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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION: THE NEGLECTED GENRE

BY

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled RUSSIAN AND SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION: THE NEGLECTED GENRE, submitted by MATTHEW D. B. ROSE in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the history and development of science fiction in Russia and the USSR from the time of Ivan the Terrible (16th century) until the Twentieth Party Congress of 1957. The purpose of this paper is not to analyse the works themselves but, rather, to present an overview of the major science-fiction works, authors and sub-generic trends within the stated period.

The first chapter deals with the appearance of the political and social utopia in Russian literature before the Revolution of 1917. The consequent dystopian reaction to these utopias is detailed as well. In the first decade of the twentieth century the popularising technological utopia appeared, and this topic is treated in the last part of the first chapter.

The second chapter outline the flurry of literary activity between the 1917 Revolution and the First All-Union Writers' Congress of 1932. The re-emergence of the sociological utopia and dystopia, the emergence of the technological utopia, the flowering of popularising science fiction and the brief appearance of the political adventure and the catastrophe novel are the subjects of this chapter.

The quantitative and qualitative lack of science fiction during the most oppressive years of the Stalin era (1932-1954) is

one section. The decline of the sociological utopia, which was marked by the appearance of the war utopia and the "battle with nature" sub-genres, led to the almost complete disappearance of Soviet science fiction in general, as is discussed in the other two sections of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four deals with the literary modes of expression employed by science-fiction writers: Science-fiction prose, poetry, drama, film and anticipatory essay are discussed. The second part of the chapter presents some of these authors' thoughts on the function and form of science fiction.

The Conclusion, besides presenting some final thoughts on Russian and Soviet science fiction, includes graphs illustrating the various trends and media of science fiction in the post-Revolution years. This section ends with a short comment on contemporary Soviet science fiction and its future.

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LIST OF GRAPHS

TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Russian	English	Russian	English
а	a	р	r
б	b	с	s
в	v	т	t
г	g	у	u
д	d	ф	f
е	e	х	x
ё	e	ц	c
ж	zh	ч	ch
з	z	ш	sh
и	i	щ	shch
й	j	ь	'
к	k	ы	y
л	l	ъ	"
м	m	э	è
н	n	ю	ju
о	o	я	ja
п	p		

INTRODUCTION

Western countries consider science fiction a sub-genre at best and, by and large, tend to ignore its literary and social value. This is, no doubt, due in part to the fact that, relative to history of western literature in general, science fiction is a young genre. There long have been utopian and fantastic socially critical allegorical works, such as More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and while works of this type are a major ancestor of science fiction, they can hardly be considered science fiction in the sense in which the term is commonly understood. A definition of science fiction should not be too restrictive, however. The definition—or rather, the avoidance of a definition—which most appropriately represents the approach to science fiction necessary for the purposes of this study is this pronouncement by author Damon Knight:

> The difficulty in defining science fiction is that, like the Indian Ocean, it has no natural boundaries. There is a central area which everyone agrees is science fiction; then as you go further out you meet disturbing similarities to other forms of fiction; and finally, at the edges, the most puzzling things happen.[1]

Some attempts have been made at giving science fiction a more concrete definition. Isaac Asimov defined the genre as "extraordinary voyages into any of the infinite supply of conceivable

precluding any speculation on "conceivable pasts or presents." H.J. Campbell, editor of the British magazine *Authentic Science Fiction*, promotes a more scientific description:

> A story is science fiction if it deals with the development, extrapolation or disproof of phenomena which are the source of material of scientific enquiry and experiment, in such a way that the ideas, claims and assumptions are not at variance with current scientific knowledge and speculation, unless such variance is explained and supported by logical reasoning or experiment.

Author Lester del Rey gives a more general definition, emphasising the speculative aspect of science fiction: "Science fiction is *fiction* that deals *rationally* with *alternate possibilities*."[4] The definition which comes closest to science fiction, while not restricting it to science or the future, is Joanna Russ':

> Science fiction is *What If* literature. All sorts of definitions have been proposed by people in the field, but they all contain both the What If and the Serious Explanation; that is, science fiction shows things not as they characteristically or habitually are but as they might be, and for the "might be" the author must offer a rational, serious, consistent explanation, one that does not (in Samuel Delaney's phrase) offend against what is known to be known.[5]

Thus, given that the term "science fiction" encompasses a broader field than the commonly-assumed technological anticipation, it is possible to consider many types of fiction as science fiction. This is

crucial to an understanding of science fiction in general but is especially so for Russian and Soviet science fiction, for the utopia was the first form of science fiction to appear and is still one of the major sub-genres of contemporary Soviet science fiction.

The birth, growth and maturation of Russian and Soviet science fiction holds a place of greater distinction in its parent literary development than, for example, Western science fiction holds in its literary tradition. No other country's science fiction can boast so many contributions on the part of the great names in its literature. No other society has afforded its science fiction so much respect as the Russian and, particularly, the Soviet societies have. And no other society has recognised and promoted the power of this genre as a tool of propaganda and popularisation. And while the genre is interesting in itself, it is the huge influence of science-fiction and utopian works on the rest of Russian and Soviet literature that make the analysis of Russian and Soviet science fiction's authors and trends a worthy one. I hope to provide a better understanding of not only the genre itself, but of its influence on the field of Russian and Soviet literature as a whole.

Unfortunately, as I have mentioned previously, the genre of science fiction has been largely ignored by critics. While this is true to a lesser extent in Soviet critical literature, an examination of Russian and Soviet science fiction encounters a problem common in any examination of Soviet literature; that is, the political

restraints which often inhibit a candid appraisal of the subject. This is particularly, but not only, true when the subject is the Russian and Soviet dystopian writers of the early twentieth century. Very often influential writers are dismissed as malcontents, as is Evgenij Zamjatin, or are ignored completely, as is Faddej Bulgarin, for reasons having little to do with their relative merits as writers.

Russian and Soviet science fiction, while having no claim to great quantity, was and is one of the most fertile genres of Russian and Soviet literature. Its roots are far from humble, having had many auspicious societal, political and literary figures contribute to its birth and growth. That growth, however, was painful. Faced first with strict Tsarist censorship, then with the material lack of the early post-Revolutionary years, only to again encounter the even more debilitating censorship of the Stalin era, it is surprising this genre survived, much less persevered through such adverse circumstances to become one of the most popular and widely-read types of literature in the Soviet Union today.[6]

Nor is this popularity exclusive to the modern day. It will become obvious from the material presented in the following chapters that the genre of science fiction has always enjoyed such renown. Names like Dostoevskij, Lenin and Maksim Gor'kij, instrumental in the growth, promotion and, sometimes, the obstruction of this genre, are known to those who are only vaguely familiar with Russian and Soviet literature. It is thus curious that serious Western

scholars have ignored this genre almost completely. Even Soviet critics, who are perhaps more cognisant of the immensely power and influence of science-fiction literature on their literature in general, have afforded it minimal attention. In the words of Soviet critic S. Poltavskij:

> If one were to collect and carefully examine all the existing empirical attempts at defining the essence of science fiction, he would have the preliminary 'working' outline of a theory without which a historical study of the question is impossible. Even so, to reach some such common denominator, he would have to purify this material of all the accidental, that which was not thought through, the contradictory. This preparatory work, however, still awaits its realization.
>
> The situation is a strange one. The person who is interested, for example, in such types of belles-lettres as the 'courtly novel,' the 'adventure novel' or the 'picaresque novel,' etc. can easily find dozens of studies on the history and theory of these generic forms. It is impossible, however, to find analogous studies of the SF novel... SF, unlike other kinds of belles-lettres, *does not have* (studies of) *its history and theory.* [7]

The Soviet critics are not the only critics guilty of negligence. Western critics who have subjected every other genre of Soviet and Russian literature to the most detailed scrutiny have ignored science fiction to a large extent. As I shall show in this investigation, this oversight is inexcusable in view of the contributions of science fiction authors and their works to the development of Russian and Soviet literature, society and politics.

