ВЕСТНИК

The Journal of Russian and Asian Studies

Issue 1, Volume 1 www.sras.org Spring 2005

Table of Contents
(click on title to jump to document)

Welcome! Добро пожаловать!

This journal has been created by The School of Russian and Asian Studies in an effort to give students and scholars a greater voice as well as to make scholarly information about Russia more widely available. We believe that there is a lack of up-to-date, scholarly English language information about Russia, particularly about the social and artistic aspects of the country for most historical eras.

This first issue features diverse papers and writings from students and professionals. Many focus on Russian art and literature. "Blood Imagery in Crime and Punishment" (p. 1) and "Similarities between Crime and Punishment and Brothers Karamazov" (p. 62) provide insights into some of Dostoevsky's literary classics. "Sancta" (p. 41) explores the religious imagery in a series of paintings by Russian artist Nicholas Roerich. "The Government Inspector in Text and Presentation" (p. 72) presents a critical history of Gogol's play while "Strange Enforcement" (p. 11) looks at the political side of the Soviet stage, giving a recount of the those Soviet censorship organs which affected Soviet playwrights.

In addition, we have included an article addressing the political aspects of Russian journalism: "Russian Media and Democracy" (p. 30) and, finally, a sampling of the Ukraine-centered creative writings of Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez (pp. 51; 57). A writer of partially Ukrainian decent, she has traveled that country and consequently written of it with interesting insight.

All papers are also available in HTML format at www.sras.org.

We are hoping to publish this journal on a regular basis. If you are interested in submitting material, have students you would like to encourage to submit material, or would like to participate on our editorial staff, contact us at jwilson@sras.org. All subjects related to Russia will be considered. Submissions should not be more than 25 pages, should be in 12-point TNR type with one-inch margins, and in electronic format (MS Word or Corel). Since we are dealing with diverse subjects, we will accept MLA, ALA and Chicago formats.

Ryan McLaughlin is a senior in Mathematics at the University of South Florida
This paper was written under the tutelage of Dr. Victor Peppard, USF

Blood Imagery in *Crime and Punishment*

by Ryan McLaughlin, 2004

Few symbols in literature are more evocative than blood. Its presence can conjure up fear, anger, sadness, confusion, and a host of other emotions in a reader. Blood seems to have a hold on the human psyche that is very nearly universal. Dostoevsky was no stranger to this concept. His novel Crime and Punishment makes frequent and graphic use of blood to convey his ideas. To him blood is a sign and means of initiation. Often he uses blood to evoke the image of the Orthodox sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This holds special significance for Raskolnikov, who is at first symbolically initiated into evil and is then symbolically initiated into suffering and redemption. Dostoevsky uses this symbolism and imagery to support major themes and undertones of the novel.

Blood has been used in initiation rites throughout recorded history. It can be seen in accounts of ancient religious initiations in such varying traditions as Greek mystery cults, Judaism, and African rights of passage. Foremost in Dostoevsky's mind would have certainly been the Holy Eucharist of the Orthodox Church. In this rite, Orthodox Christians believe, bread and wine become the real, physical body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Orthodox Church teaches that in the Eucharist ceremony worshipers are initiated into Christ's very being, becoming "partakers of divine nature" (Clendenin 26). It is such an important initiation rite that even infants participate directly following their baptisms (Clendenin 28).

While many Christian traditions have the Eucharist as a central initiation, there is an important distinction made in the Orthodox Church. While in the Catholic version of

the rite and in others the Eucharist cup is reserved for the clergy, in the Orthodox Church all believers partake of the Holy wine. To the Orthodox believer there is a very real sense in which each and every person who receives the sacrament partakes of the blood of Christ. This blood serves to transport the worshiper into the "union of Christ" (Clendenin 26), and Christ in a mystical way lives in him or her.

This dogma was most certainly in Dostoevsky's mind when he wrote Crime and Punishment. Raised in the Russian Orthodox Church, he would have become used to receiving Eucharist wine as the blood of Christ from very early on in life. The connection in his mind between blood and wine is seen clearly in Crime and Punishment, where blood is "spilt like champagne" (Dostoevsky 423). It is interesting to note that blood seems to cause Raskolnikov to act in a drunken manner. After incidences such as the old woman's murder he wanders, loses his powers of reason, and often forgets where he has been.

Raskolnikov goes through a series of initiations by blood. The first of these initiations is the murder of Alyona Ivanovna and her sister Lizaveta. Raskolnikov first knows the old pawnbroker is dead by the blood from her head, which flows "as from an overturned glass" (Dostoevsky 63). This interesting description of the bleeding is the first sign of Eucharist imagery. At first Raskolnikov tries not to get any of the blood on himself. Soon, however, he is forced to, "smearing his hand" (Dostoevsky 63) as he robs the dead woman. As he does this he pulls, rather ironically, two crosses and an icon from her neck. These images would have certainly been present at the celebration of any sacrament. The entire scene serves to picture Raskolnikov as being at a sort of unholy Eucharist, being initiated, frighteningly, into Alyona Ivanovna.

Raskolnikov immediately begins to partake of the old woman's nature. One of his first actions following Alyona's murder is to kill her sister, Lizaveta. This is nothing more than the old woman's manner of treating Lizaveta, taken to its final degree. The old woman has long regarded her sister's life as being worthless. Now Raskolnikov has done the same. Throughout the rest of the novel, Raskolnikov scarcely seems to be aware that he has murdered Lizaveta. Frequently, when talking about his crime, he says that he has "killed…an old pawnbroker" (Dostoevsky 422), rarely even mentioning the second murder at all. He seems to be barely conscious that Lizaveta ever existed, and he certainly would not seem to attribute any importance to that existence.

Even as Christ is seen as being alive, though his blood is drunk, so Alyona is alive for Raskolnikov. In a dream Raskolnikov returns to the fateful room where the murders took place. Finding the old pawnbroker hiding in a corner, he once again swings his ax at her. This time, however, she cannot be killed. His attempts at murdering her again are so futile as to be humorous. As he strikes Alyona Ivanovna, she is "simply shaking with mirth" (Dostoevsky 225). The old pawnbroker woman within Raskolnikov cannot die! Though her blood has been shed, she is alive in Raskolnikov's psyche.

This initiation by blood is first and foremost an initiation into evil. Raskolnikov is guilty of an evil from which he cannot find an escape. In reality he has murdered not only two women, but also any goodness which may have lived in him. "It was the devil that killed that old woman" he tells Sonia. "I murdered myself" (Dostoevsky 341). He has committed sin that needs expiation. His death is a spiritual one, and he looks to the story of Lazarus for hope of resurrection.

In the Orthodox tradition, some sacraments are repeatable and some are not (Clendenin 22). Raskolnikov has a chance at resurrection because the Eucharist is a repeatable sacrament. In the novel there is another cup of blood for him to drink from, another death which affects his course. After partaking of this blood he can eventually seek redemption. It will, however, send the murderer into profound suffering. It is, ironically, the blood of a pitiful drunk. Marmeladov' death provides Raskolnikov's second Eucharist.

Marmeladov's death is horrifically bloody. He is utterly crushed by the carriage, having his face and chest horribly disfigured. Raskolnikov is at once immersed into Marmeladov's blood. Having met him in a tavern, Raskolnikov is the only one of the crowd able to recognize the disgraced clerk. Rodion Romanovitch, with the help of the police, assists the dying man to his home. There, in the arms of his daughter Sonia, he passes from this life's misery. The scene leaves Rodion "spattered with blood" (Dostoevsky 153).

Dostoevsky leaves no mistake that he means for this to be a second Eucharist scene. Throughout the passage he uses the imagery of the holy sacrament. Blood is everywhere. That Marmeladov is a drunk is mentioned at every turn, bringing to mind the holy wine. Finally a priest is called in to hear Marmeladov's final confession. This practically makes the little room where the family lives seem like the sanctuary of a church.

This second initiation by blood differs from the first in that Raskolnikov is not initiated into Marmeladov's being, so much as he is initiated into his role. Rodion Romanovitch immediately steps in to provide for and protect the Marmeladov family. He

gives Katerina Ivanovna a significant sum of money to provide for Marmeladov's funeral. He protects Sonia from the false accusations of Luzhin. Raskolnikov seems to fill the place of father and husband for this destitute family.

Rodion Romanovitch also eventually takes on Marmeladov's role as a buffoon. At the very beginning of the novel Marmeladov is shown in a tavern making a fool of himself. He makes a drunken rant and confesses his sinfulness to the crowd, which enjoys mocking him. They make a point of deriding his drunken state. In one of the final scenes Raskolnikov makes his confession to a crowd. He bows low and kisses the earth in a rather ridiculous fashion. The onlookers accuse him of being drunk as well. He has completely imitated his initial meeting with Semyon Zaharovitch.

It is, significantly, through the death of Marmeladov that Raskolnikov first comes into contact with Sophia Semyonovna. She represents to him both joy and suffering. She calls Rodion both to repentance and resurrection. It is Sonia who tells Rodya to confess to the murder at the crossroads. It is Sonia who reads to him the story of the resurrection of Lazarus and offers him hope for his own return from the dead. Marmeladov's blood initiates Raskolnikov into love for Sonia, which is his path to redemption.

This path to redemption is one of great suffering. Marmeladov himself sought "tears and tribulation" (Dostoevsky 18) as his only hope. Raskolnikov must suffer for his crimes. Eventually he must turn himself in. Eight years of penal servitude in Siberia are his first steps to spiritual renewal.

This second initiation is sustained by the slow and painful death of Katerina Ivanovna. Katerina's blood initiates Raskolnikov into a more specific kind of suffering. It is the suffering of the poor and destitute. She is not killed quickly as Marmeladov is. She

is slowly eaten away by consumption, a malady often caused by living in poverty. Her blood comes gradually through her "terrible, hollow coughs" (Dostoevsky 152). She suffers more severely than anyone in the novel does. The religious character in the novel see this as something holy. When she showed him the blood she had coughed up, the priests reaction was that he "bowed his head and said nothing" (Dostoevsky 152), showing her blood great reverence. Sonia sacrifices her body to provide for Katerina Ivanovna. Her bloody suffering is a holy thing in the novel.

The Orthodox faith sees the Eucharist as something that sustains the spiritual life of the believer (Clendenin 29). In the same way Katerina Ivanovna's blood seems to sustain Rodya down the path of suffering. Each time he comes into contact with her, he is moved to sacrifice for her family. The first time he meets her, when he brings Semyon Zaharovitch home drunk, he leaves them money. When Marmeladov dies Rodion provides for the funeral. Katerina's blood compels him to give to the poor.

Using the Eucharist symbolism gives Dostoevsky a powerful image that would have resonated with his readers. They would have been intimately familiar with the idea of blood as initiation. The idea of the deaths leading to Raskolnikov partaking of different natures would have been easily understood and would have done much to help convey Dostoevsky's ideas to his audience. In addition to this, the imagery does a great deal to support his other thematic concepts. These concepts in turn support the overall message of the novel.

First, the Eucharist imagery supports the major theme of the novel, which, as the title reveals, is crime and punishment. In Christian doctrine the crucifixion of Christ is a punishment for the transgressions of the world. The Eucharist is made possible by this

atoning death. The Eucharist also pictures the shedding of Christ's blood. The sacramental symbolism in the novel supports the idea that wrongdoing deserves punishment. Ultimately Raskolnikov's crimes do bring about consequences.

Taken together, the Eucharist images form a "Dostoevskian double" (Bloom 49). Dostoevsky often had images, characters, or settings deliberately parallel one another within the same work. This would serve to show the logical conclusions of an idea (Bloom 49). Another example of a "Dostoevskian double" in Crime and Punishment is the juxtaposition of Sonia and Dounia in Part 1. Dounia's proposed marriage to Luzhin is an ideological precursor to Sonia's prostitution.

The first initiation by blood, the old woman's murder, makes Raskolnikov guilty of bloodshed. Raskolnikov tries to excuse this guilt by saying that Alyona Ivanovna's death was good for society. She is a "louse" and keeps others from attaining their goals. This idea, taken another step further, says that Marmeladov's death is a good thing. Katerina Ivanovna even says this. If he hadn't died she would have been "sousing and rinsing till daybreak" (Dostoevsky 151). His death has decreased her suffering and she is therefore justified at being happy about it. Here is the "Dostevskian double".

The Eucharist imagery helps in that it calls to mind another death that was purportedly for the common good. Christians hold that Christ's death greatly benefited them. By picturing the deaths of Alyona Ivanovna and Semyon Zaharovitch as being sacramental, Dostoevsky forces out the next logical questions of the idea: if the old pawn broker's death and the demise of Marmeladov are beneficial, and Christ's death was beneficial, what is the difference? Isn't Raskolnikov even *righteous* in his killing? Isn't

Katerina Ivanovna *holier* because of her happiness? Dostoevsky leaves these questions unanswered.

The use of blood as initiation also supports what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the "carnivalization" of the novel (Bloom 135). Bakhtin uses this term to compare the plot and setting of Crime and Punishment to the carnivals held in Medieval Europe. These festivals were times when normal social order did not apply. One could find all manner of absurd situations and people. Bakhtin supports the idea that Dostoevsky's novels often exude the air of one of these carnivals.

The images Dostoevsky uses create many of the absurdities Bakhtin writes about. Through the Eucharist image, Alyona Ivanovna's blood becomes an absurd parody of Christ's blood. A drunken man's love for his prostitute daughter points the way to redemption for a depraved murderer. Anything goes at a carnival, when disorder is king. Dostoevsky is willing to make comparisons and allusions in a carnival setting that wouldn't be allowed under normal circumstances.

The deification aspect of the Eucharist, which imparts the nature of the subject whose blood is shed to the partaker of the blood, also creates absurdities. Raskolnikov, through initiation by blood, becomes things that he is not. Thus the impoverished law student becomes, in spirit, a greedy pawnbroker. A young intellectual takes an old, drunken buffoon's place in a suffering family. These absurd situations are typical of what is meant by "carnivalization".

Blood even serves to initiate the carnival atmosphere. As was stated previously, blood seems to send Raskolnikov into a drunken state. From then on the novel is filled with drunks, including Marmeladov, Razumihin, and others. Porfiry comes in from out of

town and begins investigating the murders. His presence in the novel is owed entirely to blood. He is in every way the picture of a carnival jester. He laughs at almost everything he says. He jokes with Raskolnikov over very serious matters. He plays psychological games with the killer in order to force a confession.

The carnival atmosphere of the novel, together with the idea of the double, serves major constructive purposes for the theme of the novel. They are greatly aided by the idea of initiation by blood. Many major events in the plot are brought about through initiation by blood. Most important, however, is the powerful imagery that initiation by blood gives. It conveys ideas, questions, and themes that are in fact central to the purpose of Crime and Punishment. In using initiation by blood, Dostoevsky showed himself once again to be one of the greatest writers in history.

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold Ed. Crime and Punishment: Modern Critical Interpretations. First Edition, Chelsea House Publishers. New York, 1988.

Clendenin, Daniel B. Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader. Second Edition, Baker Academic Publishers. June 2004.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Crime and Punishment. Barnes and Noble Books. New York, 1994.

Josh Wilson holds an MA in Theatre from Idaho State University.
He is currently an educational consultant based in Moscow, Russia.
The following is an excerpt from his thesis, The Enigmas and Facts of a Social Experiment: A Reconsideration of Soviet Era Dramatic Texts 1920-1980 (University of Idaho, 2003). *To access the full thesis in PDF, click here.*

The Strange Enforcement of Socialist Realism:
Soviet Theatre 1917-1960 [Excerpt]
by Josh Wilson, 2003

Chapter I presented a practical definition of Socialist Realism. To enforce that definition, the Soviet government employed a vast bureaucracy as enigmatic as the genre itself; just as there was not a precise definition of Socialist Realism, there was no singular agency enforcing it. There were agencies for censoring plays, agencies for censoring playwrights, and agencies that provided economic incentives to encourage compliance. Furthermore, these varied agencies changed their names, bureaucratic alliances, and foci over time, presenting a substantial complication for historians investigating the genre's enforcement. That successive historians have described the system in widely varying ways is not at all surprising.

This chapter, like the last, will begin with an examination of the subject's historiography to provide a needed historical context. Then, as the most straightforward method of presenting such complicated information, a series of anecdotes will illuminate the system's Byzantine history and function. Lastly, both the historiographical and historical data will be synthesized into a concise picture of the enforcement system.

HISTORIOGRAPHY: PRESENTATIONS OF A COMPLICATED SYSTEM

The historiography of this subject is in some ways similar to that of Chapter I, with historians attributing the system's origin to various times and authorities. Despite these differences, each treatment can be seen as correct, but for different reasons than in Chapter I. Here the simplest answer is not the most workable. Rather, the Soviet enforcement system was

large enough that each description with its concomitant plethora of authorities and agencies is correct, if only incomplete.

Many histories vastly oversimplify the system. For example, Boika Sokolova, whose simple definition of Socialist Realism was featured in Chapter I, asserts that the system required theatres to justify their repertory as early as 1924[1] and that by 1932, there was a "Soviet cut" of Hamlet: an official version of the play edited for ideological content.[2] For Sokolova, these cuts were implemented through a "monitored dialogue" enforced by fear:

> The 1930s set in motion the nightmarish mincing machine of Stalinist reprisals. Fear ruled the lives of millions. In conditions of excessive ideological pressure, directors desperately groped for ways of bringing their productions close to safe political platforms and tuned carefully into the latest news spread by the Party press.[3]

This brief description leaves many open questions. If the fear began in the 1930's, why did repertories require justification in 1924? To whom were they justified? How could all the work required to edit all mention of the afterlife, God, moral compunction, suicide, and even graveyards out of Hamlet (which the Soviet version quite amazingly did[4]) be organized by simply compelling directors to read the latest newspaper?

Although problems with this type of simple explanation are apparent, it seems to be the most popular. Historians Mel Gordon, Christopher de Haan, Paul Dukes, and Anatoly Smeliansky all use similar arguments. Gordon and de Haan,[5] for instance, treat the repression of Vsevolod Meyerhold's avant-garde techniques as part of a personal conflict between Meyerhold and Stalin which eventually resulted in Meyerhold's arrest and execution; again, Socialist Realism is seen as enforced through fear of death. While the personal tastes of Stalin and the

[1] Sokolova, 145-6
[2] 147
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid. The Soviet cut concentrated on political conflict. e.g. the "To be or not to be" monologue was rewritten as a dialogue between Horatio and Hamlet in which Hamlet tries to decide whether or not to become king.
[5] Gordon, et al.

fear of death were part of the enforcement system (as this chapter and the next will discuss), the Gordon/de Haan description is incomplete. Stalin could not have personally controlled all of the Soviet Union's theatres (approx. 500 in 1934) or playwrights (approx. 1500 in 1934): an organization would be needed for such a monumental task.

