particularly in the eighteen-chapter novel *Apollon Bezobrazov*, calls to mind Joyce's stylistic experiments. We might also turn to poetry to conceive of a broader picture of Joyce's impact on Russian literature. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 3, Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam read *Ulysses* together, and the former would reread the novel many times over. Taking a closer look at Akhmatova's *Requiem* (*Rekviem*) and Osip Mandelstam's *Verses on the Unknown Soldier* (*Stikhi o neizvestnom soldate*) in light of their joint 1937 reading would prove fruitful.[277] The three works share key thematic motifs: parents and children, orphanhood, the nightmare of history, even Shakespeare. Such a study would demonstrate how Joyce's earlier modernist project was

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[275] As mentioned in chapter 1, Dobychin's novella has frequently been compared to Joyce's *Dubliners*. See Richard Borden's introduction to a translation of stories by Dobychin (*Encounters with Lise and Other Stories*) for potential parallels (pp. x-xvii). There are other similarities, however. For example, the narrator's realization (epiphany) that he has been viewing the world incorrectly when he dons a pair of glasses at the work's conclusion recalls the incident involving Stephen's broken glasses in *A Portrait of the Artists as a Young Man*.

[276] Simon Karlinsky writes that Poplavsky is "the only Russian writer [he] can think of besides Vladimir Nabokov who responded creatively to *Ulysses*" (330). The evidence presented throughout this study suggests otherwise.

[277] Igor' Garin has also compared Mandelstam's prose to Joyce's (449). Boris Pasternak, who read Joyce early, is another poet whose prose critics have called Joycean and who has been compared to Joyce in various regards. See Henry Gifford (pp. 305, 307-8), Lindstrom (p. 209), Nilsson 1958 (p. 141), Ruge (p. 22), and Wilson (p. 15). In Gerd Ruge's account of his 1958 meeting with the poet, Pasternak himself made the fascinating comment, "And what a novel *Ulysses* would have been if it had retained the clarity of *Dubliners*!" (22). Such an approach to Joyce's Modernism speaks to Pasternak's expressed desire to reach an "unheard of simplicity" in his mature writings as in his cycle "Waves": "Assured in your kinship with all that exists, familiar / with the future in everyday life, / In the end you can't help but fall, as into heresy, / into an unheard of simplicity" [В родстве со всем, что есть, уверясь / И знаясь с будущим в быту, / Нельзя не впасть к концу, как в ересь, / В неслыханную простоту] (58).

subsequently understood and transformed by Akhmatova and Mandelstam for their particular context and literary heritage.

Here, by way of conclusion, we offer one more brief case study. Although limitations of space prevent us from delving into these final two novels at great depth, this coda serves to bring the study of Joyce's impact on Russian literature to the present day by examining in schematic form his presence in the work of a pair of well-known contemporary writers, Viktor Pelevin and Mikhail Shishkin. We will not offer the same sort of extended close analysis as in the preceding chapters. These concise examples will instead reveal how in their own ways post-Soviet writers continue the same debates regarding Joyce as those that came before them. As such, the lines of dialogue with the modernist writer stretch on today.

Pelevin's 2004 novel *Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (*Sviashchennaia Kniga Oborotnia*) purports to be the found manuscript of a centuries-old shape-shifter, A Hu-Li, who feeds on the sexual energies of men. Featuring Pelevin's characteristic odd mixture of pulp fiction, blunt satire, and Eastern mysticism, *The Sacred Book* chronicles A Hu-Li's gradual self-enlightenment. Along the way, she—a were-fox—encounters an FSB captain, Aleksandr Sery, who turns out to be a werewolf. The scholars who allegedly find the manuscript note its highly intertextual qualities in their introduction, observing a "thick network of borrowings, imitations, rehashings, and allusions" that nonetheless is "not worthy of a serious literary or critical analysis" (5). In his typical ironic mode, Pelevin plays with the issue of literariness and intertextuality throughout this allegedly "amateur" book that quotes, recycles, and travesties classic plots, including Nabokov's *Lolita* foremost among them.