Happily, this avoidance of science fiction has begun to decrease. As more works of Soviet science fiction become available to Western readers, more criticism thereof appears. For the purposes of this study, however, this "discovery" contributes only slightly to a detailed examination of the roots of Russian and Soviet science fiction, for the concentration of Western critics is almost entirely on the post-Stalin period. In books devoted to critical analysis of Soviet science fiction, very little attention is paid to the development of the contemporary literature's history. Leonid Heller, a preeminent Soviet science-fiction critic, devotes a scant fifteen pages to pre-1957 history in a work of almost three hundred pages.[8] The American critic, John Glad, is similarly guilty of such an oversight. In his book, *Extrapolations from Dystopia,* supposedly a "study [which] represents an attempt to bring order of this chaos [i.e. the chaos of critical study] and provide a theory and history of SSF,"[9] there is but a ten-page chapter on the pre-Revolutionary history of this genre.[10] The third major source of *candid* criticism, Darko Suvin's "Russian SF and Its Utopian Tradition," is barely twenty-five pages.[11] A wider study of the pre-Stalin history of Russian and Soviet science fiction is therefore as much a survey of the scant critical resources as it is of the original works. I hope to present herein a more encompassing, if necessarily more general, view of the pre-1956 history of this genre.

The first chapter deals with the appearance of the political

and social utopia in Russian literature before the Revolution of 1917. The consequent dystopian reaction to these utopias is detailed as well. In the first decade of the twentieth century the popularising technological utopia appeared—the topic of the last part of the first chapter.

The second chapter presents the flurry of literary activity between the 1917 Revolution and the First All-Union Writers' Congress of 1932. The re-emergence of the sociological utopia and dystopia, the emergence of the technological utopia, the flowering of popularising science fiction and the brief appearance of the political adventure and the catastrophe novel are the subjects of the second chapter.

The quantitative and qualitative lack of science fiction during the most oppressive years of the Stalin era (1932-1954) is discussed in Chapter Three. The renowned author Aleksandr Beljaev is the subject of one section. The decline of the sociological utopia, marked by the appearance of the war utopia and the "battle with nature" sub-genres, led to the almost complete disappearance of Soviet science fiction in general, as is discussed in the other two sections of Chapter Three.

The fourth chapter deals with the media employed by science-fiction writers. Science-fiction prose, poetry, drama, film and anticipatory essay are discussed. The second part of Chapter Four presents some of these authors' thoughts on the function and form

of science fiction.

The conclusion, besides presenting some of my thoughts on Russian and Soviet science fiction, includes graphs illustrating the various trends and media of science fiction in the post-Revolution years, and ends with a short word on contemporary Soviet science fiction and its future.

The works that mark the beginning and development of Soviet science fiction are relatively few, but all the more important for that. The following chapter deals with pre-1917 Russian science fiction and utopias.

NOTES

1 Damon Knight, "In the Balance," *If,* 8 (Oct. 1958), p. 109.

2 Isaac Asimov., editorial, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine,* 2 (March-April 1978), p. 8.

3 H.J. Campbell, editorial, *Authentic Science Fiction,* 1 (April 1953), p. 3.

4 Lester del Rey, "Reading Room," *Worlds of If,* 20 (July-Aug 1972), p. 136.

5 Joanna Russ, "The Image of Women in Science Fiction," *Vertex,* 1 (Feb 1974), p. 54.

6 In a survey of Soviet readers of science fiction, it was found that approximately 65% of readers were *over* twenty years of age, and approximately 52% of those had some post-secondary education. No Western country can boast such a diverse readership in its native science fiction. (From Vladimir Savchenko, "Fantast chitaet pis'ma," *Fantastika 1967,* Moscow: 1968, p. 400.)

7 S. Poltavskij, "Fantasticheskie trudnosti nauchnoj fantastiki," *Voprosy Literatury,* VIII (1960), p. 179-80. [translation from

John Glad, *Extrapolations from Dystopia,* Princeton, NJ: 1982, p. 9-10. Note: unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.]

8 Leonid Heller, "L'Avenir dan le passé," *De la Science-fiction soviétique: Par delà le dogme, un univers,* Lausanne: 1979, pp. 31-54.

9 John Glad, *Extrapolations from Dystopia,* p. 10.

10 *ibid.*, pp. 175-84.

11 Darko Suvin, "Russian SF and Its Utopian Tradition," *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* New Haven, CT: 1979, pp. 243-69.

I. PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIAN SCIENCE FICTION

PRE-DECEMBRIST WRITERS

Christianity was a powerful force in Russian culture. The idea of a better afterlife for those who lived an honest life on Earth fit in nicely with the common man's desire for justice and a land of milk and honey, as evidenced by the countless folktales of Ivan the Fool.[1] With the influx of western thought and tradition engendered by the reforms of Peter the Great and superficially supported by Catherine II, the Russian intelligentsia became familiar with the great literary works of Europe, among them, in 1789, Thomas More's *Utopia.* Long before the appearance of this work in their country, the Russians were aware of the need for social change, as evidenced by Ivan Peresvetov's plea to Ivan the Terrible for strong state centralisation, in the form of the imaginary sociopolitical tale, *Skazanija o Magmet-sultane* (Tales of Sultan Mohamet - 1549). This idea was fondly remembered by, appropriately, Stalin (Suvin 244).

The Political Story

It was the pan-Europe spread of the Rationalist *Staatsroman* in the early eighteenth century that solidly established the trend of the exemplary political story in Russia. Vasilij Levshin presented an ideally harmonious country of economic abundance in his *Novejshee puteshestvie* (Latest Travels) (Suvin 244). Tredjakovskij's adapt-

ation of Fénelon's *Télémaque* and the parallels and parables of Xeraskov, Dmitriev-Mamonov and Emin all presented models of the enlightened absolutist prince (Suvin 244). Soon after M. Shcherbatov's *Puteshestvie v zemlju Ofirskuju* (Voyage to the Land of the Ofir) appeared, More's *Utopia* was published. The French Revolution and subsequent international tensions caused the suppression of this genre for a generation. Catherine II, while affecting friendship with Voltaire and Diderot, mercilessly strangled the pleas against serfdom inherent in the genre (Suvin 244). One of the most memorable of these was Aleksandr Radishchev's *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (Journey from Petersburg to Moscow).

M. Shcherbatov

Two of the above-mentioned authors are worthy of additional attention. The first, Mixail Shcherbatov, was a political and public figure, an historian, writer, economist and publicist. To his collection of volumes entitled *Istorija Rossijskaja s drevnejshix vremen* (Russian History since Antiquity), in the words of S.M. Solov'ev, "belongs a place of honour in [Russian] historical science." A considerable part of Shcherbatov's literary efforts was directed toward future-oriented sociopolitical programmes, as is obvious in his *Travels to the Land of the Ofir.* These programmes, however, were still heavily coloured by his noble background. V.O. Kljuchevskij noted the contradictions in the "demand for a strong governmental powers with the harsh criticism of despotism and defence of class

privileges; the ideas of an enlightened philosophy with the confirmation of the inequality of people." The pamphlet Shcherbatov wrote in the 1780's, "O povrezhdenii nravov v Rossii," (On the Injury of Customs in Russia), a sort of exposé of the court of Catherine II, was published only in 1858 in London. His criticism of the despotic regime of the Tsars won him an honorable reputation in Soviet literary history, despite some of the glaringly obvious contradictions of his beliefs with Marxism-Leninism. According to G.V. Plexanov, Shcherbatov was, in the second half of the eighteenth century, "practically the most notable ideologist of the Russian nobility." It was this honourable reputation that created a place for Shcherbatov in Soviet literature, providing a potential influence for later utopists.[2]

A. Radishchev

The second author worthy of note is Aleksandr Radishchev. A student of law, a revolutionary, a writer and a philosopher, Radishchev's ideological views aroused suspicion on the part of the government. Radishchev's ode, "Vol'nost'" (Liberty), is considered the first revolutionary poem in Russia. A.V. Xrapovitskij, secretary to Catherine II, made this entry in his journal: "...Radishchev is now being viewed with suspicion. She wishes him to be told he is a worse rebel than Pugachev." His book, *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, was confiscated and he was arrested. After a trial conducted by the Tsarina herself, he was ordered executed, a sentence

later commuted to ten years' exile in Siberia. He was repatriated by Paul I and Alexander I appointed him to the Commission for Drafting of Laws. However, Radishchev's radical demands for the abolition of serfdom and class privileges brought a stern reprimand from the Commission chairman, who warned him that a "new Siberia" awaited him if he did not desist (Guminskij, 7-8). Radishchev's utopian travelogue finds an echo one and a half centuries later in the Soviet peasant utopist A. Chajanov's *Puteshestvie moego brata Alekseja v strane krest'janskoj utopii* (The Travels of My Brother Aleksej in the Land of the Peasant Utopia - 1920), which is discussed below.