Smeliansky alludes to such an organization, but never directly names it. He refers only to "central censorship" and, again, implies that the whole system was run purely on fear. This fear was created by Stalin and, Smeliansky states, was great enough to be effective well after Stalin's death as "his shadow continued to strike fear into the country for many years to come."[6] In his 200-plus-page history, no censoring agency is specifically mentioned.[7]

Dukes also argues enforcement-through-fear, but names some specific organizations:

> During the 1930's the unions for writers, musicians and other artists increasingly imposed their control over the creative output of their members, many of whom disappeared temporarily or forever during the purges.[8]

For Dukes, authority rested with the unions and was derived from fear. Interestingly, he attributes the purges, which created the fear, not to Stalin but to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the "ruthless" A. A. Zhdanov, the same Zhdanov who opened the First Congress and whose quote Oscar Brockett and Inna Solovyova used to define Socialist Realism. However, Dukes accounts for changes in the severity of the enforcement system largely by the death of Stalin, stating the "thaw" that occurred after his death brought new, gentler enforcement procedures, such as that of enforced emigration from the USSR.[9]

These histories are cursory, characterized by brief, rhetorically charged descriptions of a system driven solely by fear. Few describe specific enforcement policies, few name specific

---

[6] Smeliansky, 1. Smeliansky's book is entitled The Russian Theatre After Stalin
[7] There was no agency known as "central censorship" and Soviet censorship was anything but centralized.
[8] Dukes, 264.
[9] Ibid, 311.

enforcement agencies, and all effectively date censorship to the 1930s.[10] Oscar Brockett makes the first substantial break from this trend. He indicates that authority rested with both the unions and other government agencies. He dates censorship slightly earlier, and names specific enforcement policies. For him, "The pressure to subordinate artistic to ideological ends was intensified around 1927."[11] He explains that a few virulently proletarian organizations such as Proletcult, which had pressed for greater homogeneity in art, received official government support in that year: party members were installed as theatre managers and, after 1930, productions had to be licensed through RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) before they could be legally performed.[12] In 1934, he states RAPP was replaced with the Union of Soviet Writers. Interestingly, while Brockett credits the Union for being "somewhat more liberal" than RAPP, he also credits the Union with "the first truly repressive measure" in art: implementing Socialist Realism. He does not explain what happened to the systems of theatre management and licensing with the demise of RAPP, which implies that they were inherited by the Union. But this was not exactly the case, as shall be shown later.[13]

While Brockett's description is far more detailed than most, it is still far from complete, as a look at Inna Solovyova's description will show. Solovyova dates censorship even earlier, to 1923, the founding of the governmental agency Glavrepertkom (Central Committee on Repertories). This agency, which cooperated closely with the Soviet political police (known in 1923 as GPU and, later, the KGB), supervised the repertoires of theatres. Solovyova also

[10] Smeliansky does not name any specific date.
[11] Brockett, Century, 193.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Brockett also mentions the importance of other government offices and other unions. The All-Union Conference of Stage Directors, held in 1939, was intended to do for directing what the First Congress had done for playwriting. The Central Direction of Theatres was founded in 1936 to provide "a single agency authority over all troupes (approximately nine hundred)." These agencies could indirectly influence which plays would be produced and are worth mentioning although they are outside the immediate focus of this study: playwriting.

mentions the role of Proletcult, RAPP, the Writer's Union, and states that the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) held authority over playwrights as well. Also, unlike most of the previous historians discussed, she describes those measures the Soviet government used to encourage Socialist Realism, rather than just censoring its opposite. These measures included lavishing funds, titles, and praise on favored theatres and artists. These issues, discussed in greater detail later, effectively demonstrate that even Brockett's more inclusive summary is still lacking. Clearly, a new, more complete description of the system is necessary.

Historians have tended to oversimplify the system for three reasons. The first reason is evidenced in their rhetoric. These historians do not provide specific evidence, apparently writing for an audience that would not require such details. I, personally, was more than halfway through Smeliansky's book before realizing that the censorship discussed was largely undefined and without source. Having lived most of my life with the image of a Soviet bureaucracy that loomed like an Orwellian dystopia, I was, at start, a ready audience for such arguments. In this study, however, I will not assume an uncritical audience and will thus consider these details as crucial. A second reason for the simplification is that official Soviet policy did not allow a free exchange of information within the country or over the border. Historians have long been dependant on interviews and "leaked" information to piece together enforcement procedures. Depending on what sources were used, different scenarios surfaced. These differences do not render the various scenarios incorrect, but simply incomplete. The third and final reason stems from the system's sheer size and complexity. To fully understand the system, a book-length study would be needed.

Given this difficulty, an exhaustive discussion of Soviet enforcement will not be attempted here. Instead, the remainder of this chapter will attempt to describe first, the nature of

that system and second, its major agencies and policies more comprehensively than heretofore attempted. These agencies enforced their policies not only by promoting fear, but also by controlling the resources playwrights needed to survive: those for both printing and producing a script.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A BYZANTINE SYSTEM

Two key concepts are necessary to understand the nature of the censorship system. First, the severity of censorship varied over time. Second, the Soviet bureaucracy generally operated on a system of personal favors rather than on a system of definite policies enforced by "blind justice:" those with the best connections got the best "justice."

The nature of the system changed over time as funding waxed and waned and as politics changed. This seventy-year process is succinctly summed in the following table:

Changes in the Severity of Censorship in the USSR Over Time[14]

1917 – 1940 Development of the Soviet system; as agencies are established and their power is augmented through the nationalization of resources, enforcement becomes more severe. This process peaks ca. 1936-40

1940 – 1945 Preparations for WWII and WWII itself stretch the USSR's resources thin. Enforcement is relaxed predominantly as a cost-cutting measure.

1945 – 1952 The Cold War develops. As the country is rebuilt and becomes a super-power, enforcement surpasses pre-1940 levels.

1953 – 1963 Stalin dies in 1953. Nikita Khrushchev succeeds to the office, calling for a more liberal Soviet society and officially denouncing Stalinist policies in 1956. Enforcement is relaxed.

1964 – 1979 Brezhnev, a political reactionary and sympathizer with Stalinist policies, succeeds Khrushchev. Enforcement grows more severe, though never again approaches the severity of the Post-WWII era.

[14] Table compiled from information from Smeliansky, Dukes, Solovyova, and Jelagin.

1980 – 1985 Russian invasion of Afghanistan again stretches Soviet resources thin. The liberality created by this is augmented by political turmoil created by a leadership crisis in the Communist party. Gorbachev emerges as victor and begins dismantling the enforcement system as part of his *perestroika* ca. 1985.

The web of personal favors on which this system operated is perhaps best summed by an anecdote recorded by Juri Jelagin of the Vakhtangov Theatre. [15] The story is set in 1934 (the year of the First Congress) and concerns Lev Ruslanov, actor and the House Manager of the Vakhtangov Actor's House (an apartment building built for employees of the theatre). One of Ruslanov's tenants, the famed director Alexsi Popov, lived on the fifth floor and kept a series of flower pots affixed to the outside of his balcony rail with plumber's tape. Ruslanov, noticing the pots as a potential safety hazard, sent Popov a friendly note asking him to remove them. Popov, however, took great pride in his flowerpots and sent Ruslanov back a friendly letter explaining that they were firmly affixed and did not constitute a hazard. Ruslanov's authority was not to be challenged and the second note was answered with a third, bearing Ruslanov's official title, seal, and much more officious language. Popov was so indignant he did not bother to respond to the letter. The next day, Ruslanov had his acquaintance the district police chief send orders to Popov that the flowerpots were to be removed. Popov, however, contacted his friend Comrade Vul, the Moscow Chief of Police, and had the orders revoked. Ruslanov, not to be outdone, called on Comrade Markarian, Chief of the National Police of the Soviet Union, to reinstate the repealed orders. Popov re-repealed them with a favor called in from Marshal Voroshilov, the Commander in Chief of the Red Army and, furthermore (and perhaps ironically), The People's Commissar of War. Ruslanov was adamant about the flowerpots and obtained orders for their removal from Mikhail Kalinin, President of the Executive Committee of the USSR. Popov removed the

[15] Jelagin, 55-8.

flowerpots, but apparently not before considering appealing his case to the Politburo (Central Committee of the Communist Party), the country's most powerful agency, or to Stalin himself.

Admittedly, this case has little to do directly with the enforcement of Socialist Realism. However, the kind of erratic behavior it describes was quite common within the enforcement system. Take, for example, the strange case of Alexandr Tairov. From the early nineteen-teens Tairov established himself as one of Russia's most creative anti-realists. However, in the early 1930s he, along with others such as Konstantine Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Danchenko, declared allegiance to Socialist Realism[16] apparently as part of a process of "self-preservation and self-transformation."[17] He was proclaimed a Peoples' Artist of the USSR in 1934. However, he apparently continued to practice anti-realism,[18] provoking the government, in 1936, to forcibly merge his Kamerny Theatre with the aptly named Realistic Theatre. Through petitions to the government, however, the Kamerny was reestablished in 1939. In that same year his troupe was "evacuated" to Siberia due to the war. Incidentally, Siberia is a long, long way from any front line Russia experienced in WWII and was the traditional repository for those considered politically dangerous. Nonetheless, he was awarded the Order of Lenin in 1945 for wartime services. He was also again charged, in that year, with "formalism" (a blanket term used to describe anything not considered to be Socialist Realism) and continuously charged with formalism every year thereafter until his theatre was again stripped from him in 1950. This bizarre process was halted that year only by Tairov's death.[19] Such was the nature of the Soviet system.

[16] Brockett, 196
[17] Solovyova, 326.
[18] Smeliansky, 3.
[19] Brockett, 196.

What the average playwright went through to get a play produced was no less complicated. He[20] faced two distinct phases of censorship: literary and dramatic. To concisely describe these phases, the following history will assume a narrative form. The history will also assume that our average playwright is writing sometime before the outbreak of WWII, but the basic system remained throughout the Soviet Era.

The story begins simply enough: after our playwright has written his play, he needs to submit copies to the literary departments of several hundred theatres for production consideration.[21] Here, the playwright encounters the first of many complications: by 1921, the government had fully nationalized the printing industry and thus controlled all publishing, publishing equipment, and distribution of published materials under an agency called Gosizdat (State Publishing House), officially founded in 1917.[22]

In order to use a mimeograph or press, the playwright needs permission from Gosizdat. After 1923, however, Gosizdat could not approve any play not already approved by Glavit (Central Administration of Literature and Publishing). Glavit was founded in 1922 as part of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment to help "orient" the ideology purveyed by literature.[23] In 1923 it was given specific authority over new dramatic texts. In 1929, after the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment fell from favor for not being sufficiently stringent ideologically, Glavit was removed from the Commissariat and made an independent agency. The

---

[20] Most playwrights were male. Therefore, the masculine pronoun will suffice to describe "the average playwright."

[21] Most of the 500 Soviet theatres' literary departments dated to the nineteenth century, established to evaluate, write, or rewrite scripts.

[22] In 1920, a committee called Glapolitprosvet (Committee for Political Enlightenment) was formed within Gosizdat to evaluate which works would be eligible for continued publication and distribution in the USSR, making it that country's first censorship organ. Glapolitprosvet had jurisdiction only over previously written works, however, and is thus not of direct importance to plays produced after its incorporation. Among those playwrights censored by the committee were Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov. Other censored authors included Plato, Nietzsche, and Kropotkin, a famous Russian anarchist. See MAAT Online Database of History. May 2003. Italy. <http://web. genie.it/utenti/i/inanna/livello2/russia-1917.htm>

Commissariat, however, was not fully disbanded until 1932 with many of its remaining powers bequeathed to the newly established Writer's Union. Glavit, now officially independent, worked closely with Cheka (Secret National Political Police)[24] so its decision would be heavily influenced by the "ideological profile" obtained from Litkontrol (Bureau for the Control of Literature), a department of Cheka. The purpose of Litkontrol was to monitor the "life, creative work, moods, friendships, and statements of all Soviet writers."[25] It is unclear exactly when Litkontrol was founded, but it is clear that Cheka was performing these functions as early as 1920.[26]

Glavit, however, is the organization with which our playwright will first have direct contact. This contact begins as the playwright submits his text through a narrow window at Glavit's large but cramped building. [27] Over the next few months, several censors read and annotate the text. They indicate where changes should be made to correct the work's "class orientation" and "historical accuracy." For example, the protagonist must represent the proletariat and if a leader from a previous era is depicted, that leader should be shown as oppressive to the proletariat (although, as Chapter III will show, there were major exceptions to this last rule). [28] Generally, then, the censors are concerned with assuring that the play conforms to the four tenets of Socialist Realism: realism, historicism, populism, and adherence to Party goals.[29]

---

[23] Gorchakov, 266-7

[24] This organization's name changed often throughout history: GPU, OGPU, NKVD, and, of course, KGB.
[25] Gorchakov, 267. This portion of the text his heavily indebted to Gorchakov's great history of Glavit.
[26] Seldes, George. 1995. The George Seldes Reader. (London: Barricade Books) 220.
[27] Gorchakov, 266-71
[28] Ibid
[29] As described at the end of Chapter I, see page 20 of this study.

To achieve the desired corrections, censors cut lines, add lines, and/or make general notes on how characters or scenes should be changed. Now, a single version with all annotations from all censors is created. Glavit now interviews the playwright: he is presented with this final copy and questioned about his intentions, his political orientation, and specifics about his play. These "interviews" will often become interrogations because semi-retired Cheka agents constitute much of Glavit's staff.[30]

After the interview, the playwright takes the annotated copy home and rewrites his text. Once done, the new version is resubmitted to Glavit for one of three fates. First, the revision may be denied by Glavit and declared "politically deficient," in which case the text is sent to Litkontrol with any other information the agency has compiled about the author. This action officially bans the text, makes discussing the text illegal, and may result in the author's arrest. Second, the revision may be re-censored and the process begun again. Third, the revision may be approved. If the third option occurs, Glavit binds the three copies (original, final annotated, and final revised) together. Glavit writes on the non-bound side of the book the author's name, the number of pages contained in the text, and how many copies of the final revised version are authorized for printing. Over this is placed a large wax seal to prevent the information and/or the final version from being changed post-censorship.[31]

Fortunately for our playwright, Glavit's approval usually constitutes approval from Gosizdat as well. However, Gosizdat still controls the resources needed for printing and can halt printing based on the availability of resources (paper, ink, etc). Apparently, politically suspect authors and texts are more subject to "scarcity."[32] If Gosizdat does not intervene, the playwright can finally apply for the use of a mimeograph or press from The Society of Dramatists and

[30] Gorchakov, 267
[31] Ibid

Composers.[33] Remember, all this has been done in an attempt to make enough copies to distribute the script to literary departments. This application, however, can be denied by the Writer's Union, to which the Society was subordinated after 1934, thus making union membership necessary to legally publish within the USSR. The Writer's Union, the official sponsor of Socialist Realism can thus also control publication by denying or revoking memberships. If all requirements are met, copies are made and distributed to literary departments.

It is generally through a literary department that the playwright will receive payment for his play. However, alternate sources of funding were available. Often, some well-connected person would arrange subsidies through the Housing Administration or the State Bank for a favored playwright. Stalin, for instance, arranged for an open bank account for playwright Alexi Tolstoy after being particularly taken by Tolstoy's play, Peter I.[34]

Our playwright can also draw income by publishing and selling his play in bookstores. To do so, after obtaining approval from Gosizdat (after 1917) and Glavit (after 1922), and if the playwright is in good standing with the Writer's Union (after 1934), the playwright may apply for the approval of yet another agency, the Bureau of the Press. The Bureau, created in 1917 as a sub-department within Agitprop (Department of Agitation and Propaganda – which itself operated within the Politburo), had appointed managers to all publishing houses since 1921. The Bureau's representatives can edit, demand revisions, or deny publication of texts.[35]

---

[32] Seldes, 232

[33] Later known as the Society for the Protection of Author's Rights

[34] Jelagin, 97, 113.

[35] Gorchakov, 269; see also MAAT Online Database of History, <http://web.genie.it/utenti/i/inanna/livello2/russia-1917.htm>

If the playwright wishes his play to be produced by a theatre, there are still more agencies and revisions to go through. This dramatic portion of the censorship process begins with the literary department who will pay the playwright only upon approving his text. Most literary departments remained quite liberal. The playwright probably knows the following anecdote concerning the Moscow Art Theatre: Mikhail Bulgakov, recognized as one of the early Soviet era's most talented writers and as one of its most vociferous dissidents, was continually reprimanded for "politically deficient" plays, after which all his plays were banned. Incredibly frustrated, he wrote a letter to Stalin asking to either be exiled or shot so he could escape the enforcement system.[36] Most contemporary onlookers thought Stalin would choose to shoot, but instead he seems to have been greatly amused by the note. Stalin ordered Bulgakov be given a job in the Moscow Art Theatre and that one play, The Days of the Turbans, be returned to the repertory there (but not anywhere else). He even called Bulgakov personally to inform him of this.[37] Stanislavsky appointed Bulgakov to the literary department, where he remained until dying a natural death in 1938. Nothing he wrote there, however, would ever pass Glavit.[38]

The playwright, knowing that literary departments usually approve plays based on their dramatic rather than polemic qualities, sends his play to the various literary departments.[39] He knows that many "politically deficient" playwrights are able to survive despite being consistently banned due to payments from these relatively liberal departments. However, this play is far from being performed onstage. If approved by a literary department, the playwright reads his play to

[36] Jelagin, 102.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] See Jelagin, 127. Gorchakov, however, informs us that there were significant exceptions to this. Nevertheless, the literary departments were bureaucratically aligned with no entity but their respective theatres.

the theatre's Art Council. On this council sit directors, designers, actors, and musicians,[40] led by the theatre's manager, who controls all funding, and its art director, who chairs the meeting.