More than once in their courtship, A Hu-Li and Aleksandr discuss literature. When Joyce is mentioned, Aleksandr flares up:

> "Joyce?" he asked, drawing closer. "The one that wrote *Ulysses*? I tried to read it. Boring stuff. Frankly, I simply don't understand why such books are necessary."
> "What do you mean?"
> "Look, no one reads it, *Ulysses*. Three people read it and then they live off of it their whole lives: they write articles, go to conferences. But no one else got through it."
>
> — Джойс? — спросил он, придвигаясь ближе. — Который «Улисса» написал? Я пробовал читать. Скучно. Я, если честно, вообще не понимаю, зачем такие книги нужны.
> — То есть как?
> — Да его же не читает никто, «Улисса». Три человека прочли и потом всю жизнь с этого живут — статьи пишут, на конференции ездят. А больше никто и не осилил. (157-8)

Without necessarily equating his character's words with his own, Pelevin here suggests what many, extending all the way back to Olesha in the 1930s, have purported to be the case regarding Joyce's popularity and accessibility. More of a figurehead for Modernism, Joyce, according to Aleksandr, symbolizes a dead-end. A select handful manage to make their way through his novels and thus "live off of" him, but the rest cannot even finish *Ulysses*, let alone comprehend its many layers. As such, his import has been exaggerated. For Pelevin, a master pastiche artist, such an outlook seems fitting. His take on Joyce picks up on Sokolov's relativistic viewpoint but extends it further. As the product of the late Soviet era, as well as a writer who came to fame at the beginning of the post-Soviet 1990s, his fiction weaves all sorts of intertexts without necessarily prioritizing any one over the other. Joyce for him would readily embody a literature that instead champions hierarchies. Pelevin, it must be recalled, demolishes all boundaries between the high and low, the sacred and the profane. While Joyce deploys comparable tactics throughout his fiction, particularly *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, the stakes are much different in Pelevin's context.

By contrast, Shishkin's relationship with Joyce as evidenced by both his fiction and public statements is much more positive and, perhaps, productive. He, too, recognizes the importance of Joyce's writing to literary history, but, unlike Pelevin, Shishkin views it as a

beneficial influence. In a 2005 interview, for example, he contrasts the Western tradition's "love of the Word," which is exemplified by Joyce's texts, with the Russian tradition's "love of man" ("Mat" 26). He says that he wishes, like Sokolov, to direct Russian literature toward the combination of the two trends.[278] More recently, he has commented on the way Russians "skipped Joyce and an entire generation of Western writers, their breakthroughs, their achievements" (Ivanov n. pag.). He was surprised to learn that he had "read" Joyce *through* other writers who came after him.[279] All the same, the lessons of Joyce's works had made it to Shishkin.

Reviewers of Shishkin's books, namely *Maidenhair* [*Venerin volos*] and *Pis'movnik* (translated as *The Light and the Dark* by Andrew Bromfield), have not missed their Joycean echoes. These comparisons typically focus on structural similarities such as Joyce's catechism and the sections of *Maidenhair* built around Questions and Answers (Arkhipova). The shifting quality of the novel, as the author moves from narrative to narrative and time period to time period, also lends itself to a Joycean reading. Like his Irish predecessor, Shishkin draws from "the clean and the dirty alike," believing it all to be worthy of literature (Divakov 10). Indeed, Muireann Maguire even goes so far as to suggest that while Shishkin cannot be denied his place as a great modern writer, many of his innovations actually stem from the modernist Joyce (140).

One such feature of his writing, particularly *Maidenhair* and *Pis'movnik*, is the simultaneity of different narrative and temporal planes. Joyce, as has been suggested elsewhere,[280] developed this device by which the reader must grasp disparate items from various

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[278] See Orobii for an excellent analysis of Shishkin's contributions to a tradition that he argues includes Joyce, Nabokov, and Sokolov.

[279] Shishkin's comments recall some of Bitov's on influence and the indirect ways Soviet writers accessed Western writers.

[280] Cf. Frank (pp. 16-17).

points in the narrative to visualize and then comprehend a broader picture within *Ulysses*. While what Shishkin accomplishes in his novels is not quite the same, he does similarly emphasize the ways in which writing can transcend time: "And now I understand that it's all so simple. Everything happens simultaneously. Here you are writing this line, precisely while I read it. Here you are putting a period at the end of this sentence, precisely as I reach it at the same time. What matters are not hands on the clock!" (*Venerin volos* 470). It follows that such an atypical approach to time would lead to Shishkin's multifaceted tales in which characters from different epochs and locations can interact on the narrative plane. Here we may also feel the presence of Sokolov, another time-obsessed writer who restored the teenage Shishkin's faith in the Word ("Mat" 26). Furthermore, this potential influence speaks to the manner in which writers even as young as Shishkin took in the lessons of Joyce's prose through intermediaries including Sokolov. Teasing out such webs of exchanges can help us better comprehend the progression of literary history.