The effect Radishchev had on his literary and political successors is remarkable. Pushkin, Gertsen and the Decembrists are certainly notable, but far more interesting is the following quote from Lenin's "O nacional'noj gordosti velikorossov" (On the National Pride of the Great Russians):

> ...Most sickening to us is seeing and feeling the violence, oppression and humiliation to which our beautiful motherland was subjected by the Tsar's butchers. We are proud that this violence evoked a reaction from our, the Great Russians', midst; that we promoted Radishchev, the Decembrists, the Raznochinetz-revolutionaries of the 70s; that in 1905 the Great Russian working class created a mighty revolutionary party of the masses; that at that time the Great Russian muzhik began to become a democrat and began to overthrow the priest and the landowner.[3]

It is thus obvious that these two writers, Radishchev and Shcher-

batov, were of greater consequence in later years, both in political and literary terms.

POST-DECEMBRIST WRITERS

F. Bulgarin

It is difficult to consider the previously-mentioned authors as writers of science fiction, or even fantasy. The utopian vein, however, is the important trait that contributed to the appearance of the first actual science fiction, or at least a genre of literature having many characteristics of science fiction.[4] The year of the birth of this genre is 1825,[5] when Faddej Bulgarin published *Pravdopododnyè nebylicy ili stranstvovanie po svetu v dvadcat' devjatom veke* (Believable Fantasies, or Travels in the World of the Twenty-ninth Century).[6]

Bulgarin presents a curious figure in Russian literary history. Instrumental in the founding and publication of Russia's first daily newspaper, the right-wing *Severnaja pchela* (Northern Bee), he also worked as a spy and informant for the Tsarist secret police. His overt and covert support of the Government are the direct cause of his works not being published in the Soviet Union (Fetzer 3) and his name is absent from Britikov's bibliography of science fiction. This is unfortunate for, despite his conservative political views, Bulgarin's *Believable Fantasies* is not so much politically oriented as it is technologically (Fetzer 3; Glad 177). It is the first Russian work that deals with a future dramatically altered by the advances

of science, a sub-genre within science fiction that was to reach its greatest popularity in the first few decades after the Revolution of 1917.[7] Bulgarin is ignored by contemporary Soviet critics who tend to attribute the appearance of such technologically-oriented works to Odoevskij, H.G. Wells and especially Jules Verne whose works were published many years later.

In his precursor to *Believable Fantasies,* a work entitled *Untrue Fantasies, or a Voyage to the Centre of the Earth* (1825), Bulgarin used the vehicle of an anonymous narrator's report of his travels through three subterranean countries, using Holberg's *Niels Klim* as a pattern, but echoed Bulgarin's "obscurantist depicting of social classes as separate races and nations" (Suvin 255). It is thus unfortunate that Bulgarin is not given much more attention, for not only is his work of moment for Soviet science fiction, it deserves a place in the history of science fiction in general.

V. Odoevskij

More fondly remembered is Prince Vladimir Odoevskij, a wealthy and well-educated philosopher and writer. His close friend, Kjuxelbeker, wrote him in 1845 saying:

> You are one of us; to you Griboedov, Pushkin and I bequeath our best; you stand as the representative of our time before posterity and before our native land. You are the representative of our selfless struggle for artistic beauty and absolute truth. (Gruminskij 216)

Odoevskij's "selflessness" and "absolute truth" are perhaps best illustrated by his unfinished utopia *4338-j god* (The Year 4338), written in 1840 by published only in Soviet times. The society Odoevskij anticipates is hierarchical and bureaucratic—one of his notes even describes this "Platonic scientific oligarchy" and the descending ranks of its bureaucrat-scientists. Suvin cites Odoevskij's sources as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Mercier's *Year 2440* and the Romantic overtones are credited to the author's knowledge of Hoffman, Pushkin and Schelling (Suvin 245-6).

Whereas Fetzer states that Bulgarin "was the first Russian writer to construct an artistically appealing future society transformed by scientific discovery" (Fetzer 3), it is *The Year 4338* that was "the first significant Russian anticipation" (Suvin 245-6). Fetzer admits, however, that Odoevskij "betrays traces of a greater design and more philosophical interest in the shape of the world to come" (Fetzer 35), a sentiment not contradicted by Suvin when he states that *The Year 4338* can be considered a "liberal-aristocratic answer to Bulgarin, pioneering in scientific extrapolation into the future," but he tempers this by adding that Odoevskij fails to realise that a "radically new productivity demands radically new social relations" (Suvin 247). The idea of opposition between Bulgarin and Odoevskij is not soley Western. The Soviet critic A. Kazanceva maintains Odoevskij had a gloomy view of a future society ruled by oppressive bourgeois law, while such a society was the "monarchist'

Bulgarin's ideal.[9] This opposition may be based on more than the varying attitudes of the two writers. Fetzer notes a passage toward the end of *The Year 4338:*

> Odoevski describes the crowds of talentless foreigners who throng about the doors of Academy seeking entry and who are notable for their back-biting, chicanery and self-adulation. When he wrote these paragraphs Odoevski particularly had in mind the Poles who came to St. Petersburg to seek their fame and fortune after the Napoleonic campaigns and prominent in their midst, as Odoevski well knew, was Thaddeus Bulgarin. (Fetzer 37)

As will be discussed below,[10] authors of Russian and Soviet science fiction used their stories as much to contradict the ideas of previous fantasists as to promote their own.

Considering the optimistic tone of *The Year 4338* and the obvious confidence Kjuxelbeker had in its author, Odoevskij's last works of utopian science fiction were decidely pessimistic; to wit, "Gorod bez imena" (The Nameless City), an anti-utopian story and "Poslednee samubijtstvo" (The Final Suicide), an anti-bourgeois work (Suvin 247).

N. Chernyshevskij

It is well known that at times the tsarist censorship of the nineteenth century could rival that of the Zhdanov era. It is thus not surprising that the only works to be licitly published were those that by and large supported, or at least did not reject, the tsarist

government. Under these conditions, it is surprising that one "genuinely radical utopia," as Fetzer puts is (p. 55), not only appeared at all, but was actually published in the journal *Sovremmenik* (The Contemporary) in 1863. Written in 1862, it was not published in book form until the Revolution of 1905. This work is, of course, *Chto delat'?* (What Is To Be Done?) by Nikolaj Chernyshevskij. Some of the ideas incorporated into Chernyshevskij's *What Is To Be Done?* are extremely prophetic, not so much in the area of technological advancement, but where the political and social situation of the twentieth century is concerned. This is not surprising since the group in which the Revolution of 1917 fermented considered this story as an embodiment of their ideals. The "cooperative producing collective" and a "new moral world based on equality and made possible by machine productivity" (Suvin 248) were to become almost slogans for the politicians organising the new communist union. The most obvious symbol of the new society Chernyshevskij envisioned was the "Crystal Palace," a huge building made of glass in which the community lived and worked, every person's actions constantly visible. The Crystal Palace appears in the most renowned section of *What Is To Be Done?* entitled "The Fourth Dream of Vera Pavlovna," in which Vera Pavlovna envisions this idyllic future.

The literary impact of this novel was slight,[11] but its political repercussions were immense. Written while Chernyshevskij was imprisioned in the Petropavlovskij Fortress, *What Is To Be*

Done? escaped the censor due to a bureaucratic foul-up (Fetzer 55). Copies of it were passed *sub rosa* throughout the radical intelligentsia and, in fact, throughout many sectors of the society. Suvin notes that "for half a century the populists and later the socialists used it in underground education" (Suvin 247). Lenin himself remembered with fondness the work's "decisive influence on [his] personal commitment to the revolution" (Suvin 247; Fetzer 55). The ideas of the liberation of women, symbolising the liberation of mankind in general (Suvin 247) and the rational organisation of labour (Fetzer 55), were the hallmarks of the "pre-Marxian materialist," as Suvin labels him. In J. Lahana's opinion Chernyshevskij's socialist and scientific utopia was inspired by Fourier.[12] Suvin attributes the enduring fame (or infamy) or the novel to "Chernyshevskij's refusal to separate the public and private lives of his heroes" (p. 247).