Art Councils had been required in all state-owned theatres since 1920 but many had established such councils years before as a way of democratizing the artistic process. In 1920, the Art Councils were subordinated to the Theatrical Department of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, which had since appointed theatre managers to all state-owned theatres.[41] However, with Vsevolod Meyerhold, a devout avant-gardist, as the department's first head, most of the first appointments had been exceptionally liberal party members.[42] Furthermore, most of these original managers were weak and easily controlled by the famous artists who worked for them. For example, Juri Jelagin, a Vakhtangov musician, refers to his theatre's first manager as a short, fat woman lacking in intelligence and civility. Jelagin will only use her last name, Vaneyeva, and indicates that although she was manager, the Art Council of the Vakhtangov Theatre was really run by the famous people who worked there: the poet Pavel Antokolski; the famous actor Boris Shchukin; etc. [43]

This all changed in 1935, however, when the newly formed Committee on Arts, an extension of the all-powerful Politburo, inherited the ability to appoint managers from the now defunct Commissariat of Enlightenment[44] and also began appointing art directors. Thus, both Art Council leaders were now representatives of the Committee on Arts. Furthermore, this new Art Council leadership can appoint "public representatives" to the council, further inflating its ranks with hard-line communists. The Art Council can, like Glavit, add or remove lines or

[40] Jelagin, 37, 39.

[41] Theoretically, it could appoint managers to all theatres, but its authority was, for all practical purposes, relegated to state-owned theatres.

[42] Pesochinsky, Nikolai. 1998. "Meyerhold and the "Marxist Critique." Theater, Vol. 28, Issue 2: 35-6.

[43] Jelagin, 35, 78.

[44] Whose demise ca. 1929-1932 is described on pages 30-1 of this chapter.

demand general changes to scenes or characters. Based on these notes, given after the playwright's reading, the script is again revised and resubmitted to the Council for approval, additional notes, or denial.

If the Art Council denies production, that theatre cannot produce the play but other theatres may still consider it. If the Art Council approves the play, it must now be submitted to Glavrepertkom. Established in 1923 as part of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, Glavrepertkom, like Glavit, was made largely independent after 1929. The purpose of both these agencies was to "ideologically orient" drama, in concert with Cheka. No play could be added to a theatre's repertory or begin rehearsals without approval from Glavrepertkom. Yet again, the play is submitted, annotated, and revised, then either approved, annotated, or denied.[45]

Glavrepertkom, however, differed from Glavit in one very important aspect: while Glavit benefited from the power of a government monopoly almost immediately, the government did not achieve such a monopoly over theatres until 1936. Many independent theatres, using their fame and prestige, managed to either influence the agency or ignore it altogether.[46] But for nationalized theatres, Glavrepertkom was an absolute authority. Vladimir Nemirovitch-Danchenko, a prestigious director at Russia's most prestigious theatre, The Moscow Art, complained of the agency as early as 1923: "it bans a play when it considers it counter-revolutionary, or when it isn't Soviet enough, or when there's a tsar (as in The Snow Maiden)… or when the past is beautiful or there's a church or whatever."[47] The Moscow Art was one of the first to fall under state ownership. The quote shows that Glavrepertkom operated under much the same principles as Glavit: "class orientation" (revolutionary, Soviet) and "historical accuracy" (the past was oppressive by Marxian standards, not beautiful). Also, "counter-revolutionary"

[45] Solovyova, 326; Gorchakov, 270.
[46] Jelagin, 79-80; Solovyova, 329.

was a term often applied to texts considered "non-realist" and Soviet policies included the promulgation of Marxist history and the elimination of all churches.[48]

As nationalization spread, so did Glavrepertkom's influence. In 1923, the year the agency was founded, the state owned 33 percent of all theatres. By 1926, this number grew to 63. Nationalization was completed in 1936.[49] If Glavrepertkom approves the play, rehearsals may begin. However, the play has not yet been licensed for public presentation. Licensing was required of all productions after 1930 but, again, was not fully enforced until 1936.[50] To become licensed, the playwright will attend the final dress rehearsal with a consortium consisting of the production's director and designers, as well as representatives from the Glavrepertkom, Agitprop, the Committee on Arts and, occasionally, the Politburo itself.[51] Following the rehearsal, all consortium members discuss the merits of the play. If the government delegation approves the production, they may still demand changes to the text or its interpretation (acting, music, design, etc.).[52] If they deny licensing, however, all copies of the script would be confiscated, performances canceled, and discussion of the play made effectively illegal. Furthermore, the theatre may be reprimanded, the playwright arrested, and the previous censors fired or arrested.[53] But, if the delegation approves, the play may finally receive public performance (although the various agencies may still cancel performances if controversy ensues).

---

[47] Nemerovitch-Danchenko, 277-8.

[48] Again, we can see in Nemirovitch-Danchenko's quote a description of Soviet censorship ideals described at the end of Chapter I. See page 20 of this study.

[49] Brockett, History, 479-80.

[50] Brockett, Century, 193; Jelagin, 105.

[51] Jelagin, 105; Gorchakov, 270.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Gorchakov, 270-1

Our playwright, then, has finally seen his play performed. In the process, he and his play have been scrutinized by more than a dozen agencies and he has rewritten the text at least three or four times. However, this is still the not whole story. There were still other agencies claiming dominion over the playwright, as well as other agencies that could censor the director, the actors, the set designers, etc. Also, beyond censorship, many other agencies positively encouraged playwrights to conform to Socialist Realist expectations. Official rewards such as the Stalin Prizes, established in 1939 (and renamed the Lenin Prizes during the Khrushchev thaw of 1956), "represented a handsome sum of money, not to mention an improvement in social status."[54] The title of "People's Artist," established ca. 1920, also gave an improvement in social status. People's Artists were more likely to be named to government posts and thus receive extra salary (and still more prestige). "Improved social status" also meant access to better shops, restaurants, and apartments, relaxed passage through censorship, and more lavish productions of one's plays.[55]

Dissidents were also subject to unofficial enforcement procedures. Artists could be disenfranchised (stripped of their citizenship), making them ineligible for steady employment, union membership, and/or publication rights.[56] If a well-connected individual came to dislike a playwright, that individual could "pull strings" to threaten the playwright with eviction, disenfranchisement, deportation, and even death if the playwright did not change his writing style. Party sponsored dramatic critics could alter a playwright's social status by either harsh or favorable reviews. A harsh review often meant decreased access to goods, more stringent censorship, and even hardships for the playwright's family.[57]

---

[54] Solovyova, 353.
[55] Jelagin, 103, 125, 136.
[56] Jelagin, 15.
[57] Jelagin, 104, 125.

The apparatus for "ideologically orienting" playwriting was more extensive, capricious, and enigmatic than described above. Take, for example, the case of Alexandr Kirshon, author of The Big Day, a play depicting a brave Soviet army defeating a Fascist invasion in just two days. One of the first playwrights to join the Communist party, Kirshon remained a fervent communist all his life, as did most of his family. However, when his cousin, Marshal Yagoda, then head of the Cheka (then known as NKVD) was purged in 1936, the new head arrested Yagoda's entire family. For the "crime" of being Yagoda's cousin, Kirshon died in a concentration camp, and his play was pulled from production at the prestigious Vakhtangov theatre.[58] Again, the system and all its processes would take a book to fully detail.

This history also admittedly does not account for all name changes, bureaucratic restructuring, and power shifts affecting the enforcement system. For example, Glavrepertkom was replaced with the Ministry of Culture in 1953. However, the Ministry performed much the same process using the same criteria, though it tended to be more liberal than its predecessor.[59]

A PORTAIT OF THE SYSTEM

Taking this historical and historiographical analysis into account, the enforcement system for Socialist Realism can be effectively summed in the following three-point description:

1) As the sole repository of economic resources, the government could decide what to print and what to stage because it controlled the resources for printing and staging.
2) Through an enigmatic, labyrinthine system that held the ultimate power of economic success and/or survival over the artist, the artist was both discouraged from acting contrary to the system's wishes and encouraged (or forced) to comply.

[58] Jelagin, 102.
[59] See table on pages 28-9 of this chapter.

3) As a general rule, enforcement encouraged (or forcibly created) plays with "appropriate" class-orientation, realism,[60] historical presentation, and adherence to the current goals and policies of the Communist Party and its leadership.

The system, in its shifting intricacy, was inherently enigmatic and was maintained as such to produce fear in those subject to it. This fear was made possible, however, largely by the government's economic hegemony over those resources necessary for playwrights to be economically viable: theatres and presses. That censorship was enforced through economic means is quite ironic; removing the means of production from the hands of the bourgeoisie was supposed to free the artist, not censor him. Perhaps even this irony was all the more helpful to the system of fear, however, as it only adds to enigmatic nature of the system. With the authority derived from economic ownership and fear, Socialist Realism, as defined in Chapter I, was effectively enforced. Furthermore, as Chapter III will show, Socialist Realism was effectively implemented into a representative body of plays.

[60] Class orientation, as seen in Chapter I, included not only showing the working class as heroes, but also presenting the story within realistic strictures. Lenin was quoted in that chapter as implying that realism was like the simple black bread of the peasantry and was thus something the general populace could understand.

Emy Wangborg is a senior in International Relations at the University of Sussex, England.
This paper was written at MGIMO in Moscow, under the tutelage of Yuri Dubinin.
Ms. Wangborg is an SRAS graduate.

Russian Media and Democracy under Putin

by Emy Wangborg, 2004

"If Russia is a democracy" is a controversial, difficult question to answer. Russia today has democratic institutions, but it may be debated to what extent they are allowed to function democratically. One of these institutions is the mass media, which plays a vital role in a democratic society.

In a speech in the summer of 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that "Without truly free media Russian democracy will not survive, and we will not succeed in building a civil society."[1] From this statement, one assumes that Putin aimed to form a democratic society in Russia and, in order to do that the mass media would have to be free and independent. Despite this goal, Putin has been severely criticized for his "interventionist approach toward Russia's mass media."[2] In this essay I will look at the mass media in Russia, to what extent Russia can be called democratic from the perspective of mass media, and how Putin's media handling has been criticized.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, it marked the end of an era. The Cold War and the ideological struggle between East and West came to a definite end and the west was very optimistic about the former Soviet Union's adoption of democracy. Finally, the former ideological enemies would be able to peacefully live side by side. However, the years following the fall of the Soviet Union have been, to say the least, chaotic and turbulent for the Russian Federation. The transition to democracy has proven to be more complex than first presumed. But although Russia today is a transition democracy, it is difficult to argue that it fulfills all the criteria for democracy.

[1] Putin, Vladimir in Sakwa, Richard's *Putin: Russia's Choice*. P. 104.
[2] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 'Russia's Uncertain Pathway of Change', April, 2004.

A democracy is defined as being "a form of government under which the power to alter the laws and structures of government lies with the voting citizenry (referred to as "the people", because in modern times it usually consists of all people over 18 years of age), and all decisions are made either by the people themselves or by representatives who act through the consent of the people, as enforced by elections and the rule of law."[3] The following institutions characterize a modern democracy:

> A constitution which limits the powers and controls the formal operation of government, whether written, unwritten or a combination of the two.
> Election of public officials, conducted in a free and just manner
> The right to vote and to stand for election
> Freedom of expression (speech, assembly, etc.)
> Freedom of the press and access to alternative information sources
> Freedom of association
> Equality before the law and due process under the rule of law
> Educated citizens informed of their rights and civic responsibilities.[4]

Thus, it is evident that in order to determine to what extent Russia is a democracy, one must closely look at all the above-mentioned institutions. In this essay, however, I have chosen to focus on mass media in the Russian Federation, and what role media plays in Russia today, as mass media is a vital aspect of democracy. I do not wish to ignore the many other aspects of democracy that should be analyzed in order to define whether Russia is a democracy or not. There are many incidents during Putin's presidency that have sparked fierce debate around democracy such as the centralization of power, or the recent election procedures. But from the perspective of media, is Russia a democracy or not? Does Russia today have a free press, or is its media under pressure to promote the government?

Abraham Lincoln said: "What is more important: Free press or free elections? Free press. Without it free elections are not possible."[5] As mentioned previously, Putin made a similar statement at the beginning of his first term as President, when stating that "Without truly free media Russian democracy will not survive, and we will not succeed in a building a

[3] Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, 'Democracy'. 2004.
[4] Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, 'Democracy'. 2004.
[5] Bogomolov, Andrey. Novosti iz Rosii. P. 176.

civil society."[6] Thus, just as Lincoln believed that a free press is an essential part of a democratic society, Putin argued that free press is crucial for Russia to be democratic. Why then, has Putin been criticized for not respecting anything that resembles "a Western understanding of free expression in his country?"[7]

One problem when analyzing the freedom of the press is finding objective, reliable sources. One western organization trying to analyze the Russian media is Freedom House. Its western ideological outlook should be kept in mind when examining its observations. In 2003, media in Russia was for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, categorized as 'not free' as opposed to previously 'partly free' by Freedom House.[8] Judging from their survey it leads one to ask how media in Russia has changed in recent years. The control of mass media in Russia is one of the most hotly disputed topics in the discussion of Russia as a democracy. It is argued that Putin's way of ruling Russia shows an "apparent lack of understanding of the values of media freedom."[9] By examining the current media situation in Russia, how it has changed during Vladimir Putin's presidency, and how the change has been criticized, I will attempt to examine to what extent this argument can be supported.

Firstly, in a democratic society, freedom of the press guarantees the "free public speech often through a state constitution for its citizens, and associations of individuals extended to members of news gathering organizations, and their published reporting."[10] Although media companies within the Russian Federation claim to be independent it is often added that they 'respect the elected politicians'. If 'respecting the elected politicians' means that they are forced to acclaim the authorities or if they personally are in favor of them is up to one's own interpretation.

[6] Putin, Vladimir in Sakwa, Richard's *Putin Russia's Choice*.
[7] Lavelle, Peter. 'The Realist Bibliophile: Getting to Know Vladimir Putin'. 2004.
[8] Freedom House, 'Country Report: Russia'. 2003.
[9] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. p. 89.
[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press

Before I go on to analyze the role of mass media in Russian society today, I will first indicate the route it has taken since 'glasnost' in the late 1980's, when Gorbachev favored freedom of speech prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This was followed by privatization during Yeltsin's era when media companies quickly came under the power of oligarchs, who "proceeded to use the media as a weapon in their struggle against each other and to influence the policies of the state."[11] Russia adopted its law on media, based on European media laws, but while "this law provided the basis for the free and private press, it did not reflect the developing market structure in Russia."[12] After Putin came to power, the role of the media, which had been "relatively free during Yeltsin,"[13] changed. Within months of his presidency, Putin sought to ensure that the oligarchs would no longer be able to "exercise class power over the state."[14] Without delay, Putin "launched a campaign against some of the beneficiaries of the market free-for-all of the Yeltsin years."[15] This led to the NTV scandal, one of the most hotly discussed topics during Putin's presidency.

The head of NTV, Vladimir Gusinsky, had been severely critical of Putin. Shortly after Putin became the President of the Russian Federation, Gusinsky was arrested allegedly for criminal activities. However, although his arrest was said to be due to illegal business, it appeared to many be an excuse to get rid of anyone opposing the authorities. Gusinksy's arrest caused an outrage among other oligarchs who argued that "democracy was in danger."[16] Putin, however, insisted that his campaign against "the illegal activities of various oligarchs and their apparently illegal influence is completely acceptable and essential for the democratic development of Russia."[17] According to Vyacheslav Nikonov, president of *Politika*, those targeted in Putin's campaign were selected "on the basis of two

[11] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. P. 107.
[12] http://www.carnegie.ru/en/print/67662-print.htm
[13] Ryzhkov, Vladimir. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: The Liberal Debacle' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 54.
[14] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. P. 97.
[15] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. P. 97.
[16] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. P. 99
[17] Gentleman, Amelia. 'Putin picks off opponents who matter most wages partial war on corruption' for The Guardian.

criteria - their loyalty or disloyalty to the president and their political weight."[18] While some argue that the condemnation of Mr. Gusinksy was "an open attack on press freedom,"[19] others argue it was necessary in order for Russia to reach democracy.

Before Putin's campaign against the oligarchs, only three television networks had the "national reach to really count in politics – ORT, RTR and NTV."[20] Putin deliberately and successfully sought to take control of these television networks. By running "billionaire Boris Berezovsky out of the country with politically motivated criminal prosecutions,"[21] Putin got his hands on ORT. The NTV scandal followed, which resulted in Putin effectively acquiring control of NTV. As RTR was already fully state controlled, Putin easily gained influence over the third important channel as well. When the Kremlin had taken control of all nation-wide television networks, the independent media on the regional level eroded as well.[22] On the regional level, support of Putin is more or less definite. Some criticism of Putin still occurs within Russian media, but not those with mass audiences. According to Masha Lipman, from the Moscow Carnegie Center, "the crackdown and the increasingly authoritarian rhetoric have created a strong urge among liberals to express their frustration and fury."[23] But these outlets make essentially "no difference in policy formulation"[24] as "the Kremlin dominates the political scene, and official media control the airwaves."[25]

Thus, soon after assuming office in 2000, Putin managed to strip those oligarchs who expressed criticism of his administration of their political influence. Consequently, "many

[18]Gentleman, Amelia. 'Putin picks off opponents who matter most wages partial war on corruption' for The Guardian.
[19] Gentleman, Amelia. 'Putin picks off opponents who matter most wages partial war on corruption' for The Guardian.
[20] McFaul, Michael & Petrov, Nikolai. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: What the Elections tell Us' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 23.
[21]McFaul, Michael & Petrov, Nikolai. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: What the Elections tell Us' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 24
[22] McFaul, Michael & Petrov, Nikolai. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: What the Elections tell Us' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 24
[23] Lipman, Masha. 'Fear and Fury in Russia' for the Washington Post.
[24] Lipman, Masha. 'Fear and Fury in Russia' for the Washington Post.
[25] Lipman, Masha. 'Fear and Fury in Russia' for the Washington Post.

of them left Russia, others are imprisoned, and those remaining have accepted their diminished role."[26] Is it a coincidence that those who criticized Putin, such as Guzinsky and Berezovsky, have been driven out of the country while other oligarchs who stick to strictly economically related activities have gone free? Russian oligarchs have been criticized for corruption, tax fraud and other economic criminal behavior, but it appears that the authorities only focused on those who have taken the largest part in the public criticism of the President. Many other economic criminals have acquired enormous wealth due to their dishonest economic activities, but as long as they do not engage in any political opposition against the President, they are not harassed.

According to duma deputy Ryzhkov, Putin's aim is to control Russia and the Russians by means "entirely foreign to any state that claims to adhere to democratic principles."[27] He argues that Putin has used his control of the most influential mass media as "instrument of propaganda"[28] favorable to his administration. This, Ryzhkov argues, is obvious when looking at Putin's handling of the numerous catastrophes that have occurred in Russia during his presidency.