Shishkin's indebtedness to Joyce can be seen even more clearly when style, structure, and theme intertwine to create something striking. For example, near the very end of *Maidenhair*, the novel's many narratives collapse, blending into one another to form more than a dozen pages of prose divided into only two paragraphs and resembling stream of consciousness.[281] Not insignificantly, the first begins with the key word "Yes," just as Molly's soliloquy does (*Venerin volos* 460). The voices of multiple narrators can be heard throughout the ensuing pages, but one of the principal figures consists of a combination of Galpetra, the protagonist-interpreter's former teacher, and Isabella Belinskaia, a singer whose diaries the interpreter reads throughout the course of *Maidenhair*. These female figures, like Molly Bloom, evoke a sense of a life that

[281] This passage is preceded by a similar, though less chaotic, one shortly before (415-29).

refuses to be diminished by any personal tragedies, not the least of which are the deaths of Molly's and Isabella's young children. Indeed, the novel ends on a somewhat unexpectedly positive note with strange, belated pregnancies, miraculous meetings, and an affirmation of the inherent goodness to be found in a world clouded by evil. All this positivity is embodied by the "young green grass" (*travku-muravku*) that recalls the vibrant, joyful scenery atop Howth Head at *Ulysses*'s conclusion (479). Shishkin sees such optimism as the goal of the creative artist; the writer for him overpowers "that nightmare that people have made the world into and restores dignity to a person, filling him with human warmth and otherworldly light" (Gorski 41).[282] Certainly not devoid of complications, the love found at the heart of both novels is meant to defeat the ills of the day. Indeed, as observed in chapter 3 of the present study, in *Ulysses* Bloom unequivocally names "[l]ove," "the opposite of hatred," the real essence of life (273). Shishkin gives voice to similar sentiments when Isabella writes, "The greater the unhappiness of some somewhere, the more intensely others must be happy. And they should love more strongly" (*Venerin volos* 448). It is a matter of balance between happiness and unhappiness, between love and hate, that must not be upset. This attitude furthermore speaks to the fundamental difference between Shishkin's and Pelevin's fiction. Shishkin, at least in *Maidenhair*, unabashedly champions love,[283] while his contemporary takes an almost exclusively pessimistic view. The former's stance is entirely devoid of irony and, therefore, links him much more closely to the modernist era of Joyce.[284]

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[282] In the same interview, Shishkin also remarks that "a writer should leave his home country, his native language for some time. Because then he begins to see himself and his country as if in a mirror" (39). Such self-imposed quasi-exile recalls Joyce's decision to leave Ireland.

[283] Very little criticism has been written about Shishkin. See Goscilo on love as Shishkin's "prophylactic against trauma" throughout *Maidenhair* (180).

[284] A more minor point still worth mentioning is Shishkin's placement of "Zürich – Rome, 2002—2004" after the last lines in *Maidenhair* (479). This addition might be read as an intentional reference to, or more

Though the ideological content informing their opinions is obviously much different, Shishkin and Pelevin may very well be compared here to Vishnevsky and Poplavsky, on the one hand, and Radek, on the other. The former understand the value of Western literature to Russian letters and the power of the Russian writer to create something meaningful and new out of a combination of sources; the latter sees in Joyce a form of literature totally foreign, unnecessary, and frequently misrepresented. Such tensions speak to Joyce's complex place in Russian literature that carries on from the debates of the 1920s and 1930s into today and that deserves further analysis.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Beyond detailing the manner in which four individual writers reacted to a single and in many respects singular twentieth-century author, the four chapters of this study have underscored how a foreign author (Joyce) becomes generally ingrained within a local context (Russian literature). In other words, revelations about an individual text, whether it be *Envy* or *Pushkin House*, and its connections to *Ulysses* also carry larger implications about their authors' aesthetics, intertextuality, and Irish-Russian cultural exchanges. In studying Russian literary responses to Joyce, his texts, and his ideas, we come to a better understanding of both components of the equation. Likewise, these analyses demonstrate how fluctuating historical, cultural, and personal conditions can affect one writer's reception of another. In the present case, Olesha, Nabokov, Bitov, and Sokolov's fascination with history and with a series of interlocking Joycean themes speaks to their shared interest in the ability of an individual to reshuffle

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accurately a respectful evocation of, Joyce's postscript to Ulysses: "Trieste–Zurich–Paris / 1914–1921" (644).

narratives to fashion a new identity. For them, Joyce became the “old father, old artificer” who could generate new possibilities in both art and in life through literature.

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