The political and social impact of *What Is To Be Done?* is obvious. However, while the literary quality of Chernyshevskij's novel is debatable, its influence on literature was as great as its impact in those other areas. The above-mentioned socialist-utopian ideas, together with a fusion of "romantic pathos and a rational belief in social change," earned Chernyshevskij a place in the widespread Western European tradition of positive utopian writers—writers like More, Rabelais and Rousseau. Suvin believes—and with good reason, considering what eventually did happen—that *What Is To Be Done?* "set the tradition of a whole aspect of Russian SF" (p.

248-9).

F. Dostoevskij

Fedor Dostoevskij is hardly a name closely associated with science fiction. The fact remains, however, that a significant portion of his work is tied in with the roots of Soviet science fiction and its development. Although he was a member of an underground fraternity of utopian-socialists, his time in prisons and Siberia caused Dostoevskij to transform his radical tendencies into a "mystical deification of the tsarist system" (Suvin 249). His loathing of capitalism and radicalism found embodiment in the Crystal Palace of the London World Exhibition. *Notes from the Underground* (1864), produced immediately after Chernyshevskij's *What Is To Be Done?*, was a polemic against the latter and harshly criticised the rationality and stupidity of the rationalists. The image of the Crystal Palace, used by Chernyshevskij in his novel to symbolise the harmony and openness of a utopic future society, was used by Dostoevskij to symbolise the futility of the rationalists' ideals and was symbolic of the sterility and lack of humanity in such a future society—an idea which was to be echoed by Zamjatin several decades later.[13] In his next novel, *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Dostoevskij presented a caricature of the radicals he so opposed (Suvin 249). Despite this attitude, Dostoevskij continued to uphold his utopian ideals of "innocence, brotherly love and transcending social antagonism" (Suvin 249).

Dostoevskij does enter the sphere of science fiction with *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877). A text in which the character is transported through space to a double of Earth, where he finds a society untouched by the social afflictions of his own culture, cannot be considered anything but utopian science fiction. True, it all takes place in a dream, but merely the idea of another Earth with a different society is repeated in fantasy and science fiction the world over. In Suvin's eyes, the "dream" is a "tardy, isolated and wistful but significant concession to the dream of Vera Pavlovna" (p. 249).

N. Fedorov

One author who was to have a lasting effect on Russian and Soviet science fiction was Nikolaj Fedorov, a religious and scientific philosopher of the second half of the nineteenth century. His philosophies were completely innovative for Russia and the entire world, and Dostoevskij, Tolstoj and Solov'ev considered him a genius.[14] In his essay "Filosofija obshchego dela" (The Philosophy of the Common Cause - 1906), Fedorov presented his thoughts on the fate of man. The basic premise was twofold: first, there should be a "conditional acceptance of the Apocalypse"; second, the Holy Scriptures should be understood in their literal sense (Heller 40). Fedorov saw the duty of humanity in the united battle against mortality and once mankind had become immortal, it would then give will and reason to a chaotic universe (Heller 40-1).

Fedorov's "The Philosophy of the Common Cause," utopian though it was, is more notable for its being the "only true 'uchronia'," where mankind was united in time as well as in space (Heller 41). This combination of religious and scientific thought has been reflected in many sub-genres of Soviet science fiction: Ciolkovskij was a student of Fedorov and his idea of resuscitating the past generations of mankind was taken directly from his mentor; Beljaev, the premier science fiction writer of the Stalinist era, clearly shows Fedorov's influence; Jaroslavskij, Brjusov, Xlebnikov, Majakovskij and Zabolotskij had all read Fedorov and Platonov was his most ardent disciple (Heller 41).

1900-1917

A. Kurpin and others

As the revolutionary spirit strengthened, several anticipatory works appeared. Chikolev's *Ne byl', no i ne vydumka: Elektricheskij rasskaz* (Neither True nor Made-up: an Electrical Story - 1895), Rodnyx's *Samokatnaja podzemnaja zheleznaja doroga mezhdu S.-Peterburgom i Moskvoj* (Self-propelled Underground Railroad between St. Petersburg and Moscow - 1902) and Komarov's *Xolodnyj Gorod* (Coldtown - 1917) were all technological anticipations aimed at popularising science and technology (Suvin 251). These three authors were scientists and engineers and it is interesting to note that many of the science-fiction writers from the beginning of the century until the present day have been scientists.[15] Perhaps most

representative of the combination of technology, socialist ideology and the utopic future are Aleksandr Kuprin's two popular stories, "Tost" (A Toast - 1906) and "Zhidkoe solnce" (Liquid Sunshine - 1912). Kuprin, however, was not a scientist, but a littérateur. Written during the Revolution of 1905 for the journal *Signal*, "A Toast" was a direct reflection of the optimism brought on by the seeming inevitability of a radical altering of Russian society (Fetzer 180). Kuprin himself called it a literary trifle, but it was nonetheless an encapsulation of the great expectations for revolution and technological and social change (Fetzer 180). Both "A Toast" and "Liquid Sunshine" depict a world in which, through the efforts of the working class, not only has the exploiting capitalist system succumbed to the proletariat, but the secrets of nature have been discovered and have been put to use for the betterment of all society. Kuprin's other story was written during the period after the failure of the 1905 Revolution. In Fetzer's opinion:

> ["Liquid Sunshine"] is the first significant work in Russian literature which bears the impress of H.G. Wells and it is therefore a first step on a line of development which can be traced after Kuprin through Zamjatin's *We*, the autochthonic Russian Science Fiction of the 1920s and the post-Stalinist Russian Science Fiction revival after 1957. (p. 180)

The "impress of Wells" is visible in character development and human response, with an eye on the future implications of tech-

nological development (Fetzer 180). These are obvious in Kuprin's story, all the more so because of the patent lack of same in both his previous work and the works of his contemporaries.

A. Bogdanov

Despite the increase in technological utopias, the social utopia did not wane. In fact, whereas the technological utopia by and large ignored any real plot or character development, the social utopia began to evolve into true social science fiction. Aleksandr Bogdanov, the pseudonym of A. Malinovskij, created the utopia, *Krasnaja zvezda* (Red Star - 1908), which "renewed the struggles with the interplanetary tale" (Suvin 252). Fetzer says that in this "only significant utopian writing by a Bolshevik ideologue," Bogdanov describes the Marxian future of Earth using the planet of Mars as a symbol (p. 71). This Wellsian technique was used by Bogdanov "in a manner unsurpassed between [Wells] and the American 1940s, or even 1960s" (Suvin 252). Efremov was to employ the theme of a "free, science-oriented social system" (Suvin 252) in the 1950s with his utopian *Nebula Andromedy* (The Andromeda Nebula - 1956), just as A. Tolstoj was to write a voyage-to-Mars tale in which the Martian society was a dictatorship—diametrically opposed to Bogdanov's theme (Suvin 260). The revolutionary who falls in love with a Martian woman, just as Bogdanov's hero did, is one of the main characters in Tolstoj's *Aelita*. In addition to these two great names, in many other Soviet science-fiction writers can be found evidence

of Bogdanov's influence (Suvin 252).

Inzhener Menni (Engineer Menni - 1913), Bogdanov's sequel to *Red Star*, was not as influential or even of as good literary quality as its precursor (Fetzer 73). It would not be incorrect to state that *Red Star* was the peak of the literary career of this physician and political activist. Once a close confidant of Lenin, he did not take an active part in the 1917 Revolution. His last great literary act was to aid in the founding of the *Proletkult* and a decade later he died performing a blood transfusion on himself (Fetzer 73).