The Kursk tragedy of 2000 and the hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Theater in 2002 are two major incidents which led to wide criticism of Putin. It was questioned to what extent the media was showing the whole picture. According to Freedom House, "the government used draft changes to the media law to censor and shape coverage"[29] of the hostage crisis at the Dubrovka theater and allowed "NTV television to broadcast only some of the statements made by the Chechen rebel leader inside the theater."[30] As a result of the theatre-trauma, Russian media came under wide examination by the West as it became apparent that the whole picture was not shown.

---

[26] Ryzhkov, Vladimir. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: The Liberal Debacle' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 54.
[27] Ryzhkov, Vladimir. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: The Liberal Debacle' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 54.
[28] Ryzhkov, Vladimir. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: The Liberal Debacle' in the Journal of Democracy. P. 53
[29] Freedom House, 'Country Report: Russia'. 2003.
[30] Freedom House, 'Country Report: Russia'. 2003.

Likewise, Putin seems to be intent on controlling the media reporting from Chechnya. During Yeltsin's era, the first Chechnyan war was shown on TV. With many journalists present in Chechnya it was possible for the Russian population to follow the brutal war live. It resulted in a reaction of disgust, and eventually the war was stopped. Since Putin came to power, however, the coverage of the second Chechnyan war has taken a new route, with a limited coverage of the conflict strictly controlled by the Russian military: pictures are censored, conversations with the civil inhabitants are under strict control etc. The Russian media was further criticized following the recent hostage crisis in Beslan. It appears as though the media gave out false information of the number of hostages, the number of victims, the number of terrorists etc. In a survey by Reporters Without Borders, Russia's freedom of press ranks 140th out of 169 countries. The "biased coverage of the tragic hostage crisis in Beslan"[31] is referred to as a "flagrant illustration of the total control exercised by the Kremlin over the national TV stations."[32] Just like the coverage is questionable, many wonder if reports from Beslan were accurate, especially as no state controlled televisions networks have shown any independent analysts or hostage accounts.[33] A similar report published in 2003, ranked Russia 148th, where the Reporters Without Borders argue that "Russia's poor ranking is justified by the censorship of anything to do with the war in Chechnya."[34]

Furthermore, the Russian media caused a stir during the 2003 parliamentary and the 2004 presidential elections where media played a very different role compared to the previous elections held four years earlier. In the recent election, where Putin was re-elected with a large majority, all the nationwide channels were under his control. Again, is it a coincidence that this time around Putin won with such a large majority when the population was fed with indirect pro-Putin propaganda?

---

[31] Reporters Without Borders, 'East Asia and Middle East have worst press freedom records'. 2004.
[32] Reporters Without Borders, 'East Asia and Middle East have worst press freedom records'. 2004.
[33] Lavelle, Peter. 'The Realist Bibliophile: Getting to Know Vladimir Putin'. 2004.
[34] Reporters Without Borders, 'Cuba second from last, just ahead of North Korea'. 2003.

By analyzing only a fraction of a democratic society, the mass media in this case, one fails to take other aspects into consideration that are essential to democracy. An example of this is free elections that, as Lincoln suggested, are not possible without free press. Media accounts must be objective and independent in order to be efficient within a democracy. For free and open elections to function democratically, it requires the citizens to be able to form their own opinion. If all media is biased, this will not work and one could argue that the rights of the citizens have been abused as the authorities have not fulfilled their responsibility. However, this is a conclusion easily jumped to when analyzing Russian mass media. It must be kept in mind that although the major TV channels are controlled by the Kremlin, independent media still exists in Russia. To be fair, it should be added that in democratic societies in the West, many media outlets are openly influenced by various political parties and private ownership of media is highly concentrated in many Western countries.

Although the democratic institutions are present in Russia today, they will not benefit society as a whole if they are not handled democratically. From looking at the example of the Kremlin's control of the leading TV channels, one asks if Putin would enjoy the popularity he does today without the indirect pro-Putin propaganda the channels provide. It is obvious that the Kremlin's increasing control over media may seem more totalitarian than democratic, but one must also keep in mind that Russia cannot turn into a democracy overnight. If Putin is steering Russia in a direction that is only beneficial for a minority of the Russian population, is too early to answer. Although there are many reasons to distrust and criticize him, he has gotten the country 'back on its feet' after Yeltin's disorganized years as President. It has been argued that Putin's reforms are a step back towards the dictatorship of the Soviet Union for Russia. However, as Anatol Lieven from the Carnegie Center stated "The anarchy, misery, and decline of the 1990s were such that any Russian administration would have had to act to restore a measure of order and eliminate the

oligarchical system created in those years; that far from pursuing some kind of uniquely wicked course, the kind of system Putin is creating has many analogies round the world, including many states which the West has supported; and that semi-authoritarian capitalist modernization is not an irrational strategy."[35] It is too early to say how Putin's route will turn out and how Russia's democracy will evolve.

Thus, to conclude, I would like to go back to Putin's statement "Without truly free media Russian democracy will not survive, and we will not succeed in a building a civil society."[36] I believe it is fair to say that from the media-related incidents discussed in this paper, it is clear that Russia is far from having truly free media. Although Russia may have the institutions that make up a democracy, it will not be a democracy until those institutions are allowed to function in a democratic matter. One cannot however, strictly follow Western criticism of Putin's presidency without taking into account the transition Russia is going through. Additionally, other features such as the centralization of power, are also viewed as problems of democracy. Without addressing democracy from all angles, it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion. There are flaws within the Russian democracy that are widely known, but the difficulty, not only with mass media, but other democratic institutions as well, are to prove those defending Russian democracy wrong. In the case of mass media, it is known that they are corrupt, manipulated, and can be closed down by the Kremlin, etc., but to find solid evidence of this is next to impossible.

According to the British scholar Richard Sakwa, Putin's "commitment to democratic values would only be proven by the flourishing media freedom, the rule of law and ultimately the greatest challenge, the democratic rotation of the highest political office in the land in free elections."[37] In the meantime, I believe there is no right or wrong way to define Russia: calling it a dictatorship is too harsh, whereas referring to it as democracy may be too

[35] Lavelle, Peter. 'Q&A: Lieven - A different view of Putin'.
[36] Putin, Vladimir in Sakwa, Richard's *Putin Russia's Choice*. P. 104.
[37] Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. P, 75.

optimistic. A ‘democracy with flaws’ would more accurately describe Russia in a diplomatic, fair manner.

Bibliography

Bogomolov, Andrey. Novosti iz Rosii. Moscow: Ruskiy Yeziyk. Kursii, 2003. P. 76.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 'Russia's Uncertain Pathway of Change', April, 2004.
<http://www.ceip.org/files/news/42004_McFaul_Between_Dictatorship_Democracy_Release.asp?from=newsnews>

Freedom House, 'Country Report: Russia'. 2003.
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/countryratings/russia.htm>

Gentleman, Amelia. 'Putin picks off opponents who matter most wages partial war on corruption' for The Guardian. July, 2000.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,2763,343278,00.html>

Lavelle, Peter. 'Q&A: Lieven - A different view of Putin'. August, 2004.
<http://www.untimely-thoughts.com/?cat=3&type=3&art=834>

Lavelle, Peter. 'The Realist Bibliophile: Getting to Know Vladimir Putin'. 2004.
<http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue32/Vol3Issue32Biblio.html>

Lipman, Masha. 'Fear and Fury in Russia' for the Washington Post. November, 2003.
<http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/media/71492.htm>

McFaul, Michael & Petrov, Nikolai. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: What the Elections tell Us' in the Journal of Democracy, Vol. 15, Nr. 3. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Putin, Vladimir in Sakwa, Richard's *Putin Russia's Choice*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Reporters Without Borders, 'East Asia and Middle East have worst press freedom records'. 2004. <http://www.rsf.fr/article.php3?id_article=11712>

Reporters Without Borders, 'Cuba second from last, just ahead of North Korea'. 2003.
<http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=8247>

Ryzhkov, Vladimir. 'Russian Democracy in Eclipse: The Liberal Debacle' in the Journal of Democracy, Vol. 15, Nr. 3. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004. (54)

Sakwa, Richard. *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd Edition. London: Routledge, 2003.

Sakwa, Richard. *Putin Russia's Choice*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Vlachtchenko, Kate. 'A discussion meeting with Mikhail Lesin, Russian Minister of Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting and Mass Communications' for the Moscow Carnegie Center. 2003. < http://www.carnegie.ru/en/print/67662-print.htm>

Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, 'Democracy'. 2004.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy>

Holly McMurtry is pursuing an MA in Russian from Middlebury College
The following paper was presented at the International Center for the Roerichs in Moscow in 2003
Ms. McMurtry is a SRAS graduate

A New Look at the Series "Sancta:" An American Perspective
by Holly McMurtry, 2003

Introduction:

In 1922, while in Chicago as a guest of the director of the local opera company, Nicholas Roerich created a series entitled "Sancta" consisting of six paintings: "And We Are Not Afraid," "And We Labor," "And We Continue to Fish," "And We Open the Gates," "And We Bring Light," and "And We See." It has been argued previously[1] that these works are closely connected thematically to the spiritual teaching of the great Russian ascetic, the Reverend Sergius Radonezhsky, for whom Roerich created a number of other paintings during his life.[2] However, taking into account that this series was painted by Roerich during America's economically prosperous but socio-politically and socio-culturally conflicted post-WWI era, it is necessary to not only consider the influence that Saint Sergius's teachings had on Roerich, but also to take into account the cultural milieu of the United States that shaped Roerich's creativity at the time and ultimately led him to paint this series.

In this paper, we hope to establish that Roerich painted "Sancta" in order to reveal a spirituality that, while based on one of the greatest icons of Russian culture, was intended to draw attention to those *universal* spiritual values that, as it seemed to Roerich, had been forgotten by Americans.[3] To demonstrate this, we will provide a cursory discussion of the situation in America leading up to his arrival and during his stay and how the socio-cultural atmosphere of the time affected the artist. In addition, we will seek to

[1] Сергеева, Н. В. Древнерусская традиция в символизме Н. К. Рериха. Москва, Международный Центр Рерихов, 2003, 39
[2] "Sergius the Builder" (1924), "Sergius the Builder" (1940), "Saint Sergius Radonezhsky" (1932), "Sergius' Church" (1933), "Sergius' Church" (1936), "Fellow Laborers" (1922), and "Fellow Laborers" (1940)
[3] Беликов, П. Ф., Князева В. П. Николай Константинович Рерих. Самара: Изд-во. «Агни», 1996., 123-4

understand the message that Nicholas Roerich attempted to convey to the American people with the creation of "Sancta."

America in the 1920s

Nicholas Roerich arrived in America at the beginning of a decade that would later be known as the "Roaring Twenties." He found a country that had recently lost its innocence during the First World War, when it became clear that the United States could no longer stay politically and culturally isolated from the rest of the world. One part of society, particularly the older generation, reacted to this fact by trying to rebuild the socially-constructed barrier that had existed between the United States and the rest of the world before the war, thereby setting a tone of extreme isolationism and 'Americanism' (see, e.g., the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915[4] and the violent 'Red Scare' of 1919[5]). In addition, the reactionary national legislature passed a series of ludicrous laws, such as the infamous 18th amendment to the Constitution (the 'Prohibition Act' of 1920 banning alcohol), which were intended to halt the rapid social, economic, and political progress of the post-WWI era.

Of course, these conservative sentiments succeeded only in inspiring the younger generation to rebel against the puritanical traditions of the Victorian era and to begin a free-spirited rampage into self-discovery best personified by the 'flapper,' a woman who flaunted her sexuality, bared her skin, smoked and drank with men, and reveled in the newfound freedoms reluctantly given to women post-WWI. This era was also compounded by a rapid escalation of materiality, as mass production, electricity, cars, radio, and film became central foci of American culture. As Frederick Lewis Allen writes:

> Each of these diverse influences – the post-war disillusion, the new status of women, the Freudian gospel, the automobile, prohibition, the sex and confession magazines, and the

[4] Allen, Frederick Lewis. Only Yesterday: An Informational History of the 1920's. First Perennial Classics, 2000.

[5] Miller, Nathan. New World Coming: the 1920's and the Making of Modern America. Da Capo Press: 2003.

> movies – had its part in bringing about the revolution [in manners and morals]. Each of them, as an influence, was played upon by all the others; none of them could alone have changed to any great degree the folkways of America; together their force was irresistible.[6]

It is no surprise that Nicholas Roerich – artist, student of religious philosophies, and visionary – became disillusioned with America when he encountered the materialist and wanton cultural atmosphere during the early 1920s that found "[. . .] all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken."[7] In contrast to this nihilistic viewpoint, Roerich also encountered a massive renaissance in the arts as the free-spiritedness of the age encouraged writers and artists to explore their creativity and to leave behind traditional conventions and expectations. Indeed, the 1920s were arguably the most creative decade in America's history. Playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill transformed American theater from 'vaudeville'-type shows to serious dramas, a movement seen also in the burgeoning silent film industry. American writers in Paris such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway epitomized the disillusionment and listlessness of the 'Lost Generation' while US-based writers such as William Faulkner and the Black-American authors of the 'Harlem Renaissance' captured the revolutionary fire of the era. Similarly, the bleak realism of Edward Hopper's paintings and the passionate, sexualized paintings of his contemporary, Georgia O'Keeffe, further symbolize the dualism inherent to American culture at the time. Even European art styles such as Surrealism, Art Deco, Cubism, Expressionism, and Dada, which had long been shut out from the American mainstream, flourished in the artistic landscape of the 1920s, so much so that the French sculptor Gaston Lachaise moved to America because he believed that, "the soil most fertile for the continuity of art – is here."[8]

This new wave of cultural development gave rise to many discrepancies and conflicts within the American socio-cultural environment. Nicholas Roerich sharply felt the fatality of the extreme American pragmatism that was obstructing spiritual and cultural development.[9] Zinaida Litchman, Roerich's future assistant, complained to the artist ". . . that they treat art like a business in America and look for profits in everything,

[6] Allen, 89
[7] Miller, 10
[8] Miller, 201
[9] Беликов, 123

and the young people are not interested in either painting or music."[10] Roerich was especially concerned that the average American youth was not interested in art. He believed that this generation's emphasis on self-discovery was in fact a search for something deeper and more concrete, and that the key to finding this inner contentment was art. He wrote: "The light of art will illuminate numerous hearts with a new love. The feeling will first come unconsciously, but after it will clean all of the human conscience. And how many young hearts are searching for something true and beautiful."[11] These beliefs led Roerich to champion the foundation of several cultural institutions in America including The Institute of Unified Art, The International Cultural Center "Corona Mundi" (The Crown of the World), and The Artists' Union "Cor Ardens." The main goal of these institutions was the unification of people through art because Roerich believed that art, in its own manner, is the universal *lingua franca*.[12]

These foundations were Roerich's answer to the American cultural and spiritual needs for a social figure who was also concerned with spirituality at the same time that the creation of the series "Sancta," as well as individual paintings such as "Bridge of Glory" and "Meditation," were his answer to the same needs as an artist. According to one scholar, Roerich's paintings from the early 1920s are "brighter, clearer, and more ethereal."[13] In creating the series "Sancta", Roerich returned to the moral roots of his own culture – i.e., to the teachings of Saint Sergius Radonezhsky – in order to promote the revival of moral values in America and stimulate spiritual and cultural development.

American exhibitions of Roerich's work were enthusiastically received and caused an unprecedented sensation. Against the backdrop of the Red Scare, which had portrayed Russians as "horrid-looking Bolsheviks with bristling beards,"[14] a completely new and unknown Russia appeared in America with this series. Indeed, no artist had ever

[10] Дубаев, Максим Львович. Рерих. Москва: Мол. Гвардия, 2003. – 427 (5) с: ил. – (Жизни замечат. людей: Сер. биогр.; Вып. 831), 204
[11] Там же, 205
[12] Там же, 122
[13] Иванов, Всеволод Никанорович. Огни в тумане. Рерих художник-мыслитель. Москва: Сов. Писатель, 1991. 348
[14] Allen, 50

managed to convey the entire depth of the Russian soul as effectively as Roerich did in these paintings.[15] As P. F. Belikov writes:

> With these canvases Roerich recreates the nature and ancient Russian architecture of his motherland that was so close to his heart. Scenes from the lives of Russian ascetics unfold against their backdrops. Their simple-hearted labor and their spiritual pureness are conveyed so grippingly, so sincerely, that these paintings continue to move viewers even today after so many decades have passed. Even then they were a revelation for Americans. Missing his motherland, Roerich praised the moral strength of his people, the harmonious way of life that is reached in integration with nature, peaceful labor and humaneness.[16]

However, the artist's ultimate goal in painting this series was not the redefinition of the American view of Russians *per se*. Instead, Roerich sought to combat the growing materialist and isolationist movements in America by projecting moral and cultural values that he believed are universal.

The Series 'Sancta':

In this light, the "Sancta" series can be viewed as six paintings unified by the high ideals of earthly yet spiritually symbolic human acts. Even the titles of the paintings offer, "insight into the horizons of spiritual heroic acts towards which Roerich's artistic search was aimed."[17] The unifying "And We . . ." not only expresses the fact that these paintings belong to one series, but attracts attention to the deeper meaning of universality, unity, and collaboration. Likewise, these words establish a connection between the present and past, between us and the monks portrayed in the paintings, between 1920s America and St. Sergius of the 14th century.

This theme of universal spirituality is demonstrated in a number of aspects of the series "Sancta." For example, in "And We Open the Gates" we see Roerich's expression of the theme of 'openness' that Saint Sergius demonstrated with his life. The gates divide the painting into two compositional and conceptual plans. Embodying the border between the earthly (the foreground of the monastery that is still covered in darkness) and

---

[15] Decter, Jacqueline. Nicholas Roerich: The Life and Art of a Russian Master. Park Street Press, Vermont. 1989, 115

[16] Беликов, 120-1

[17] Рудзитис, Рихард Яковлевич. Николай Рерих. Мир через Культуру. пер. с. латыш. Л. П. Церсюлевич. Мн: 2002., 38

heavenly (the background on the other side of the gates that is illuminated by the rising sun) worlds, this division allows the viewer to feel the exact moment of passing through the 'holy gates' into the world of the spirit. At the same time, the painting seems to remind us of the need to keep ourselves open to the world 'out there.' This can be seen as a reaction to the growing isolationist movement in American culture at the time.