V. Brjusov

Concurrent with Bogdanov's fairly passive utopias was Valerij Brjusov's actively interventionist play *Zemlja* (Earth - 1904). The image of the Crystal Palace reappears here in the form of a glass dome. The dome is shattered by a revolution of the youth who seek to escape form the decadence of the giant city (Suvin 250). In his next tale, *Respublika juzhnego kresta* (The Republic of the Southern Cross - 1907), Brjusov's disappointment with the failure of the 1905 Revolution is apparent. Far from the optimistic utopia of *Earth*, this "Poesque story about a future city... is frankly dystopian" (Suvin 251). Fetzer agrees with this view and cites one of Poe's novels, *Hans Phaall*, as a model for *The Republic of the Southern Cross* (Fetzer 226). Better known as a "prominent symbolist" or "Modernist" poet (Fetzer 226; Suvin 250), Brjusov was influenced by other writers such as Poe and Dostoevskij (Fetzer 226-7) as well as

Flammarion, Verne, Wells and Renard (Suvin 251). Brjusov admired and popularised these foreign authors and thus was one of the "few prominent non-Marxist writers who took an active part in post-Revolutionary cultural life." It was his loathing of "ugly and shameful" capitalism that made him any ally of the Bolsheviks by default (Suvin 251). Fetzer, conversely, credits Brjusov's continued recognition to his fidelity to the Bolshevik party (p. 228). In any case, Brjusov died peacefully in the Soviet Union in 1924 while Kuprin, one of the most fervent supporters of revolution, fled into exile in 1917, returning only in 1937 to die one year later. It is therefore interesting to note that Brjusov, a writer with marked dystopian tendencies, should find more favour with the government than Kuprin, whose works supported the ideology of that government wholeheartedly. The importance of the fate of these two men lies in the fact that during the 1920s, when Soviet science fiction was growing so rapidly and in such divers directions, the possible influence of these two writers on their successors was very different and different in a way contrary to what would be expected, given the content of their respective works.

SUMMARY

It is apparent that the roots of Russian and Soviet science fiction are inextricably intertwined with the roots of Russian and Soviet literature in general. As Leonid Heller puts it, "science fiction had accompanied Soviet literature since the day of its birth" (p.

40). While there is no Russian writer of fantasy or science fiction who can equal the literary renown of Western authors like Wells, Verne and Poe, perhaps the effect of the lesser-known Russian authors like Radishchev, Chernyshevskij and Bogdanov had on the world in general was far greater than any Western contemporary's. The indirect role these Russians played in the construction of a revolutionary movement is obvious and undeniable. The manner in which their successors portrayed and were influenced by the Revolution of 1917 will be dealt with in the next chapter—The Revolution Years.

NOTES

1 Darko Suvin, "Russian SF and its Utopian Tradition," *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, New Haven, CT: 1979, p. 244.

2 All quotations and citations in this paragraphs are taken from V. Guminskij, ed., *Vzgljad skvoz' stoletija*, Moscow: 1977, pp. 20-1.

3 *Polnoe sobranie' sochinenij*, Vol 26, p. 107.

4 Bulgarin himself stated in a footnote that the advances he envisioned were "probable, although still unrealisable in our time," a defin- ition which corresponds to Russ' (See introduction) [taken from Glad, p. 177 (see below)].

5 According to L. Fetzer it dates from 1824: *Pre-Revolutionary Russian Science Fiction: An Anthology*, Ann Arbor: 1982, p. 3; according to Suvin, 1829.

6 John Glad, *Extrapolations from Dystopia*, Princeton: 1982, pp. 176-7.

7 See Chapter Two, sections "Technological Utopia" and "Popularising Science Fiction."

8 A. Britikov, "Zarozhdenie sovetskoj nauchnoj fantastiki," *Istorija russkogo sovestkogo romana*, II, M.-L.: 1965, p. 371.

9 A. Kazanceva, "Posleslovie" (Afterword) in Guminskij, ed., *Vzgljad skvoz' stoletija*, p. 322.

10 See sections "Dostoevsky" and "Dystopian Reaction".

11 Fetzer (p. 55) and Glad (p. 178) denigrate the worth of *What Is To Be Done?* as naïve and of questionable literary value.

12 J. Lahana, "Introduction," *Les Mondes parallèles de la science-fiction soviétique*, Lausanne: 1979, p. 10.

13 See section "The Proletkult and the Technological Utopia".

14 Leonid Heller, *De la Science-fiction soviétique*, Lausanne: 1979, p. 40.

15 Ciolkovskij, Zamjatin and the Strugackij brothers are scientists, engineers or have had considerable scientific training.

II. THE REVOLUTION YEARS: 1917-1930

INTRODUCTION

In the decade immediately succeeding the Revolution of 1917, the enthusiasm and confidence of the builders of the new Soviet state was at its zenith. The labourers toiled to reform and industrialise backward Russia, while writers and authors provided idealistic encouragement. Much of the literature of this period was based on utopian anticipation of planetary voyages (Suvin 253). The way to a Soviet utopia was perceived in industrialisation and modern science (Suvin 252).

Despite this progressive and utopian movement, or perhaps because of it, very little science fiction was published between the years 1917 and 1921.[1] The resources of the presses were directed entirely toward the promulgation of the new Bolshevik ideal and, while the few science-fiction works published were supportive of this ideal,[2] such literature was viewed as hardly necessary (Glad 186). However, these years provided huge amounts of raw material for science-fiction writers in the 1920s (Glad 186; Suvin 252).

THE PROLETKULT AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL UTOPIA

The Proletkult, founded by Bogdanov, published its first book, Aleksej Gastev's *Poezija rabochego udara* (Shockwork Poetry) in 1918. The members of the Proletkult held much in common, partic-

ularly where their origins, the themes they employed and their views of literature were concerned (Heller 32). The technological utopianism of Bogdanov was the tie that bound this literary society together. Their basic attitude might best be described by V. Kirilov's words:

> [One hears] the songs of the future's golden days in the noise of the factories, in the cry of steel and in the hateful screeching of fan-belts.

The principle themes of both the Proletkult and "Kuznica" (The Smithy), a splinter group of the Proletkult, were founded on the glorification of labour, of the collective and of the factory-machine (Heller 32). This ultra-mechanisation philosophy is overwhelmingly apparent in Aleksej Gastev's collection of verse, *Shockwork Poetry*, the first book published by the Proletkult.

Gastev's work was heavily influenced by foreign writers such as Whitman, Verhaeren and Marinetti.[3] In truth, his contribution to the literary development of Soviet science fiction is tenuous at best but, as an example of the desparate striving for a utopic future in which man and machine had become inextricably intertwined, there is none better than Gastev. Previous to *Shockwork Poetry*, Gastev had published an essay that could be classed as science-fiction. This essay, "Ekspress" (Express), embodied the utopia that Gastev and his fellow Proletkult members envisioned—that is, the complete union of man and machine (Heller 32). Gastev was so completely devoted

to this union that he saw a future in which men, ruled by the machines they create, become as machines themselves.[4] This trend was certainly a far cry from the optimistic technological anticipations of the 1800s and early 1900s in which scientific development was seen as a means of elevating man further above machines. It would seem that the sources of the new technological, mechanical utopia are not to be found so much in the technological utopias of the early 1900s as in the optimism engendered by the success of the Revolution itself. The idea that certain sectors of proletarian literature hold a place in the genre of science fiction despite their independent origins will be supported by further discussion of other authors.

The greatest point of interest in Gastev's works is his description of a "mechanisation" so complete that it '[lends] proletarian psychology a remarkable anonymity... [and] permits the definition of the individual proletarian unit as A, B, C, or as 325, 075, 0, etc...'[5]

THE DYSTOPIAN REACTION

It is in the fanaticism of Gastev and the Proletkult that Zamjatin found the fuel for his acerbically critical polemic against the ethos of the Proletkult. The Soviet critic Britikov states that:

> If the appearance of the utopia in Russian literature was a symptom of the encroaching revolution... then the anti-utopia marked the counterrevolutionary offensive and the wave of varying shades of scepticism.[6]

Zamjatin's depiction of a society *à la* Gastev gives a different and de- pressing perspective on a future of which "machinisation" and anonymity were the hallmarks. While not exactly counterrevolutionary, Zamjatin's work clearly presents "varying shades of scepticism."

E. Zamjatin

Evgenij Zamjatin was a scientist who specialised in shipbuilding, a one-time Bolshevik and an opponent of capitalism (Suvin 255). He is unquestionably one of the most significant names in the history of Soviet Russian science fiction. This is particularly interesting in that Zamjatin wrote only one novel that belongs to this genre. That novel is *My* (We), written between 1920 and 1921 and, while read in manuscript by most of the leaders of the literary circles of Leningrad and Moscow, it has never been published in the Soviet Union (Alexandrovna 91). *We* has been the subject of extensive analysis—in fact, when critics discuss Zamjatin, it is often the only work to which they refer, usually the main topic of discussion and always mentioned.

The roots of Zamjatin's science fiction are, unlike Gastev's and the other proletarian writers', firmly embedded in the Russian and Western science-fiction tradition. As editor of five volumes of H.G. Wells' writings, Zamjatin had a superb understanding of the English author (Alexandrovna 94-5) and perhaps was influenced by

Anatole France.[7] H.G. Wells, however, was likely the greatest foreign influence.