Similarly, "And We Continue to Fish" addresses the universal value of 'collaboration' when in the pursuit of a common goal. Looking at the monks – at their strained, angular, and somewhat unnatural positions – the viewer senses all of the difficulty connected with the concurrence of actions during collaborative work. On such a small vessel, it would only take one of them losing his focus to not only put the others in jeopardy, but to defeat their larger cause. The awareness of their involvement in a shared objective helps them to continue in their hard work, while providing them with the understanding that they can only withstand life's raging stream unified. This theme was especially pertinent to American socio-politics of the 1920s, as the debate over whether to join the League of Nations had continued to rage since it was rejected by the United States Senate in 1920.[18] Although relevant to the American situation in 1922, the theme is obviously also derived from St. Sergius's emphasis on personal obligation when working towards a common end.

The painting "And We Bring Light" expresses a similar theme of 'service' to mankind. In this scene, monastic walls are shown in the twilight of sunset. Deep from within the recesses of the monastery, faint specks of light are seen that appear to become stronger as they move out of the darkness and closer to the viewer. These specks are candle flames burning in the hands of the monks. On one level, this painting represents the monks bringing their ministry and teachings to the world in silent humility. As they leave the monastery, they sacrifice the safety of familiar surroundings and enter a world of darkness with only the light they carry to show them the way. It is certainly important here to note that Saint Sergius's has long been associated in Russia with the words "light" and "torch." As Borisov writes, "He became for his contemporaries a true light, a person

[18] Ostrower, Gary B. The League of Nations: From 1919 to 1929 (Partners for Peace) Avery Publishing Group, 1996.

who was able to submit his entire life to the evangelical commandments of love and like-mindedness."[19] With this painting, Roerich was likely encouraging America to leave behind the familiar and to reach out beyond her borders in order to bring to the world the great potential that she had to offer.

The first three paintings discussed above deal with interrelated themes – openness, collaboration, and service – and arguably are all reactions to the isolationism and 'Americanism' that Roerich observed while in Chicago. The rest of the series changes thematically and appears to focus more on the conflicts internal to American society. For example, in "And We Are Not Afraid" Roerich seems to encourage his viewers to be courageous and to have faith in the face of uncertainty and chaos, again following the teachings of St. Sergius, who told those wishing to enter the hermitage: "The Lord will not give you over to be tempted more than you can bear. Today we are filled with sorrow, but tomorrow our sorrow will turn to joy, and no one will be able to take the joy away. Be bold, be bold, people of God!"[20]

In this painting, an elder-monk and a young monk face each other against the background of a Russian winter landscape at sunset. The soft halftones of the pink and light blue shades of the snow give the onlooker a sense of calm and harmony that corresponds with the inner world of the monks. However, this is only a first impression. The painting gradually reveals an intense struggle and a resulting spiritual equilibrium. The bright pink reflection of the sunset shades the slopes of the snow-covered mountain in the background with a disturbing lilac color, while the dark violet shadows that creep across the mountainside intensify the sense of alarm. The broken rhythm of the shadows and the indefinite shapes they form remind us about the presence of chaotic forces.

At a time when the American lifestyle was drastically changing, Roerich certainly felt chaotic forces at work in the American culture. He no doubt perceived the extreme polarization between the conservative older generation (the 'elder-monk') and the rampaging younger generation (the young monk) to be a fearful reaction to the rapidly

[19] Борисов, Николай Сергеевич. Сергий Радонежский. Москва: Молодая Гвардия, 2003
[20] Яровская Н. «Преподобный Сергий Радонежский». Знамя Преподобного Сергия Радонежского, 40

evolving society of post-WWI America. With this scene in "And We Are Not Afraid," Roerich admonishes Americans not to be frightened by the chaos and uncertainty facing them, but to seek spiritual harmony and balance.

In "And We Labor," Roerich expresses Reverend Sergius's teaching that simple physical labor is the basis of a person's spiritual and moral perfection. Furthermore, he seems to challenge the American pragmatic concept that the goal of labor is materialistic gain instead of the attainment of spiritual satisfaction. In this scene, the monks leave the monastery that sits high on a hill with shoulder-yokes and buckets early in the morning when the sky is filled with the golden light of the sun. Bent under the weight of the yokes, they fulfill their responsibility to bring water to the monastery by slowly and calmly going down to the river. However, even though their labor is difficult, they toil without complaint knowing that their work, while seemingly inconsequential, is actually vital to the common good.

This sense of fulfillment is transmitted by the artist with the help of color and lines. The first thing that the onlooker notices is the bright yellow color that floods the entire canvas. Similar to this all-pervading light, feelings of harmony, peace, and holiness are born in the intensity of the strenuous labor of the monks. The flowing lines of the winding river, of the bent figures of the monks, and of the crescent-shaped yokes are repeated in the rounded curves of the hills. The linear rhythm of these elements adds lightness and mystique to the paintings and helps to communicate a sense of balance, calm, and daily satisfaction.

Finally, in "And We See," the artist places before his viewer the symbolic culmination of the spiritual journey undertaken by all who adhere to the universal truths laid forth in Saint Sergius's teaching. He does so by depicting a heavenly vision – an obvious reference to the many heavenly visitations that Saint Sergius, according to his biographer, received throughout his life. The focal point of this painting is the depiction of the countenance of The Uncreated Savior. It is completed in traditional iconographic manner on a mantle that is revealed by an angel. The most amazing part of the countenance of The Savior is the gaze of his all-seeing eyes – kind, humble, but at the

same time strict and deeply penetrating into the soul of the onlooker. Similar to the monk who is stunned by the heavenly vision in the left part of the painting, the viewer finds it difficult to withdraw his eyes from the image of The Savior. It is as if all the hopes and dreams of a person searching for spiritual transformation are concentrated in that image.

For the monk, having seen the face of The Savior, this moment becomes the testament to the completion of his spiritual journey. Due to diligence, patience, and love for the Higher Being, this journey becomes real in the end. In addition to this, those precepts connected with the Higher Being acquire clarity and validity. The heavenly appearance helps the monk to understand that all the trials and tribulations he has endured were not in vain. Each one of his actions now gain meaning and power. Just as in "And We Labor," the evenly distributed golden color of the painting conveys a feeling of sanctity and spiritual fulfillment. Although obviously Christian in premise, the theme of 'attainment' – i.e., the completion of a search – is in fact universal. With this painting, Roerich reminds the American people, many of whom had thrown morality and spirituality out the window, that there is a 'meaning' to life – a spiritual raison d'être – and it is achieved and understood through the ideals encapsulated in the teachings of Saint Sergius and visually expressed in this series.

Conclusion

V. M. Sidorov once said of Roerich: "His great service is that he gave Americans eyes to a new understanding of the culture of the Russian people. The paintings themselves, composed on the subjects of ancient Russian history and folklore, full of symbolism and philosophical depth, were unique messengers of Russia."[21] While undoubtedly correct, we must not forget that Roerich painted "Sancta" for an American audience that was not familiar with Russian history and folklore and certainly would not have known about the life and teachings of the Reverend Sergius Radonezhsky. However, he painted this series believing that the spiritual teaching of a 14th century Russian saint could have an effect on a materialistic American public of the 1920s because of their universality. Out of this duality between Russian and American, past

[21] Сидоров, Валентин Митрофанович. «Музей Рериха». Держава Рериха, 346

and present, and heavenly and earthly, Roerich was able to create something new – the series "Sancta" – which was meant to serve as a Hegelian 'synthesis' for the extreme social, political, and cultural conflicts of his audience.

This new interpretation of "Sancta" sheds a different light not only onto the series itself – taking it from a purely Russian to an ecumenical level that transcends chronological and spatial boundaries – but onto the artist as well, adding another dimension to the depths of his persona. So much is concentrated on Roerich's time in India and how his life and work became a combination of Russian and Indian that the synthesis of Russian and American has been largely ignored until now. Although his time in America was short, only three years, the impact was great, as demonstrated by the series "Sancta." Further research is needed in order to discover to what extent this Russian-American synthesis affected Roerich's other paintings of the period and how it played out in his later life and work. Regardless of what such future studies may show, it is unquestionable that the universal values portrayed in "Sancta" appealed to a conflicted American audience in the 1920s and, as such, may continue to appeal to the polarized American society of today. As such, Roerich gave not only to America, but to the world, a true monument of art that deserves greater acknowledgement in these troubled times.

Russian version of this text (in HTML)
Interview with Holly McMurtry

What follows are the personal reminiscences of Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez from her trip to visit her Ukranian relatives in Kiev in the Summer of 1999. So that they might be of greater use to scholars, we have included her official biography below. We should also mention that, within the text the abbreviations "T." and "D." stand for *tyotya* (aunt) and *dyadya* (uncle), respectively. Much as in English, the titles can be used for relatives as well as for good friends of the family. We would also like to mention that the psychological portrait given here of the citizenry and of store clerks in particular, still holds generally true in rural Ukraine as well as in urban Moscow.

With a mother from Kiev, the Ukraine, and a father from India, Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez grew up traveling around the globe to visit her far-flung relatives. She attended Indiana University in Bloomington, IN as a recipient of the Herman B. Wells Scholarship and studied for one semester in Voronezh, Russia, motivated by the desire to communicate better with her Ukrainian relatives. After graduating in May of 2002 with a BA in Journalism and minors in Biology and Russian Studies, she spent one year in Bombay, India as a volunteer for a street children's non profit organization and getting in touch with her 'other' side. Currently, she is working for the Business Journal of Corpus Christi in Corpus Christi, TX as a writer while planning her next and final escape to the Old World.

Memories of the Ukraine in the Summer of 1999

by Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez, 1999

In Kiev store signs and street markings are in Ukrainian, and although I could still read all of them, half the time, I could not understand what they mean. The drive from Borispol airport to T. Clara's apartment deep inside Kiev was speedy, thanks to our driver who traveled well over the km/hr speed limit. Somehow, we were comfortable, my mother, my aunt, and me in the backseat, the two unidentified men in the front. All three of our suitcases fit snugly in the trunk of the boxy black Audi, and each of us in the back held a bag upon our lap like a small child.

We entered the city of 2.5 million within half an hour and all around I saw only tall, off-white buildings sprouting out of the ground, side by side by side. Thousands of tiny little windows with tiny little balconies were strung with washed clothes and colorful sheets. In between patches of buildings, there were rectangular holes in the sidewalks where people slipped in to get to the metro, Kiev's subway. It seemed so very secretive, everyone disappearing amidst blue-and-white tiled walls, trusting to be carried away and reappear somewhere familiar. People walking the streets wore nothing out of the ordinary. Most of the pedestrians were men. It was simply another grey day on my arrival in Kiev.

As we got closer to my mother's old apartment, the strange man in the passenger seat loudly announced that the old elementary school was somewhere in the area. My mother's excitement poured freely, after all she was not a foreigner here. She leaned and squinted and pointed at every other building. There it is, oh, no—wait. Her sister, my T. Tanya, joined in, and the two were squealing and gasping together like school children. Then a few minutes before reaching the apartment, the man in the front boomed out that the building in front of us was the actual school. My mother agreed and shouted happily at me, look, look, there it is!

From the back, my mother's childhood apartment looked dilapidated. Every year since we had last visited had peeled off another layer of old green paint chips from the door, crumbled off a few bits more from the stone balcony. I was wondering how the sagging

stone even held up anymore, when on the left end of the building, three stories up, a woman shouted out from her balcony. She was waving wildly, moving her brightly colored lips. I had to turn away and help carry our luggage upstairs. As we entered through the cracked green doorway, a very short, plump woman in a plain black dress and a mop of white hair popped quietly out of an apartment door. I found myself being tightly hugged and I smiled awkwardly. This can't be T. Clara, I thought to myself in shock. She's so old, she can't be so old. I pointed my bewildered face toward my mother over this little woman's shoulder. T. Clara had had bold chunks of short red hair in stylish curls all over her head. She had declared herself as if she were speaking before a rally. The woman accosting me was peeping like a kitten, soft and meek.

To my relief, my mother continued up the worn stone steps. It had not been T. Clara. My fear of growing old retreated as I freed myself from the little woman.

T. Tanya already was bustling about the apartment, talking to anyone who would listen. And then I saw her. Actually, first I heard her, her clear, emphatic phrasing. She appeared in the doorway and jumped out to greet my mother. Her red hair was not red anymore, but it was still short, and at the moment, rolled up in long silver curlers. I smiled to myself at how very adorable she was and hoped I too would still groom myself to perfection when I reached her age.

Once my mother had been appropriately cried over, it was my turn to be hugged and kissed and squeezed. The torrent of exclamations regarding my height and face and hair began and in my jet lagged state, my translations did not keep up.

I stood among the open-mouthed suitcases as the conversations headed off, a pack of racing bicyclists. When T. Ira, my mother's best friend from college, arrived, I was sitting in T. Clara's loud presence, inhaling her voice of a thousand cigarettes. Everyone present simultaneously jumped up to gather at the table that had been set. Now we were focused on this most delightful and dainty concoction of tea, champagne, little cakes, and breads that were smothered with some form of fish. The teacups glistened opal and gold, filled with hot black tea. I sipped my champagne and then my mother's. The madness of words had created a slight fog and she did not notice. Before me, the festivities of the table and the festivities of the women intensified and the grin on my face began to grow with those festivities. T. Clara told a loud joke that drew much laughter, which echoed slowly in my ears. I half understood her comical remarks but the shrieking was comical enough, and I laughed along.

The seven-year-old girl next to me, Dasha, was swathed in frilly clouds of a purple frock and happily swallowed her cake as fast as her little porcelain fingers could manage. Her concentrating brown eyes were the color of the chocolate on her lips, and they slanted in an almost Oriental fashion. A perfect ponytail was caught in a matching purple-and-silver-trimmed bow. Like a Christmas tree ornament, she added a magical touch to the table from her quiet corner.

The strong bitterness of the champagne bit into my tongue after too many sips and I asked my mother, what is the legal drinking age in Ukraine? The woman across from me, who I thought I recognized from photographs, answered me and my mother translated even as the table erupted in reckless giggles and red faces. “Why, it’s 18 here! And you have had three years ripped out of your life!”

* * *

I went with my cousin Sasha to his friend Misha’s apartment, because Sasha had a CD-ROM he wanted to try out and Misha had a computer. His friend opened the elegant black-padded leather door and greeted us. When we followed Misha to the room where the computer sat, several boys ranging in age from 10 to about 25, clad only in shorts in the hot apartment, came into the room one by one. They seemed to sniff at me like dogs at a new dog. I gave a little smile and observed them as specimens of Ukrainian youth. Both Misha and Sasha seemed to expect me to know how to install the CD-ROM, but I could not understand all the Russian computer commands. But somehow with amusing effort, we were able to open the program.

In much less time than it had taken to run his program, Sasha got bored. We decided to go walking. In the pressing heat, we climbed up the cobblestone road of Andrevski’s Pyck that wound its way through a Bohemian district of sorts. The ice cream I’d bought on the way was already dripping down my fingers and onto my leg until I finally had to throw it, wrapper and all, under a bush as directed by my guides. “Now that’s a real Ukrainian girl there!” was Sasha’s approving comment. A thin, black metal staircase appeared near a café and we climbed that too, reaching a popular lookout point from where much of Kiev could be seen in one breathtaking view. But I did think that the sun, toward which we had voluntarily ascended, was melting me too, and I suggested that we make our way back down. So I followed the guys in a different direction from which we had come and we traveled a level path for some time. Suddenly, arriving at a clearing in a grove of sweet smelling trees, I realized that there was a large, dark gray statue looming above us. It was the statue of Prince Vladimir, and according to Sasha, the smaller figures at his feet, were his children. Sasha and Misha both began to laugh and I realized then that I also should.

Our trek back to the apartment was rather leisurely and we stopped at a kiosk to get something to drink. With our non-alcoholic bottles, we sat in a small park with green wooden benches enclosing a fountain, several beds of colorful flowers, and three sweaty men with lawn mowers. I sipped on “Tarhoon,” a green and bubbly liquid made of “mountain grasses” as Sasha had put it. This amused me into trying the beverage, and it turned out to be quite tasty, reminding me of an herb that my mother grew in her garden.
The drink came in a glass bottle, something I had found less and less back in the States unless it was an alcoholic beverage. As we finished off our drinks, an old and slightly hunched lady hobbled over to us. Sasha handed over his empty bottle to her and then she looked at me and my bottle. I swiftly gulped down the last bit of my mountain grasses and extended the bottle to her. Sasha explained that she would be able to take these bottles in somewhere and receive a bit of money for them. Misha had finished his drink

much before us, so I asked him where his bottle was. He grinned widely, laughed, and then asked me where my ice cream wrapper was. I laughed with them. There was nothing I could say to that.

* * *

Again, we were headed back to the Ukrainian countryside, this time to D. Valya's dacha in a small town that my mother did not even know the name of. A four-hour journey by electric train transported us there. Long wooden benches served as seats, the paint peeling from much use, from the alternating waves of cold and heat. Today, as it had been for many days now, the air was smothered by sun and everyone was uncomfortable. But comfort is not necessarily the primary concern of many: food is. The raising and growing of it, the harvesting and cleaning, the selling and buying, the preparing and cooking, and most of all, the serving of it. Our sole purpose in going to the dacha was to gather the ripened crops before they began to rot.

During the train ride, I witnessed numerous varied characters selling their wares, almost indifferent to the sweaty passengers. It was a dilapidated parade of sagging faces and coarse voices, offering everything from newspapers and ice cream to hot piroshki and clothespins to paintbrushes and shoes. Even a bit of entertainment came along in the form of several musical parties. One consisted of an old, bespectacled woman pushing along her blind, stumbling husband who played the accordion not too unpleasantly. The couple pushed up their strong and pleasant voices in sad harmony with the music. A second group of clamoring conspicuity also included a man (fine of sight) with an accordion, a young man with a shockingly long trombone that had outworn its shine, and a third younger fellow who carried a small violin case containing a few lonely coins. As he passed my mother, she placed a wrinkled paper bill into his curled fingers.

* * *

The heat had followed us even here, to the little village of about 500 where my aunt had made her home after tiring of city life. My aunt now led my mother and me down the grassy path from the dacha. Here and there emerged bits of trodden and dried earth, attempting to resemble a road. Tall weeds rose up on either side. But they were very pretty weeds; lots of bold purple, white, and yellow petals armored by rich, green, and jagged-edged leaves. Small white butterflies swam silently by my nose and I thought that these looked exactly like the ones back home in the States.

We were going to the post office and the grocery stores in the village, a half hour's walk. To carry the items, my aunt had brought along a bag on wheels, now empty, that she dragged along the bumpy path, reminding me of an olden-days version of the carry-on luggage we had brought with us on the trip. My aunt was telling my mother that since the selling of products on the street had been legalized by President Kravchuk, this little bag-on-wheels had been named in his honor; we would be toting our purchases on "a kravchuk."

Soon we reached a paved road, but instead of any vehicles, I spotted a large brown cow, chewing, blinking, swatting its tail. It stood lazy on the edge of a field that belonged to a bright blue cottage. Also near the house was a small river where ten or twelve ducks tramped noisily through their hard orange beaks and swam in feathers of the purest white. I suddenly had an urge to jump into that cool body of water. I looked at my mother pleadingly, and back again at the water. My aunt was shaking her head and saying, you could swim with the ducks I suppose, but you wouldn't enjoy it. "But what about a public pool? There must be one in the city?" My mother did not bother to translate to my aunt, and just clucked her tongue, telling me in Russian then, "Are you crazy?" I could not quite understand why it was such a crazy idea but as the ducks fell behind our little entourage, I gave up hope of cooling off and concentrated on the non-crazy …

Once we had overcome the hill in the road, there were a few more houses enclosed by quaint wooden fences, painted white or green or brown. Then there was a building on our left that my aunt told me was the "village club" with a discotheque. The grim white columns that graced the front of the building gave it an air of a colonial mansion from the American Civil War era. I tried imagining flashing strobe lights, pounding music, and sweaty dancing village people in kerchiefs and garden-stained clothes.

Our hike continued, wild flowers framing the sidewalk that had appeared suddenly, splotches of dried cow dung adorning the road. A mother hen and her fluffy gray babies scurried out of our path as we approached them. My aunt steadily pulled her brown kravchuk talking about the changes in the village recently. As we passed a rundown building she pointed with her forehead at it and said, "That is the church. It used to be a bar."

We finally reached a small, whitewashed building with light blue shutters and my aunt slowed her pace for the first time. The sign read *apteka*, drugstore. But as we entered, my mother was already shaking her head at me and saying, "It's a post office." And it turned out to be a post office with its own self-paced time zone. The two women behind the counter acted as if they had never seen a parcel before. At least a half hour's worth of fiddling with ridiculous paperwork passed until our box was finally wrapped in brown paper, tied with string, and sealed with something that looked like hot fudge syrup. I asked my mother what it was and she had to ask my aunt. When one of the employees, a plump girl who had served herself a heaping plate of blue eye shadow, overheard my aunt's explanation of the sealing process to two ignorant Americans, she laughed and said, "You don't have this in America?" She smiled widely. It was the first thing I'd actually seen her do since we had been in the post office, this laughing and smirking.

While our parcel was being finished off by a slim, wispy-haired girl, this haughty plump girl pretended to look busy again with some paperwork that she seemed to turn over and over. Finally, the exhausted slim girl looked up at my aunt who had been holding the money ready in her hand. We left.

My legs were aching to sit down at that moment but I was glad to be outdoors again. We walked on, encountering a few women in the typical kerchief and flower print dress.

They each carried some sort of bag, weighed down probably by recent purchases of bread and potatoes, perhaps some butter. We passed several little boys on the sidewalk spinning the wheel of an upturned bicycle, talking loudly amongst each other.

Then in front of me there was a store with a bench waiting before it, like a storefront in an old western. Several people sat and waited in the shaded heat. My aunt led us into the cool, quiet store that she informed us was one of the latest additions to the chain of privately owned stores in the village. All the stores had been government owned during the Soviet days. Only three people were within the dimly lit store: an older woman sat at one of the small white tables with a little blonde-haired girl. They were chewing silently, together. The one employee working in the store was a weary-looking lady who reluctantly detached herself from her book and stood up as we entered. She waited with an expression of utter boredom as my aunt scanned the scantily clad shelves for what we needed to buy. After discussing with my mother in her breathless rush of a voice, she asked the lady for two beers, a loaf of bread, a carbonated drink, and an ice cream for me.

We gathered the purchases and piled them into the kravchuk. At long last it was filled. My mother and aunt sat down, busying themselves with the ‘sports drink’ that they had discovered as I discovered a whole new version of ice cream. With every bite, it tasted more like Russian butter. My aunt had to finish it for me, under my mother’s disappointed gaze. As we stood to leave the store, I noticed the two girls from the post office enter the store and begin conversing with the bored store lady. I looked at my watch, almost 11 o’clock. The post office, I remembered the sign, closed at noon. I looked questioningly at mother who turned to me and told me that they had closed early to do their marketing.

Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez holds a BA in Journalism with minors in Biology and Russian Studies
She is currently working for the Business Journal of Corpus Christ in Texas as a writer

The Cherry Pit
-Original Fiction-
By Suchorita Rudra-Vasquez

Katya's kitchen spewed warmth into the rest of the little Kiev apartment as she prepared her cherry varenikis. Her father-in-law was visiting, and her husband Victor sat with the old, bent-over man, listening to his strained voice repeat the stories of his days as a nuclear physicist.

"That was when I liked Kiev. Now, there is nothing here but fast cars and fast people with fast mouths."

"Ay Papa…" Katya could hear the deep tone of her husband from the other room, and pictured his long legs crossed, eyes focused with a child-like attention upon the small man next to him. "But you chose to come here from the village because you wanted to study and have a good job…" Victor sighed and Katya knew he was tired of repeating himself but did it anyways.

"Yes, and I got stuck here because I married a woman who had the city etched into her soul. Your mother—"

"Yes, Papa, I know, Mama this and that. Mama is dead, let us give her some rest."

"Katya, where are the vareniki, we are getting hungry now, the smell is driving Papa mad, isn't it Papa?"

"What? I don't smell anything. I'm sick, I'm an old man, I have lost everything, even my nose doesn't work."

"Papa, don't talk like this, you have us here. And Sashinka is coming home soon, she says she has new paintings she wants to show you. You know she always shows you first."

Katya heard the old man grumble back weakly, and then heard Victor again soothing the roughness, letting it dissipate into the air. Her husband had wanted Papa to live with them here, but Papa refused, wanting to go back to his village where his younger sister still lived. But the village was only two hours by bus from the city. Victor had also offered to come to the village, but Papa also refused that, scared that he would like the village so much, he would not return to the city. This always made Katya and Victor laugh and the old man would simply shake his head in dismay at their amusement. So every week, if he was feeling well, Papa made the trip by bus; and Victor rarely got to see the village. Papa only allowed his one granddaughter, Sasha, to visit whenever she was home from university. He wanted her to leave Moscow for good, a city which was even faster than Kiev, he said, and return to draw and ride horses in the village. Victor was just happy that

Papa was in good health and good spirits after Mama had died 2 years back. Her death had left Papa speechless for weeks.

As the vareniki were cooling on the counter, Katya sat and stared at the bird-shaped crystal standing on the cupboard by the doorway. When she had married Victor, Papa had given this to her, something he had brought back from his days in France. Papa had also gifted a crystal horse to Sashinka when she was born. Once she was old enough to recognize what it was, little Sasha had become obsessed with the horse and played with the delicate figure more than with her dolls. Eventually Papa took his granddaughter to his village for the first time to ride a horse and on that day she had declared she would grow up to own a horse farm and ride horses every day.

Katya heard her name being called again and broke out of her reverie. Then Victor appeared in the kitchen.

"Katya. What have you been doing in here? Talking to the bird again?" She smiled up at him and got up to stretch her arms and her back. Katya yawned then, and replied,

"Yes, you are having such a lovely conversation with Papa, I didn't want to interrupt, so I have my own fun."

"Yes, I know you and your fun. Now bring out the vareniki, Papa has to go home."

"Ok, ok, I will bring them now. Go sit, be happy. Leave me alone with my bird."

She lightly pushed him out of the kitchen and turned to find the vareniki more than cooled. She sighed and knew that Papa would grumble also about the cold vareniki. Then she noticed that there was still extra cherry filling left in the pan and quickly heated it and poured it over the stuffed pastries. She lifted the plate of varenikis high on her flat palm like she did at the café during work, and sailed into the living room singing, "Hot cherry varenikis! Very hot, very cherry!"

Papa straightened himself a little at the sight of his daughter-in-law swaying around the coffee table with the plate of red and white pastries. "But are they very Ukrainian?" he pretended to grumble, but was quite happy that they would now eat.

"Victor, could you bring in the tea?" Katya asked, as she set the plate right in front of Papa.

"Here Papa, have two and three and four and…"

"Ach! What are you doing Katya, trying to kill me? Two, that's it."

"But Papa, they are very Ukrainian, as always."

“Well, now that you are working at that Georgian place, I think their dark spices will be poisoning your cooking too.” Katya grinned and patted Papa’s shoulder.

“Don’t worry Papa, I never cook Georgian food. I only serve it.” Victor entered the room with the tea and arranged the tray beside the vareniki.

Papa was chewing thoughtfully on his first bite of the pastry, and Katya had paused to watch his reaction to the temperature of it. Suddenly, Papa stopped chewing and coughed. Then he coughed again and his pale face turned red and purple.

“Oh God!” Victor cried as he put his arm around his father. “He’s choking! Katya, what did you put in these vareniki?!”

He glanced at her quickly, accusingly, and she was too shocked to answer. She fumbled with a napkin and tried using it to wipe away the spit that was appearing on his lips as he coughed. She didn’t know what else to do. Victor was now pounding his father’s frail back as hard as he dared.

“Papa, drink some tea? Papa, spit it out! Papa, Papa!!” Katya’s husband was frantic and his fingers shook as he curled and uncurled them over the old man’s body. Then Papa became quiet for a short second, and Katya gasped as he suddenly coughed up a masticated chunk of the pastry, spraying his shirt with bits of red. Victor sighed loudly and slumped to the chair, then leaned over to pluck something off from Papa’s shirt.

“Katya!!” Victor raised a small dark object in his trembling fingers. It was a cherry pit.

Katya opened her mouth but did not know what to say to Victor. She turned instead to Papa, again wiping his mouth and now cleaning his shirt off.

“Papa, are you alright? Papa, it’s over now, here have some tea.” She smoothed down the sparse, feathery grey hairs on his head. Victor had thrown the pit to the floor and was now watching it roll slowly under the table.

“Victor, at least help Papa!” Katya whispered loudly to him. He looked over at Papa and again stood up.

“Papa, you should go home now. You should not indulge in such things like cherries anymore…you are an old man, Papa.” Papa was slowly nodding his head as his breathing returned to a more normal pace. He cleared his throat loudly and said,

“Yes, you see, the cherries now all have pits here…they are all irradiated.” On his last word, he nodded with the nod of a nuclear physicist.

“Yes Papa,” Victor agreed seriously, “and in the village it is not so. You should go back and rest there where you are safe from irradiated cherries.”

Katya slid out of the room at that point with her guilty varenikis, cold and almost untouched. The pit must have been from a cherry that was in the sauce she'd used. She felt terrible and sat at the kitchen table heavily, thinking about what could have happened. Her gaze found itself back upon the little sparkling bird as she heard Victor helping Papa slide into his boots and coat and arranging his hat and scarf. Now she was feeling hungry and picked up a pastry that was at the bottom of the heap, hoping it was a little warm. She observed it carefully for any dark protrusions and then bit into it, savoring the thick cherry syrup that coated her teeth and tongue completely, and even tickled the inside of her cheeks with a faint sour taste. Then the front door was opened, Victor shouted, "we're going" and the door slammed shut. A thin draft of the snow cold air made its way into the apartment after the two men had left. She looked around for her shawl but could not see it on the stool where it usually lay. Katya got up to clean up the coffee table, bringing the tea tray back into the kitchen, leaving it by the sink with a sigh. She was very tired now, and she returned to the chair to rest her head on the table. Her eyes closed and she slept, dreaming of horses and birds that spit up pits.

A pounding on the door awakened Katya. With her eyes still closed, and her heart beating in her ears, she felt disoriented and fearful. She cautiously blinked her eyes open and licked her lips; they still tasted of cherry. The light in the kitchen glared against the clock on the wall that told her it was three in the morning. Victor had left to drop Papa to the bus station at seven—was he just now returning? Katya pushed back the chair and stood up unsteadily, still blinking. Then she heard a voice wailing her name again and again through the door, even as the pounding came louder and faster. The voice was now moaning as if at the edge of death. Katya felt cold and wondered why she wasn't wearing her shawl, as she scurried to the door. Unfortunately, the peephole glass was partially covered with dots of paint, and she could not be sure that the man leaning against the opposite wall was Victor. She watched an oblong mouth slowly opening to wail her name again, and then saw a blurry hand raise up a flask. Katya stepped back from the door feeling colder still. Where was her shawl? Katya pressed her lips to the crack in the door and yelled out her husband's name. She quickly jumped to watch the man's response through the peephole. He was still gulping from the flask but his eyes seemed to open wider at her calling out. This time she yelled into the peephole and the man dropped the flask to the ground. She looked at the clear, spilling liquid and recognized Victor's shoes.

Katya rushed to unlock the door and flung it open to a strong stench of alcohol and something metallic that clung to her nose unpleasantly.

"Victor, what are you doing? What happened? It is so late!" She could not say she had been worried because she had fallen asleep in the kitchen. "Why are you…"

He had not looked up until now. With one gloved hand he forced himself off of the wall, and came at Katya who was still in the doorway. His breath, his eyes, his fingers, they were all radiating with a heaviness that did not belong to alcohol.

"Katya," he slurred loudly. "They took our things and then…they beat him. Why didn't they beat me? Why not me?" Victor was weeping.

At that moment, Victor fell to his knees on the drenched ground and encircled Katya's legs with his arms, burying his wet eyes into her thick skirt. Katya drew in a quick breath. She shivered. It was very cold.

Amanda Stadjuhar is a senior studying English at the University of South Florida
This paper was written under the tutelage of Dr. Victor Peppard, USF

Similarities between Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov
by Amanda Stadjuhar, 2004

Fyodor Dostoevsky is best known for four novels: Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Devils, and The Brothers Karamazov. Despite the fourteen-year gap between when he wrote the first, Crime and Punishment, and the last, The Brothers Karamazov, the similar themes in Dostoevsky's writings remain constant. The themes that exist in both these novels are very alike and undeniably characteristic of Dostoevsky. The parallel themes in Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov include murder, the suffering of children, and the power of money. Furthermore, both novels display Dostoevsky's use of multiple voices or polyphony. This paper will examine and explore the recurring themes that Dostoevsky employs in both, as well as their basically fundamental character.

The Role of Murder

The act of murder is a central focus in both novels. In Crime and Punishment, Alyona, the pawnbroker, and her sister are murdered. Raskolnikov's original plan did not involve the death of Lizaveta; his intentions were only to rid society of Alyona, "the louse." Raskolnikov tries to convince himself and others that killing Alyona was a positive action because he was contributing to the betterment of society. The death of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov happens in a similar context. While Smerdyakov's motives for murdering Fyodor may not have been the same ones that Raskolnikov had for killing Alyona, Smerdyakov is accomplishing the same thing.

For the most part no one suffered or felt badly at the news of Fyodor's death. Fyodor had been a drunk, a poor father, and a general disruption to society and for these reasons the news of his death likely came as a relief to at least some. While it is interesting to note that both of these murders are portrayed in some way to be beneficial, it would not be correct to say that Dostoevsky is promoting murder. In both novels the murderers, as well as any people connected to the act, are punished for their crimes.

In Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov admits his crime and is sent to prison. However, his real punishment takes place long before this in the form of mental anguish; he ends up suffering more by trying to avoid being caught than he does when he turns himself in. Dostoevsky focuses a great deal on the psychological aspects of crime. In The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan does not kill Fyodor, but he does feel that he paved the way for Smerdyakov and thus is guilty by association. As a result he is mentally tormented. The combination of this guilt with alcoholism eventually causes Ivan to suffer delirium tremens and a nervous breakdown. Ivan's brother, Dmitry also suffers terribly. Dmitry is not guilty of Fyodor's murder either, but he does feel that he is guilty of other sins. Smerdyakov also must have suffered a certain amount of guilt since he took his own life. It seems that Dostoevsky believed that all crimes go punished even if the perpetrators are not sent to prison. In all of these cases, whether the sin committed was murder or some other, none of the sinners can escape the punishment they put on themselves. Dostoevsky's most convincing example in these two novels is that even Svidrigailov, as despicable as he may be, realizes the severe error of his ways and takes his own life. The fact that even somebody like Svidrigailov suffers psychologically strengthens the idea

that no one can escape the torments that their own mind is able to produce; therefore, every man is punished for his sins in some way.

In both novels psychological suffering follows murder and other sins, and this suffering can be viewed as punishment; however, this mental agony can also be seen as a means of redemption. In The Brothers Karamazov, Dmitry suffers through realizing his own evil before he is able to realize his goodness. Raskolnikov also suffers before he is able to redeem himself. In both novels women lead the men into redemption; Grushenka helps Dmitry to be a better person, and Sonya aids Raskolnikov on the pathway to a new life. It seems that Dostoevsky is saying that for one to be redeemed one must first suffer, and often one cannot find redemption alone.

Yet another theory as to why Dostoevsky's novels focused on murder so much comes from the neurologist Sigmund Freud. In his book The Collected Papers, Sigmund Freud wrote:

> A criminal is to him [Dostoevsky] almost a Redeemer, who has taken on himself the guilt, which must else have been borne by others. There is no longer any need for one to murder, since *he* has already murdered; and one must be grateful to him, for, except for him, one would have been obliged oneself to murder…This may perhaps be quite generally the mechanism of kindly sympathy with other people, a mechanism which one can discern with especial ease in the extreme case of the guilt ridden novelist. There is no doubt that this sympathy by identification was a decisive factor in determining Dostoevsky's choice of material. (43)

Freud also goes on to suggest that Dostoevsky had a very strong destructive instinct, and was both a sadist and a criminal, which is why he would have chosen to focus his novel on the crime of murder (41).

The Suffering of Children

The suffering of children is intertwined throughout both novels. In The Brothers Karamazov, the poor disposition of children can be seen in Ilyusha, and also through

incidents brought up in Ivan's poema, "The Grand Inquisitor." Crime and Punishment displays sufferings in the children of Marmeladov. The unfortunate lives that these children have to bear are a commentary on the poor state of society many believed existed at that time. Lack of parenting and poverty often forced children to be more mature than their age would normally require. When the reader is introduced to Marmeladov's children, they are poor, cold, and hungry and it is the ten-year-old Polenka who must step out of her role as child in order to help her mother take care of all the daily chores. The plight of the Marmeladov children is continuous, and when the reader leaves them they are homeless, singing and dancing on the street for money and at the mercy of their deranged mother. Ilyusha is also forced to act more maturely when he stands up for his father, Snegiryov, who has badly beaten Dmitry. This incident causes Ilyusha pain because he is ashamed of his father and is also teased by other schoolboys.