The greatest domestic influences on *We* were probably Dostoevskij's "underground man" (Heller 31; Suvin 256-7) and Aleksandr Blok (Alexandrovna 87-9). As will be discussed immmediately below, the influence of the Bible can be found in Zamjatin's novel, an influence that occurs very rarely elsewhere in Soviet science fiction.

We is a story about a man's attempt to retain or create an identity in a world where uniformity and anonymity are the ultimate goal. As previously mentioned, this story is an extrapolation on Gastev's ideas, but an extrapolation in which the utopia created by the "machinisation" of humanity has lead to a static happiness where the new and different is brutally suppressed. Zamjatin blatantly ridicules Gastev's ideas. One of the most obvious examples of this is Zamjatin's use of letters and numbers for the names of his characters; for instance, the hero of *We* is named D-503. The Dostoevskian idea of the Crystal Palace is obvious—Zamjatin's city is enclosed by huge glass walls (Suvin 256). Contradictory to Chernyshevskij's Crystal Palace, which symbolises the openness and harmony of the future society, Zamjatin's "Crystal Palace" symbolises the sterility and oppression of a society created through blind contentment in a system that has proved itself functionable (Suvin 256).

The basic precept apparent in this significantly dystopian novel is the irreconcilable difference between contentment and freedom. This can be seen in the tempting of the main character by the heretical woman who would lead him out of paradise. The Biblical parallel is inescapable. The parallel between the hero of *We* and Christ in Dostoevskij's scene with the Grand Inquisitor is also conceivable.[8] Zamjatin's hero, D-503, is a Christ of individuality, while Gastev's "Iron Messiah" is the Christ of conformity (Gregg 207; Suvin 258). The style of the language in *We* bears overtones of Majakovskij's innovative use of neologisms and broken phrases, perhaps in a way that mocks that Futurist's style (Glad 113), perhaps from admiration for the style of Majakovskij, whom he called a "magnificent beacon" (Suvin 258).

As interesting as the potential influences on Zamjatin is Zamjatin's potential influence on later authors. His effect on Soviet Russian literature is as undeniable as it was inevitable. As leader of the Serapion Brethren, Zamjatin had as disciples Fedin, Kaverin, Vsevolod Ivanov, Tixonov and Zoshchenko. His influence is apparent in much of their early work (Alexandrovna 84; Slonim 88). Jurij Olesha, although not a member of the Serapion Brethren, was also influenced to a large extent by Zamjatin. *Zavist'* (Envy - 1927), his first major novel, faintly echoes *We*, especially in its treatment of Gastev's ideal of the "machinisation" of man. One of the characters, a young Komsomol representative of the new society, says, "I want

to be a machine."[9] This sentiment is typical of a society in which there is no place for ordinary emotions and feelings—something Olesha feared, as did Zamjatin (Heller 42). Although far from being a science-fiction novel, *Envy* does have one characteristic that causes it to lean in that direction. The wonder-machine, Ophelia, built by the novel's character Ivan Babichev, was a symbol of the pre-Revolutionary romanticists. The sole purpose of Ophelia was to sow destruction. Thus Olesha pointed out his fear that a society so dependent on emotionless machines would create its own destruction (Heller 43).

While Zamjatin's *We* and Zamjatin himself had considerable repercussions within the new Union, his influence in other countries must not be ignored. The resemblence between *We* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is remarkable. *We* owes a great deal of its "imagery and narrative detail" to Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes.*[10] It is as if Zamjatin were the first to recognise the basic power of Wells' theme and create something more powerful than Wells had.[11] There is still a great deal of dispute as to whether *We* is a political or social criticism. Whichever it be, it is the most powerful and enduring of post-Revolutionary Soviet Russian utopian writings, although it has remained an illegal, underground text in the USSR.

S. Bobrov

Another example of the dystopian story came from Sergej Bobrov, leader of the futurist group *Centrifuga* (Centrifuge). Centrifuge was less successful than most groups in bowing to the ideological demands of the new government, and as a possible consequence Bobrov's novel, *Vos- stanie misantropov* (The Revolt of the Misanthropes - 1922), is riddled with cynicism (Zavalishin 89). Although not as powerful, it is natural that Bobrov's novel be compared to Zamjatin's *We* (Zavalishin 89; Suvin 254). *The Revolt of the Misanthropes* is a sceptical picture of the future of the new Union, in which the proletariat is easily manipulated but the peasant "cannot be bent" (Zavalishin 89). However, with the help of the propagandists, the leaders, whose "madness consisted chiefly in a desire to shed the blood of their brethren and to devastate fertile lands,"[12] would eventually subdue all opposition (Zavalishin 89). Like Zamjatin, Bobrov was not ideologically opposed to Bolshevism—he was merely sceptical. The "tormented and ironical aspects" of Zamjatin present in Bobrov (Suvin 254) can be linked to Dostoevskij. Just as Zamjatin's work significantly reflected the "underground man" of Dostoevskij, so did Bobrov's work reflect both the "underground man" and Zamjatin's hero, D-503.[13]

L. Lunc

One very intriguing Soviet author was Lev Lunc. It is obvious that there was some confusion regarding Lunc' position in Soviet

literature. Although he is rarely mentioned by Soviet science-fiction critics,[14] he was considered a real talent in his day. He died at twenty-three of a nervous disease, but his few years of writing with the Serapion Brethren were nonetheless noteworthy. As Zamjatin was the leader of the Serapion Brethren, it was only natural that some of his ideas rub off on the young playwright (Suvin 254). In his debatably most significant work,[15] *Gorod pravdy* (City of Truth - 1924), Lunc had created a play with strong undertones of Zamjatin's "totalitarian state" and Blok's principle of "oneness of time" (Zavalishin 225-6). The plot of a Commissar leading a group to the glorious "city of truth" rapidly devolves into an exposé of the dehumanising assimilation of the new Soviet society in which, *à la* Zamjatin, "all work alike and live alike."[16] It is unfortunate that Lunc did not live long enough to produce more such works of critical and literary value, continuing the tradition of Soviet dystopian writing so well begun by Zamjatin.[17]

M. Bulgakov

Mixail Bulgakov is well known for his fantastic and parodical stories, his most famous being *The Master and Margarita*. Almost as famous are his short stories written at the beginning of his career in the 1920s. The novella "Rokovye Jajca" (The Fatal Eggs - 1925) can be related to Wells' *Food of the Gods*, and there is even a direct reference to Wells' story in "The Fatal Eggs" (Struve 155). Unlike his fellow catastrophists, Bulgakov did not hold with the idea of the in-

evitable victory of communism—in fact "The Fatal Eggs" is a satire of, as Zavalishin puts it, "the Bolsheviks' mania for launching projects without regard for con- sequences and their practice of hanging the blame on some scapegoat when the results were an unpleasant surprise to themselves" (p. 331). Although the basic precept of Bulgakov's story is science-fictional, "The Fatal Eggs" has such powerful elements of satire, fantasy and the grotesque that it merits a special place in the science fiction of the 1920s (Glad 18).

Heller sees another aspect to "The Fatal Eggs." He considers it to be a polemic against the revolutionary utopia, in that it questions whether the communist utopia is of any great value if it is engendered by stupidity and petty bureaucrats (p. 43). Suvin classes Bulgakov with Bobrov and Lunc among the Zamjatin-like sceptics (p. 254), although it can be said that Bulgakov does not attack the idea of the communist utopia itself (Heller 43). Whichever the primary value of this story, Bulgakov's tale is another example of the influence of H.G. Wells' science fiction in the literature of the Soviet Union of the 1920s.

Wells' impetus is revealed in another of Bulgakov's stories, "Sobach'e serdce" (Heart of a Dog - 1925). Although never published in the Soviet Union, it is quite popular abroad. The idea of transforming an animal into a man through surgery can be traced to Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (Glad 40). Here again Bulgakov questions the morality of the communist utopia, in which the most vulgar of emo-

tions are an accepted and expected part of the individual, and all that is required is a "proper orientation," that is, a communist orientation—the very assimilation that Zamjatin so opposed in *We* (Heller 43).

THE SOCIOLOGICAL UTOPIA

Before discussing the rapid growth in popularity of the adventure-oriented science-fiction story, it is necessary to examine the authors who continued to write in the declining utopian vein. Although this sub-genre basically disappeared after Jan Larri's *Strana schastlivyx* (Land of the Happy),[18] the few that were written in the 1920s are as notable as any of their precursors.