In both novels the link between these suffering children is often a poor father figure who is an alcoholic. Marmeladov is a drunk who wastes all his money on liquor, and in the end dies because of it. The Second Grade Captain, Snegiryov, loves his son Ilyusha, but this does not stop Snegiryov from disappointing him. In Ilyusha's eyes, his drunken father is an embarrassment after Snegiryov is beaten by Dmitry. Also, while the focus on Dmitry, Ivan, and Alyosha is during their adulthood, it is evident that a lot of their childhood was spent in suffering because of Fyodor's lack of care for them, especially for Dmitry. Fyodor Pavlovich, like Snegiryov and Marmeladov, was also a drunk. Dostoevsky must have viewed drinking as a serious social issue, and had even originally entitled Crime and Punishment, The Drunkards. In a letter to his friend, A.A. Krayevsky, Dostoevsky wrote,

> My novel is called The Drunkards and will be tied in with the current issue of drunkenness. Not only is the problem of Drunkenness analyzed, but all its ramifications are shown, especially scenes of family life and the education of children in such conditions" (Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky, 65).

A contemporary of Dostoevsky's, Leo Tolstoy, voiced his opinion on the disastrous consequences of alcohol in his essay "Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?" in which, Tolstoy reminds the reader that the things accomplished in one's life are not achieved by physical means but by one's consciousness. While he discourages it, Tolstoy recognizes that people "deliberately make use of substances that disturb the proper working of their consciousness" (66).

The Power of Money

The role of money is addressed in both Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov. The most obvious function of money is as a motive for murder. While Dmitry does not actually kill Fyodor, he is found guilty because he had a very good motive to murder him: money. Similarly, in Crime and Punishment one of the reasons that Raskolnikov murders the pawnbroker is money. Geoffrey Kabat, author of Ideology and Imagination, says that, "murder is an attempt to annihilate a symbol of the oppressive forces of a society in which money gives one power over other people's lives and in which lack of money means dependence on others" (124). By having money, both Alyona and Fyodor had power over other peoples' lives, and both abused this power.

Another likely reason for the constant focus on money in many of Dostoevsky's novels including Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov is a biographical reason. Dostoevsky spent much of his life in financial trouble. In 1864 Mikhail, Fyodor Dostoevsky's brother, died. According to the section "Financial Struggles Continue"

from Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky, shortly before his death Mikhail had received permission to start a new magazine, The Epoch, to which Fyodor Dostoevsky contributed greatly. Dostoevsky was unable to keep the magazine alive without his brother's management skills, and was obliged to pay off the magazine's debt when it failed. Dostoevsky also felt he was financially responsible for the family that Mikhail left behind. Often Dostoevsky borrowed money from friends and family, but their generosity did not help much. On top of the financial obligations that Dostoevsky had taken on after his brothers death was Dostoevsky's gambling problem. Gambling had a very negative effect on Dostoevsky's life, causing him to lose the little amounts of money he had ("Financial Struggles Continue," 25). While money tends to play a large role in everyone's lives, it seems that for Dostoevsky it was even more important since he never had enough of it. It seems likely that the reason there is so much focus on money in these novels, whether it is on having money or the lack of it, results from Dostoevsky's own constant struggle with money in his life.

Dostoevsky's feelings towards those who did have money may have also permeated these novels. In both Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov all the characters that have money are portrayed negatively. In Crime and Punishment the reader is first introduced to Alyona, who is continually referred to as "a louse." Also present in this novel are Luzhin and Svidrigailov. Luzhin is not incredibly rich but he has more money than Raskolnikov's family. While Luzhin is not as despicable as Svidrigailov, he is not an admirable man, and he uses his money to wield power over Dunya and her mother. Svidrigailov is very well off and is of heinous character, having murdered, raped, and used his money to bribe. Svidrigailov uses his money to try to control Dunya, and he

also uses money as a way to become engaged to a young teenager. Fyodor Pavlovich from The Brothers Karamazov is a man who has money and is a contemptible person. Fyodor also uses his wealth to wield power over others, especially his son, Dmitry. Money is often linked to power, but in these novels, Dostoevsky associates money with the power to abuse. It seems that through his characters Dostoevsky is communicating a belief that those who have power will abuse it.

The Polyphonic Novel

Mikhail Bakhtin originally introduced the idea of the polyphonic novel in his book The Problems of Dostoevsky's Art. Later, this book was republished and expanded as Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Bakhtin described the polyphonic novel as one in which many different voices can be heard, and each voice represents a different view of the truth. In his book, Pro and Contra: Notes on Dostoevsky, Viktor Shklovsky summed up Bakhtin's conception of the polyphonic novel by saying:

> In Dostoevsky, the voices have equal right; they are not refuted. There is, in his dialogues, no Socrates who leads the argument to his own conclusion. The dialogue does not end. The argument is explicated in his novels by virtue of the fact that there is no (single) conclusion which he would be able to validate artistically. (13)

Bakhtin's notion of the polyphonic novel is born both out of The Brothers Karamazov and Crime and Punishment, as well as Dostoevsky's other works. Both novels contain so many instances of what Bakhtin would have referred to as polyphonic that it is impossible to say that one is more 'polyphonic' than the other. One of the many examples is the scene in chapter five of book three in Crime and Punishment when Raskolnikov, Porfiry, Razumikhin, and Zamyotov are discussing the ideas in Raskolnikov's article about the 'superman.' In this scene multiple voices can be heard, some conflicting, in

reference to Raskolnikov's article. Bakhtin also comments on the variety of voices that express Ivan Karamazov's idea that "everything is permissible" as long as the soul is not immortal. Throughout his book, Bakhtin stresses that Dostoevsky's ability to incorporate these multiple voices in his writings is what makes his writing truly unique and ingenious. Bakhtin comments specifically on both The Brothers Karamazov and Crime and Punishment by saying:

> Both of these ideas (Raskolnikov's and Ivan Karamazov's) reflect other ideas, just as in painting a certain color, because of the reflections of the surrounding colors, loses its abstract purity, but in return begins to live a truly colorful life. If one were to withdraw these ideas from the dialogical sphere of their lives and give them a monologically completed theoretical form, what cachetic and easily-refuted ideological constructions would result! (80)

Since Bakhtin's study on the polyphonic novel focuses mainly on The Brothers Karamazov and Crime and Punishment, to conclude that the notion was born equally from both novels would be logical.

Bakhtin also comments on the sources of the several voices that appear in Dostoevsky's writing by saying,

> As an artist Dostoevsky did not create his ideas in the same way that philosophers and scholars create theirs- he created living images of the ideas which he found, detected, or sometimes divined in *reality itself*, i.e. images of already living ideas, ideas already existing as idea-forces" (81).

For instance, the prototypes of Raskolnikov's ideas came from Max Sterner's "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum," as well as ideas from Napolean III's Histoire de Jules Cesar (Bakhtin, 81) whereas many of the prototypes for the voices in The Brothers Karamazov were influenced by Dostoevsky's personal life. The voice of Father Zosima is likely to have been influenced by the monk that Dostoevsky visited upon the death of his child, Alyosha ("Life With Anna," 28). Also, while in prison, Dostoevsky met a man who had been wrongly imprisoned for parricide. Most likely the prototype for Dmitry came from

this man ("Convict and Exile," 22). It is evident that Dostoevsky drew from many different aspects of life for the many voices that appear in his novels.

The themes that are present in Crime and Punishment reappear in The Brothers Karamazov, despite the fourteen-year gap between when the two novels were published. Often these themes, which include murder, the power of money, and the suffering of children, as well as the use of polyphony, may be connected with Dostoevsky's own life. Both novels are permeated by events similar to those that took place during Dostoevsky's life, as well by his own feelings and social critique of those events. Despite the fact that the two novels contain different stories, there are many similarities and a resonance between them, because they both grow out of a core of powerful questions and themes that Dostoevsky was preoccupied with throughout his career.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Trans. R.W. Rostel. Readings on Crime and Punishment. Ed. Derek C. Maus. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2000. 72-83.

"Convict and Exile." Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 22.

"Financial Struggles Continue." Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 25.

Freud, Sigmund. "Dostoevsky and Parricide" from The Collected Papers. Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 40-43.

Kabat, Geoffrey. Ideology and Imagination. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. 124.

"Life With Anna." Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 28.

Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 65.

Shklovsky, Viktor. Pro and Contra: Notes on Dostoevsky. Critical Essays on Dostoevsky. Ed. Robert Lecker and Robin Feuer Miller. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co, 1986. 13.

Tolstoy, Leo. "Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?" Readings on Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ed. Tamara Johnson. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 63-66.

Josh Wilson holds an MA in Theatre from Idaho State University
He is currently an educational consultant based in Moscow, Russia

The Government Inspector in Text and Presentation 1836 - 1938

by Josh Wilson, 2001

It has been said that Gogol's career was like that of a meteor. It appears suddenly, burns brightly, fades quickly, and with its impact, changes the surrounding landscape and environment forever.[1] It is interesting that Gogol's play, The Government Inspector, was described with a similar power-type metaphor. Nabokov wrote, "(it) begins with a blinding flash of lightning and ends in a thunderclap… it is wholly placed in the tense gap between the flash and the crash."[2] To add another, The Government Inspector builds speed from its very beginning. By its end, the frenetic pace bursts off the stage and crashes through the theater walls. The audience departs through the wound.

The purpose of this paper will be to understand The Government Inspector, the forms of its text and presentations, the impact each had upon their audiences, and, of course, the man who wrote it.

Let us begin with the author. Nikolay Vasilievich Gogol was born in Sorochintsi, just outside Poltava, the Ukraine in 1809. His affluent family held a position in the Cossack nobility. His father was well educated: an amateur playwright, poet, and "gentleman farmer" who raised his son in relative indulgence.[3] Except for this, not much is known about Gogol's early childhood. However, we can discern much about Gogol's primal mindset from the culture he was raised in.

---

[1] Milton Ehre, "Introduction" in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), xi
[2] Ehre, xxi-ii
[3] Bernard Guerney, "Nikolai V. Gogol," in *Dead Souls*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1997), v

The Ukrainian Cossacks are a proud and powerful ethnic group. In 1654, they allied with the Russians to drive the Poles from the Left-Bank Ukraine and Smolensk. The ensuing victory not only enlarged the Ukraine and provided Russia with a valuable land route to Europe; it also marked the beginning of a prosperous, however unstable, relationship between Cossacks and Russians. With Cossack assistance, Russia went on to further expansion and military success against the Poles, Swedes, and Turks. However, Russia's attempts to forge the Cossacks into Russia's consolidating government were met with strong resistance. In the Third and Fourth Peasant Wars, Cossacks in the Don and Volga River region (just a short distance from Poltava) led other dissident groups to revolt in 1707 and 1773. The Cossacks, like most Russians, blamed oppression on corrupt officials, while considering the Tsar essentially infallible.[4] In fact, Emelian Pugachev, leader of the Third Peasant War, gained a wide following by claiming to be the deceased Tsar Peter the Third.

This pride of heritage and tempered dissidence was to provide most of Gogol's literary topics. His earliest successes, "Dikinka tales" (1831), Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka (1831-2), and Taras Bulba (1835) concern Ukrainian life and culture. Furthermore, as we shall see, The Government Inspector is a striking appeal for reform.

At age ten, Gogol began a formal education, eventually graduating from the School of Higher Studies at Nezhin in 1828. There he pursued interests in theater (originally in directing and acting) and in classical studies.[5] Afterwards, Gogol settled in St. Petersburg where he failed at several government posts and continued pursuing the

[4] Paul Dukes, *A History of Russia c. 882-1996*, 3rd ed., (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 111
[5] Susanne Fusso and Priscella Meyer, *Essays on Gogol*, (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 6-7

theater. He attended varied productions in St. Petersburg including vaudeville,[6] neoclassicist plays, (ranging from Sumarokov's early tragedies to adaptations and translations of French and German plays),[7] and the new Sentimental dramas. Gogol would blend all these influences: classical studies and various theater genres, into his distinctive and often misunderstood dramatic form. After his first literary successes, published by his friend, Alexander Pushkin, Gogol became a full-time writer in 1835.

Experimentation in form was not new to Russian writers. Although folk theater and performance had existed for centuries, Western style drama was unheard of in Russia until about 1650,[8] when French plays were imported along the new trade routes. Peter the Great's westernization of Russia in the mid-1700's hastened Russian language drama, largely modeled on Cornielle and Moliere. Catherine the Great's drive to bring culture and enlightenment to Russia hastened its popularity. Both rulers saw great potential in the new drama to teach and entertain the masses. They hoped to use it to forge an enlightened (and docile) populace. Russian authors, operating from neoclassicism rather than Machiavellianism, also sought a drama that would teach and entertain, with the emphasis on pedagogy. As Alexander Sumarokov wrote: "Comedy's nature is to correct manners through ridicule. / Its rule – to amuse and serve."[9]

With the turn of the century, two interrelated ideas were introduced to Russia: Nationalism and Romanticism. Romanticism helped steer Russian authors away from strict adherence to neoclassical ideals. The new direction was solidified as Nationalism

---

[6] Ehre, xvii
[7] Nikolay Gogol, "The Petersburg Stage of 1835-36," 1836, In *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 166
[8] Victor Borovsky, "Russian Theater in Russian Culture," in *A History of Russian Theater*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6-7
[9] Ehre, xvi

demanded Russia fervently seek national forms of art, including a national theater. Gogol wrote passionately against the production of foreign plays (they were essentially meaningless to Russian audiences and actors, he felt) and added: "for heaven's sake, give us Russian characters, give us ourselves!"[10] Russian language Western drama, still in relative infancy at just over a century old, was forced to mature quickly.

Despite it tender years, Russian drama realized one of its finest fruitions very quickly. In 1836, Gogol finished The Government Inspector. Milton Ehre states:

> The wide social spectrum of that play, the recognizable "Russianness" of its characters, its richly colloquial language the likes of which had never before been heard on the Russian stage caused it to be hailed as a realization of the dream of a national theater.

However, the genius of Gogol's play lies in much more than the play's national style, for many troupes of many nationalities have performed The Government Inspector to many appreciative audiences of many nationalities.[11]

Gogol's true genius lies in his play's form. As previously mentioned, Gogol blends neoclassicism with various other dramatic genres, as well as a comic blend of illogicality and logic. Also previously mentioned, the play and its form may best be understood in terms of speed and power. Gogol has streamlined his play with neoclassical devices. His characters are familiar to us from tradition. Khlestakov is a comic braggart, Osip, a wily servant, Marya, a naive ingénue. Also, his plot turns on the classical case of mistaken identity.[12] The Government Inspector closely follows the unity of action, giving it, despite its colloquial language and social spectrum, elegance and simplicity. However, because neoclassical forms were under attack, as well as because of Gogol's own creative impulses, he only adhered to the form so long as it was useful to

[10] Gogol, "Petersburg," 167
[11] Ehre, xxiii
[12] Ehre, xix

him.[13] For example, the unities of time and place are observed only loosely; the twenty-four-odd hours of the play are stretched over the course of two days; the action takes place in varied locations, but all in one small provincial town. Horace's *utile* and *dulce* are certainly present, but Gogol blends the *utile* into the *dulce*, relying on the play's comic absurdity and a few unique stylistic devices, such as an "inverted catharsis," rather than pure didacticism. We will discuss this later.

Gogol openly despised vaudeville, "this facile, insipid plaything (that) could only originate among the French, a nation lacking a profound and fixed character,"[14] as he called it. However, Gogol also possessed a great respect for vaudeville, just as he possessed a great respect for the French. "O Moliere, great Moliere, you who developed your characters in such breadth and fullness and traced their every shadow with profundity,"[15] Gogol laments in the very paragraph following his French-bashing. While the French lacked profundity of character, Moliere possessed profundity in apparent abundance. While vaudeville was "facile, insipid," it possessed a briskness of pace, actability, and a novelty that carried across political and class lines.[16]

Gogol adopted these qualities to give speed and power to his streamlined play. Previous comic playwrights relied on the heavy use of a *raisonneur* to express the *utile* of their plays. In Fonvizin's The Minor, for instance, fully one-fifth of the text is given over to Starodum's long speeches on morality. While this tended to make the play's moral lesson abundantly clear, it also slowed the comic pace, creating "dead air" for both actors and audience. Gogol's solution to this was ingenious and radical: complete elimination

[13] Ibid
[14] Gogol, "Petersburg," 166
[15] Ibid
[16] Ehre, xvii

of the *raisonneur*. In doing so, of course, he completely eliminated a stable center for his play. To again quote Milton Ehre: "(Gogol's) great innovation… was to write a comedy without any ballast of sanity."[17] The Government Inspector spins nearly out of control, with hapless, self-serving, amoral characters running in farcical situations that beg physical comedy (such as Khlestakov's dual and simultaneous seduction of the mayor's wife and daughter, his solicitation of bribes from several officials in the course of just a few minutes, etc.). On the verge of chaos, The Government Inspector is vaudeville, but remains, somehow obviously, a moral drama.

As stated before, Gogol's characters are amoral, not immoral. A government inspector means a possible threat to their posts; therefore, they bribe the perceived threat to neutralize it. There is no intrigue, no premeditated scheme to do wrong, merely a practical system that is followed. As Gogol states: "My heroes are not all villains; were I to add but one good trait to any of them, the reader would be reconciled to all of them."[18] Gogol's characters are grotesque, but not completely without hope. It is precisely this hope, this possibility of salvation that allows the play to be open to morality.

The morality is communicated through Gogol's dialectic, inherent in his major stylistic devices. In his "The Denouement of The Government Inspector," a short piece written shortly after its namesake, Gogol has "First Comic Actor" give the audience the "key" to understanding The Government Inspector.

> Take a close look at the town depicted in the play. Everyone agrees that no such town exists in all of Russia; a town where all the officials are monsters is unheard of. You can always find two or three who are honest, but here – not one. In a word, there is no such town.[19]

---

[17] Ehre, xxi
[18] Ehre, xxiii
[19] Nikolay Gogol, "The Denouement of The Government Inspector," 1846, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 188

Gogol expected his audience to realize they were watching a narrative hyperbole, a world turned on its head, and instinctively perform the intellectual gymnastics to right it.

> Let us not swell with indication if some infuriated mayor or, more correctly, the devil himself whispers: "What are you laughing at? Laugh at yourselves!" Proudly we shall answer him: "Yes we are laughing at ourselves, because we sense our noble Russian heritage, because we hear a command from on high to be better than others!" Countrymen! Russian blood flows in my veins, as in yours. Behold: I'm weeping.[20]

Gogol expected his comedy without sanity, his world without logic or morals to create a hunger in his audience for sanity, logic, and morals via a sort of Platonic dialectic. Platonic logic, as S. Fusso and P. Meyer point out, permeates all of Gogol's works.[21]

Another of Gogol's stylistic devices further aids the speed and flow of the play. As stated earlier from Nabokov, The Government Inspector "begins with a blinding flash of lightning and ends in a thunderclap… it is wholly placed in the tense gap between the flash and the crash."[22] The reason this observation rings true is because Gogol has completely omitted any falling action and the denouement and has condensed the exposition into near similar oblivion.

The Mayor's first two lines let us know all we need; "Gentlemen! I've summoned you here because of some very distressing news. A government inspector is on his way." is followed by "From St. Petersburg, incognito! And with secret instructions to boot!"[23] We know now the action of the play turns on a government inspection. We know that no one knows who the inspector is. Any audience member with even brief experience classic plots will know that the comic action will turn on mistaken identity. Finally, we know from "Gentlemen," the concerned and indignant

---

[20] Gogol, "Denouement," 189-90
[21] Fusso and Meyer, 5-7
[22] Ehre, xxi-ii
[23] Nikolay Gogol, The Government Inspector, 1836, in The Theater of Nikolay Gogol, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 55

tone of the announcement, and the brief explicatives of concern uttered by the other characters, that they are likely provincial officials. Provincial officials are the only people who would show concern for this; they are the only people who may lose their positions from such an inspection. Hence, the exposition is taken care of in less than a quarter page. Other needed information is introduced as part of the rising action.

Gogol spends the next three and half acts building a rising action. Khlestakov arrives on the scene, is mistaken for the inspector, and is given a royal treatment he does not understand, but takes full advantage of. Minor characters are introduced and a potential love affair between Khlestakov and the mayor's daughter (and possibly wife too) is developed. The climax begins near the end of act four, with the famous "bribe scene," where a rapid and farcical procession of officials commit continuous bribery. However, this climax never ends, but continues through the fifth act, reinvigorated by the arrival of the Storekeepers, the reading of the letter, and given one final boost with the last line of the play: "the government inspector has arrived."[24] As all characters freeze on stage, the pace has nowhere to go but crashing through the theater walls.

The result of Gogol's stylized dramatic structure is the final stylistic device we will discuss, a device whose intent seems to have backfired on Gogol. This device can only be called an "inverted catharsis." The play certainly possesses catharsis: it creates joy for the audience and purges them with laughter. However, other emotions, such as the anger at seeing such corruption as well as the frustration at wanting to right Gogol's upside-down-world and not seeing it happen, are given no release. The audience must exit through a gaping wound created by the exiting action, with these emotions seething within them, desiring release; this is inverted catharsis.

[24] Gogol, Inspector, 130

It is possible that Gogol intend this, assuming the post-production release of this emotion would be channeled into improving society and stamping out corruption. However, more often than not, the audience simply directed their anger and frustration at the play and/or its author. Gogol complained about this:

> "He's an incendiary! A rebel!" And who is saying this? Government officials, experienced people who ought to know better… and this ignorance is widespread. Call a crook a crook, and they consider it an undermining of the state apparatus… Consider the plight of the poor author who nevertheless loves his country and his countrymen intensely.[25]

Gogol is frustrated but uses the opportunity to point out the fact that this reaction proves the need for change in his beloved Russia.

It goes without saying, then, that the original production of The Government Inspector was not generally well received. In addition to the adverse emotional reaction, there is an artistic theory for the poor reception. This theory is presented by Milton Ehre and supported by another historian of the Russian stage, Anatoly Altschuller.

Before we discuss this theory, however, we should discuss why this play, seen as "undermining of the state apparatus," was allowed to remain on the stage throughout the reign of Nicholas I, a tsar infamous for oppressive censorship. The tsar himself was present at opening night, which meant that all important officials and nobles were there as well,[26] and upon leaving the tsar was heard to say "All have gotten their due and me most of all!"[27] The tsar's quote requires some explanation. First, it should be pointed out that in the play, much like in a Cossack rebellion, the tsar is never slandered, only officials. Second, it should be noted that every tsar since Alexi had tinkered with reforming the role and position of provincial officials. Milton Ehre adds: "We may guess

[25] Nikolay Gogol, "Letter to M. P. Pogodin," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 177-8
[26] Ehre, xi
[27] Guerney, vi

that Nicholas I, who had little confidence in his subordinates, consented in order to have an opportunity to see them squirm."[28] Finally, it should be noted that the only time a direct representative of the tsar appears it is in the capacity to change the province's government and to hold it accountable to corruption. Gogol's own interpretation of the final scene does nothing to hinder the good position of the tsar either:

> I vow, our spiritual city is worth the same thought a good ruler gives to his realm. As he banishes corrupt officials from his land sternly and with dignity, let us banish corruption from our souls![29]

The "due" the tsar has received is a favorable comparison with almighty God, everyone else, with damnable sin. Obviously, the tsar had little problem with this.

With Gogol safely past the censors, we return to a discussion of why the original production failed. Erhe claims that the actors tried to perform The Government Inspector as "harmless vaudeville,"[30] hence detracting from Gogol's vision of a socially corrective play. A vaudeville presentation would have also detracted from its "Russianess," as vaudeville was seen as French. Gogol backs Ehre's theory:

> My creation struck me as not at all mine… (Khlestakov) turned into someone from the ranks of those vaudeville rogues… in general, (the characters) were so affected that it was simply unbearable. [31]

We can certainly see how this would detract from the redemptive value of the final scene:

> The curtain fell at a confused moment and the play seemed unfinished. But I'm not to blame. They didn't want to listen to me. I'll say it again: the final scene will not meet with success until they grasp that it is a dumb scene.[32]

Gogol saw reliance on farce as detracting from the dialectical satire and overall message.

---

[28] Ehre, xi
[29] Gogol, "Denouement," 189
[30] Ehre, xvii
[31] Nikolay Gogol, "Fragment of a Letter to a Man of Letters," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 178
[32] Ibid

Anatoly Altschuller in A History of the Russian Theater provides evidence to back Ehre's theory of why the original production failed. He states that the 1830's were a time of transition for Russian theater. A night at the theater was a variety experience. The same actors might present all vaudeville, dance, song, tragedy, and comedy in the same evening.[33] Nikolay Osipovich Dyur, who played the original Khlestakov, and who Gogol thought helped turn the production away from his vision, was widely loved as a vaudeville performer. Altshuller also points out that Dyur's strength was "his personality, not his acting skills."[34] Alexsandr Martynov, who played Bobchinsky and whom Gogol criticized as "hopelessly affected" was popular for his portrayal of low comic characters.[35] Varvara Asenkova, who played Marya, was primarily famed for "travesty" parts on the vaudeville stage.[36] Overall, choices of costuming and staging were decidedly vaudeville.[37]

All this shows the original production of The Government Inspector deviated from Gogol's vision of it. But it was not a complete failure. In Gogol's own words:

> The reaction to (The Government Inspector) has been extensive and tumultuous. Everybody is against me. Respected officials, middle-aged men, scream that I hold nothing sacred in having had the effrontery to speak of officialdom as I did. The police are against me, the merchants are against me, the literati are against me. They rail at me and run off to the play; it's impossible to get tickets.[38]

While many were offended by the content and style of the presentation, everyone was excited and talking. Many, such has Herzen, a contemporary drama critic, saw the play as "contemporary Russia's terrible confession" and demanded radical social and political

---

[33] Anatoly Altschuller, "Actors and Acting," *A History of Russian Theater*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 105
[34] Ibid
[35] Altschuller, 111
[36] Altschuller, 105
[37] Gogol, "Fragment," 179-80
[38] Nikolay Gogol, "Letter to M. S. Shchepkin," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 177

change.[39] Others argued that Gogol's text is essentially conservative, asking only for the present system to work properly.[40] Some sided with Gogol in decrying the inappropriate presentation of the text. Others argued that it had appropriately brought out the play's humor. Victor Borovsky, a Russian and a respected modern theater historian and theorist, still insists humor is the play's most important quality.[41]

However, if we regard only Gogol's intent to encourage his audience to seek redemption or beauty or perfection, this "artistic failure" turns out to be quite an achievement. The unexpected thing was that people sought in so many different ways, in so many different places. Some sought redemption and beauty in dramatic form. Turgenev, the famous Russian playwright and critic, uses the date of The Government Inspector's premier to mark the beginning of a new age for Russian drama: "Ten years have passed since The Government Inspector was first performed. A wonderful change has come about since then in our ideas and in our demands."[42] Altshuller adds: "by the end of (ten years) realism, the 'natural school,' was predominant."[43] Many of Gogol's chastised actors moved away from vaudeville and romanticism to realism, and became some of Russia's greatest actors and actresses ever.[44] Martynov, Gogol's chastised Bobchinsky, became the "first true Khlestakov" after his conversion. The premier of The Government Inspector left much to be desired aesthetically, but its ideological impact was great; it instigated the dramatic realism Russia would someday be famed for.

[39] Ehre, xi
[40] Ibid
[41] Borovsky, 101
[42] Altschuller, 113
[43] Altschuller, 114
[44] Altschuller, 120

One could also argue that the political implications of this first run were also great. Major revolts occurred in the 1860s, just a few years after the premier of The Government Inspector. Although these revolts amounted to naught, perhaps they were partially fueled by the discourse and controversy created by the play.

Over seventy years later, Stanislavski would also find redemption in The Government Inspector. It was during the rehearsals for a new production that, in 1908, he fully realized his directorial style. At the start, Stanislavski was tyrannical, ordering his actors to act in particular manner, with particular motion. In his own words:

> I began to order the actors about exactly as I ordered about amateurs. Of course they did not like it, but they obeyed, for they lost all ground beneath their feet. What I said and what I wanted was right. I saw the truth of that in the following years in many productions of (The Government Inspector*)*. But the means I used for attaining my new ideas and influencing the actors were not the right ones. Simple despotism does not persuade an actor to his inner self; it only violates his inner self. [45]

Stanislavski thus began to solidify his theory of method acting. He began direct from a more psychological standpoint. He developed a terminology extrapolated from his readings of Gogol. These early terms, such as "nail" and "circle" eventually became the terms we know today as "through-line of action" and "circles of concentration."[46]

Despite the inspiration Stanislavski received from Gogol and The Government Inspector, his presentation of the play did not create lasting fame for him. Although it favorably reviewed during its time, praised for its "enriched realism,"[47] although it was essentially an "enriched realism" Gogol wanted his play presented with, this production has not been remembered as a masterpiece. Perhaps this is because Stanislavski's technique was still in its infancy. In any case, Stanislavski's production had no

[45] Constantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, J.J. Robins, trans., (New York: Merdian Books, 1966), 247
[46] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski*, (Bungay, Suffolk: Richard Clay Ltd, 1988), 246
[47] Ibid

significant impact on society or art, despite the revolutionary impact of Stanislavski's new theories and techniques of acting, partially extrapolated and inspired by Gogol.

Of more interest to us here is the advent of a very different technique brought to full fruition in the presentation of Gogol's play by one of Stanislavski's contemporaries. While Stanislavski's inspiration is interesting, the rest of our discussion will concern Vsevolod Meyerhold and his 1926 masterpiece production of The Government Inspector.

Simply simply saying he rejected realism and naturalism can best sum Meyerhold's theories and techniques. Although Meyerhold did not fully systemize his theory, he did leave a lengthy discussion of them in his book Meyerhold on Theater. From this, we can tell much about his approach to The Government Inspector.

He considered a quote from Gogol most important in interpreting the script: "I decided to hold up everything to ridicule at once."[48] Therefore, Meyerhold decided: "The theatre was faced with the task of making The Government Inspector an accusatory production… (of) the entire Nicholayan era, together with the way of life of its nobility and officials."[49] To accomplish this, he emphasized the grotesque elements of the play. At once it was seen as realistic, and seen through a bent lens of hyperbole and fantasy. The effect was nightmarish, a memory something one would never want to return to.

Meyerhold essentially rewrote Gogol's script. He broke it into fifteen episodes, which were "ideally suited to the disorientating effects of the grotesque."[50] He also added additional elements from Gogol, references to Dead Souls and other plays and

[48] Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theater*, Edward Braun, trans, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 209
[49] Ibid
[50] Meyerhold, 113

added additional characters, a laughing charwoman, for instance, to add mood and probably additional disorientation.[51]

If we look at one of the surviving photographs of the play (see appendix A), we can see the effect of Meyerhold's staging. At first glance, the interior of the inn looks realistic. However, the more we look, the more non-realistic it becomes. The staircase is slightly disproportioned, its angle unusual. The positioning of the two actors at ground level is most disorienting. Their posture serves to skew the otherwise vertical and horizontal lines of the set. In addition, it does not look at all natural, reminding us that we are not in reality. The lighting also comes into play here. Everything is heavily shadowed; most of the back wall cannot be seen. This was important to Meyerhold's overall nightmare theme for he wanted the action to come "forward from the gloom like the reincarnation of a long-buried past."[52] In fact, the only time the back wall could be clearly seen was in Meyerhold's famous "bribe scene," when eleven bribes came through eleven doors that lined the stage. We should also note Khlestakov who is seen descending the stairs. Again, overall he looks realistic. However, his ghostly pallor, set off against his black suit, top hat, and rectangle-rim glasses, not to mention the unexplainable donut hanging from his lapel (Meyerhold never ventures to explain the donut) make him seem not at all natural, even if he is realistic.

Meyerhold did many things that likely had Gogol spinning in his grave such as his heavy departure from realism and his portraying Khlestakov as "a man who makes an art of lying."[53] However, Meyerhold insisted he was keeping with Gogol's vision. In the "dumb" scene, for example, all characters are to be frozen in fear for "at least two or

[51] Meyerhold, 211-3
[52] Meyerhold, 216
[53] Meyerhold, 212

three minutes."[54] Meyerhold found a way to insure this would happen. The real government inspector's arrival was announced on a large white screen, raised to cover the stage. Behind the screen, wax dummies, precisely designed to resemble each actor, were wheeled out to replace each actor (see appendix B). Hence, Gogol's beloved "dumb" scene can now last indefinitely, even as the audience is leaving.

Reaction to Meyerhold's presentation was, like the original, extensive and tumultuous. Meyerhold's own assessment of his critics even resembles Gogol's:

> (My production) inspired a greater volume of critical literature than any other production in the history of the theatre. Despite the violent criticism of its alleged 'mysticism,' the attempts to discredit its author's political integrity, and the hysterical protests at the liberties taken with Gogol's hallowed text, the work was performed regularly up to the very day of (my) theatre's liquidation in 1938. Not only did it establish once and for all the creative autonomy of the stage-director, it gave rise to numerous 'reinterpretations' of Gogol and other Russian classics. [55]

Once again, we see wide spread debate over the stylistic and political appropriateness of the presentation. Once again, we see that despite the debate, the presentation was at least partially effective in what it set out to accomplish:

> The following was heard at the box office: 'We are going, but we shan't permit our children to see it.' They realized that in our production the spectator could sense between the lines of the text – in every gesture, in every trick of staging – our hatred for the society which was overthrown by the October Revolution.[56]

The new soviet officials disagreed with this assessment. The amorality of the "hero" Khlestakov and the non-realism of the production were seen as antithetical to the tenants of Soviet Realism and the doctrine of soviet policy, which became the official dramatic style of The Soviet Union soon after the opening of this production.[57] Before it could be banned, however, the debate sparked by the production had helped establish anti-realism as an art. It had also assured Meyerhold of the validity of his vision and the greatness of his masterpiece. He refused to make revisions, and the government liquidated his theater.

---

[54] Gogol, "Fragment," 180
[55] Meyerhold, 218
[56] Meyerhold, 292-293
[57] Meyerhold, 250

Meyerhold continued the political debate inspired by the play: "as though a Communist is incapable of writing a bad play; as though it is not possible for a Communist… to use Soviet themes as a smoke screen to hide his own mediocrity."[58] Political reform was not to come to Russia for many years. However, the production had proven to all of Europe that realism was not necessary to stage a good production.

To conclude, we have seen that The Government Inspector occupies a unique place in theater history. In its original production, it blended vaudeville with neoclassicism and realism to change the face of Russian and world drama. In Meyerhold's, it blended realism and anti-realism to again change the face of Russian and world drama. We can say, then, that perhaps Gogol's drama is not best suited to one particular genre, as Gogol insisted. Rather, the simple yet powerful story, easily adapted and possessing a wide wage of possible interpretations, is best used in the experimentation of new forms. The debate over the validity of this new form is fueled by the political controversy of its striking political satire. The power of such debate has the ability to move people to topple established governments and dramatic forms. This gives true definition to Gogol's famous quote: "What is comedy without truth and fury?"[59]

[58] Meyerhold, 251
[59] Nikolay Gogol, "Letter to M. P. Pogodin," 1833, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 169

Works Cited

Altschuller, Anatoly, "Actors and Acting," 1999, in *A History of Russian Theater*, R. Leach and V. Borovsky, eds., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Benedetti, Jean, *Stanislavski*, 1988, Bungay, Suffolk, Richard Clay Ltd

Victor Borovsky, "Russian Theater in Russian Culture," 1999, in *A History of Russian Theater*, R. Leach and V. Borovsky, eds, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Dukes, Paul, *A History of Russia c. 882-1996*, 3rd ed., 1998, Durham, NC, Duke University Press

Ehre, Milton, "Introduction" 1980, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Fusso, Susanne and Priscella Meyer, *Essays on Gogol*, 1992, Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press

Bernard Guerney, "Nikolai V. Gogol," in *Dead Souls*, N. Gogol, 1997, New York, The Modern Library

Nikolay Gogol, "The Denouement of The Government Inspector," 1846, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

____, "The Petersburg Stage of 1835-36," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, trans., Chicago, University of Chicago Press

_____, "Fragment of a Letter to a Man of Letters," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, trans., Chicago, University of Chicago Press

____, The Government Inspector, 1836,in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, trans., Chicago, University of Chicago Press

____, "Letter to M. P. Pogodin," 1833, 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, trans., Chicago, University of Chicago Press

____, "Letter to M. S. Shchepkin," 1836, in *The Theater of Nikolay Gogol*, M. Ehre, trans., Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Rudnitsky, Konstantin, *Meyerhold the Director*, 1981, G. Petrov, trans., Ann Arbor, Ardis

Stanislavski, Constantin, *My Life in Art*, 1966, J.J. Robins, trans., New York, Merdian Books

Meyerhold, Vsevolod, *Meyerhold on Theater*, 1969, Edward Braun, trans., New York, Hill and Wang