V. Majakovskij

Like Olesha, Vladimir Majakovskij is hardly known for his science fiction. However, the fact that he was a Futurist necessarily entailed a certain anticipatory utopian/dystopian nature in his works. Viewed in its component parts, Majakovskij's anticipatory works have the major characteristics of a utopia: they are set in the future and they deal with a progression (or regression) of society to a certain, idealised point. Suvin assumes the utopian nature of Majakovskij's writings (p. 256) as does Heller when he states, in direct reference to Majakovskij and the other Futurists: "Wherever there is a utopia, there is almost always an element of science fiction" (p. 39). The scientific and philosophic influence of Fedorov is noted by Heller, who states that Majakovskij's faith in resurrection and im-

mortality is a direct result of N. Fedorov's "The Philosophy of the Common Cause" (p. 41).[19]

Apart from the utopian vein running through Majakovskij's fiction, there are certain aspects in some of his works that make it necessary to at least consider this author from a science-fiction point of view. First, there is the fact that in his play, *Banja* (The Bathhouse - 1928), Majakovskij's characters use a Wellsian time machine to travel into the next century. The use of cryogenics, or the freezing of a character to preserve him for future revival, is a significant detail in another of his plays, *Klop* (The Bedbug - 1930) (Glad 40, 80). It is apparent that Majakovskij and the Futurists in general exhibited by definition a strong utopian streak that, while not relegating them entirely to the ranks of fantasists, ensures them a place in that category. The kinship between the sociopolitical utopias of the pre-Revolution years and the sociopolitical anticipations of the Futurists is visible, if not explicit. More obvious is the influence the Futurists with their strong revolutionary themes had on contemporary and later science-fiction authors, such as Aleksej Tolstoj and Aleksandr Beljaev.

A. Chajanov

In response to the proletarian utopias of Gastev and the Futurists, there surfaced a rather obscure reaction. Writers like Kljuev, Shirjaevec, Sadofev, Gerasimov and Oreshin opposed the "intrusion of iron" into the rural life of Russia, and the peasant utopia

appeared (Heller 34). Most representative of this movement is A. Chajanov's *Puteshestvie moego brata Alekseja v strane krest'janskoj utopii* (The Travels of My Brother Aleksej in the Land of the Peasant Utopia - 1920). This utopia, in which a quasi-anarchistic, citiless society had everyone living peacefully and simply, could not oppose the momentum of the proletarian utopia. Consequently, Chajanov's novel was interdicted, despite its having been in no way counterrevolutionary.

V. Brjusov

Previously mentioned as the author of *Earth* and *The Republic of the Southern Cross,* Valerij Brjusov continued to play an active role in political and literary life. He joined the Communist Party in 1919 and was elected to the Moscow City Soviet and held an important position in the Commissariat of Education under Lunarcharskij (Zavalishin 37). Influenced by Pasternak and the Futurists, Brjusov wrote in his poem *Distances* (1922) of the billions of planets waiting for the planetary revolution Earth was experiencing (Suvin 253). *Dictator* (1923), an unpublished play, tells of a leader who tries to impel Earth to conquer the universe but is overthrown by the peace-loving proletariat. Brjusov probably used Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes* as an example (Suvin 253). Another of Brjusov's unpublished plays, *The World of 7 Generations* (1923), is an allusion to the self-sacrificing Russian proletariat, as the inhabitants of a comet sacrifice themselves in order to prevent their world from destroying

Earth (Suvin 253).

V. Itin

Vivian Itin's *Strana Gonguri* (Land of the Gonguri) was a utopia that continued the tradition of Chernyshevskij's and Bogdanov's anticipations. Itin saw in his work the need to "impress the readers with moral values" and to give the "a new impulse of energy on the weary road to the 'Land of the Future'."[20] Most notable about this novel is the presentation of a theory which enjoyed some popularity in the first part of the century—that there exist microcosms with atoms as solar systems. This idea distinguishes this otherwise sociopolitical utopia as true science fiction, or at least as having a solid basis of science-fiction characteristics (Heller 40). *The Land of the Gonguri* is the only work of fiction for which Itin is at all remembered, and it is merely one of a number of similar utopias. However, Heller considers *The Land of the Gonguri* the first Soviet utopia (p. 44).

Ja. Okunev

In 1923 Jakov Okunev's *Zavtrashnij den'* (Tomorrow) appeared as an attempt at an epic-form sanctification of communism but, according to Britikov, the blend of adventure, revolutionary hero and utopia hindered a proper presentation of a communist utopia. In this story can be found a resemblance to the first description of A. Tolstoj's *Giperboloid inzhenera Garina* (known in translation as *Engineer Garin's Death-ray* - 1925), which he had jotted down for a Gos-

litizdat requisition form (Britikov I 665-6). If Okunev did take his ideas from that abstract, the fact that Tolstoj succeeded where he failed attests to the greater ability of Tolstoj. His first novel, *Grjadushchij mir* (Future World - 1923) was more exclusively utopian, if not as popular (Britikov I 666).

V. Nikolskij

In 1928 V. Nikolskij published *Cherez tysjachu let* (In a Thousand Years) in which the heroes time-travel on a "chronomobile" (Heller 40). This single fact makes Nikovlskij's story science fiction, as Itin's microcosm had done for *Land of the Gonguri*. Although much in keeping with the optimistic communist anticipation, there is one item of interest—Nikolskij predicted the first atomic explosion would occur in 1945.

E. Zelikovich

Sledujushchij mir (Coming World - 1930), by E. Zelikovich, features a utopic communist world in which there is no registration or coordination at all, in the style of the Martian society in Bogdanov's *Red Star*. However, the novel is faulty in its poster-type imagery and rectilinear thinking (Britikov I 679).

Ja. Larri

The last social utopia to be published until 1956 was Jan Larri's *Land of the Happy* (1931). While presenting the idealised future of a communist society, Larri neglected to emphasise the revolutionary example of the Soviet Union (Glad 156; Britikov II

384). Conversely, there was a keen "sociopolitical and moral-philosophical" theme in *Land of the Happy* (Britikov II 363). Suvin notes that Larri's book contained a "satirical portrait of Stalin" (p. 253). "Ideologically confident," (Heller 39), Britikov labels *Land of the Happy* as "the first mature attempt at depicting a comprehensive picture of the Soviet Countries' communist tomorrow" (Britikov I 678). Although the last true utopia, Larri's story is viewed by Heller as the herald of the "third revolution: industrialisation and collectivism," and the appearance of a utopia can only occur through dissatisfaction with the present (Heller 44). Just as the author of the first Soviet utopia, Itin, was ruined by the Purge, so Larri, author of the last, was sent to a Gulag.

POPULAR AND POPULARISING SCIENCE FICTION

K. Ciolkovskij

While the Revolution had promoted the growth of the sociopolitical utopian-type science fiction, there appeared a new wave of science fiction that combined sociological traits with a large degree of natural science (Suvin 259). The leading figure in this movement was Konstantin Ciolkovskij, also a pioneer in Russian astronautics (Suvin 259). His statement, "The Earth is the cradle of the human race, but one cannot forever remain in that cradle,"[21] sums up his attitutde toward science and literature. Ciolkovskij foresaw the extraterrestrial flights of man and promoted them in his first works *Na lune* (On the Moon - 1893) and *Grezy o zemle i nebe i ef-*

fekty vsemirnogo tjagotenija (Daydreams of Heaven and Earth and the Effects of Gravitation - 1895). Although written during the Tsarist regime, it was the Soviet government that actively sponsored his ideas (Suvin 259). *Vne zemli* (Outside Earth), written the year after the Revolution, was his best work and Ciolkovskij was given government support to teach the future builders of Sputnik and Vostok (Suvin 259). His influence on the scientific community is thus apparent, but less apparent is his influence on the literary community.

Ciolkovskij wrote with popularising aims (Suvin 251). This scientific popularisation had begun in the pre-Revolutionary years with authors like Chikolev, Rodnyx and Komarov as mentioned above, but to Ciolkovskij belongs the credit for perfecting the method (Suvin 251). The following quote best encapsulates the idea behind this movement:

> I want to be the Chekhov of science, to present a serious, logical understanding of the perfectly legitimate study of the cosmos through short essays directed toward the trained or untrained reader.

Ciolkovskij did not limit his scientific extrapolation to astronautics. One of his recurrent themes was taken from N. Fedorov's theory of achieving an earthly paradise through resuscitation of dead generations (Heller 41). Ciolkovskij too was not immune to utopian ambitions, and much of his work was based on the idea that

humans, learning from extraterrestrial societies, could create their own utopia on Earth. These ideas of the resurrection of man and technological and social development through alien contact was to have repercussions on all future fantasists, A. Beljaev in particular (Heller 41).

By and large, Ciolkovskij is not given much notice in the annals of Soviet science fiction or Soviet literature in general. Glad mentions Ciolkovskij in passing, Suvin gives him a scant two paragraphs and Heller mentions him several times but without giving any extensive analysis of his place in Soviet science fiction. Britikov, Ljapunov and Zavalishin all recognise the "potent influence" of this pioneer in Soviet cosmic science fiction, although none devotes much attention to his role therein. This is unfortunate for, while his influence may not be overt, his work in both the scientific and literary fields was great and far-reaching. Firstly, he was not only respected by his fellow littérateurs, such as Beljaev, who said he was "the first science fiction writer,"[23] but by the scientific community as well. When the Kaluga chapter of the Proletkult, to which Ciolkovskij belonged, attempted to belittle his contributions, the All-Russia Association of Natural Scientists protested in a letter to *Izvestija* (Zavalishin 149). It was while he was a member of the Kaluga Proletkult that Ciokovskij made a deep impression on Kirillov and other proletarian writers (Zavalishin 149). These writers became known, largely due to the influence of Ciolkovskij, as the

Cosmists. Combined with the mystical and religious influences of Belyj and Blok, this group stood somewhere between the Symbolist and the writers of true science fiction. Majakovskij can be said to have much in common with this group that so patently exhibits the influence of Ciolkovskij (Zavalishin 147- 56).

A. Tolstoj

If Ciolkovskij's emphasis is on technology and science, Aleksej Tolstoj's is on "a utopian pathos arising from revolutionary perspectives" with a lesser although still considerable emphasis on interplanetary flight (Suvin 260). Tolstoj had difficulty, however, reconciling himself himself to the new Bolshevik government, and much of his earlier work, particularly *Xozhdenie po mukam* (The Road to Calvary), was considered "tendentious lies and slander."[24] Tolstoj, himself a former liberal, had friends among the revolutionaries, but he rejected the Bolsheviks and joined the White Army. He emigrated to Paris where he wrote his best works up to that time, including the first part of *The Road to Calvary* (Slonim 147) and perhaps his most famous novel, *Aèlita* (Alexandrovna 205). Although the anti-Bolshevik sentiment was strong in its first part, upon Tolstoj's return to Russia in 1922, *The Road to Calvary* was revised and eventually became a Soviet classic (Slonim 149). It was in this year (1922) that *Aelita* began publication in serial form in the journal *Krasnaja nov'*. The success of the science-fiction novel was immense and, oddly enough, Tolstoj was "linked to the best tradit-

ions of nineteenth-century realism" (Maguire 250). In 1925 two more of Tolstoj's fantastic works appeared—*Golubye goroda* (Azure Cities) and *Engineer Garin's Death-ray*. From a "tendentious liar" in the early 1920s, Tolstoj rose to great acclaim in the 1930s. He was named a dean of Soviet letters, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet, a member of the Academy, a winner of the Stalin Prize, the head of the Union of Soviet Writers and the Ambassador to Bulgaria (Slonim 144). Obviously, Tolstoj's reputation and influence was immense.

In his three science-fiction and fantastic works—*Aelita, Engineer Garin's Death-Ray* and *Azure Cities* —can be seen the three major trends of Soviet science fiction that were common in the 1920's; that is, the revolutionary utopia, the social utopia and the catastrophe novel. First, *Aelita* is the story of the interplanetary voyage of two men, a scientist and a revolutionary, to Mars, where the scientist falls in love with a Martian woman, Aelita, and the revolutionary foments rebellion among the working class. It is thus of no surprise that this novel helped catapult Tolstoj to prominence, for it combined exciting, if rather implausible, technology with the revolutionary spirit (Glad 164). The sources for Tolstoj's novel are varied. The legend of Atlantis serves as a basis for the kinship between Earthmen and Martians, but many contemporary authors, well known to Tolstoj, must have had an effect on him. Most obvious is Bogdanov's tale *Red Star* which, along with Edgar Rice Burroughs' *A Princess of the Moon,* may have served as the forerunner of Tolstoj's

setting (Heller 37, Suvin 261). Influences on his style and plot are he[illegible]ave come from various sectors; foreign writers like H.G. Wells and Jack London, or Tolstoj's own contemporaries such as Valerij Brjusov (Heller 37).

Tolstoj's next two books, both written about 1925, are as different from each other as they are from *Aelita*. *Azure Cities* is not science fiction or fantasy *per se*, but it has so much in common with the utopian genre of the pre-Revolutionary period that it cannot be ignored. It is the story of a young Communist who, in a typhus-invoked delirium, dreams of the marvelous new cities he and his comrades will build. This sequence is not particularly fantastic, nor does it deal with the distant future. It does, however, bring to mind Chernyshevskij's "The Fourth Dream of Vera Pavlovna" in *What Is To Be Done?*, and to Dostoevskij's *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. *Azure Cities* is a natural component of the long-lived utopian genre.

The third novel by Tolstoj worthy of note is *Engineer Garin's Death-ray*. This novel was first published serially in *Krasnaja nov'* in 1925-26, and became one of the first important novels with an emphasis on the catastrophic, a sub-genre of science fiction that was to become the stand-by for most Soviet writers until Efremov re-introduced the sociotechnological utopia in 1957 (Suvin 260). Its "combination of scientific thriller and politically virtuous anticipation" was a trait that was gaining popularity in works such as Orlovskij's *Bunt atomov* (The Revolt of the Atoms) (Suvin 260).

Engineer Garin's Death-ray tells the story of a brilliant scientist who, with the help of a laser-like weapon, becomes world dictator. In fact, the novel was later renamed *Garin—diktator* (Garin the Dictator) (Slonim 148). It is imbued with anti-imperialist and anti-fascist sentiment, but the social comment found in *Aelita* is lacking (Suvin 261-2). The cloak-and-dagger scenario, pitting the unscrupulous capitalist against the patriotic communist, sometimes called the "Red Pinkerton" genre after a Burroughs character, had made its debut and was to maintain its popularity for three decades.

Perhaps the greatest testament to Tolstoj's influence is the fact that *Aelita* is still widely read in the Soviet Union. The major Soviet literary prize for science fiction is named "the Aelita."[25] *Aelita* is officially the first Soviet science-fiction novel and its date of publication, 1922, is the official birthdate of Soviet science fiction in general (Gakov 162).

THE CATASTROPHE NOVEL

In the decade during which the Soviet utopia was born, grew and died, another sub-genre of science fiction appeared—one that was to last much longer: adventure science fiction. Actually, this sub-genre can be divided into two subsets: the first, the catastrophe novel; the second, the political/crime story.

The catastrophe novel centred around a megalomaniac scientist/capitalist who abuses some new technological invention to accomplish his evil, capitalist ends, eventually being defeated by the

fall of capitalism and the victory of world revolution (Suvin 254). This subset had roots in the tradition established by Jules Verne's *roman scientifique*, it worldwide setting drawn directly from Wells' novels,[26] both foreign influences being incorporated into the Bolshevik ideal of imminent world revolution (Suvin 254).

V. Kataev

Poveditel' zheleza (The Ruler of Iron - 1925), by Valentin Kataev is in keeping with the victorious revolution idea, although the story itself is quite tongue-in-cheek (Glad 190). A Russian scientist magnetises India, putting an end to war, but the revolutionaries destroy the machine and triumph. Like Bulgakov's, Kataev's basis was definitely science-fictional, but the technology was secondary to the plot.

V. Orlovskij

The finest example of the catastrophe novel is V. Orlovskij's *Bunt atomov* (The Revolt of the Atoms - 1928) (Heller 38). A German scientist discovers the secret of atomic disintegration, but he loses control of his experiment and only the combined efforts of Soviet scientists manage to stop worldwide destruction, since the efforts of Western scientists are hampered by oppressive capitalism. The international group of physicists who toiled to avert imminent catastrophe are hailed as leaders of a new union of free peoples.

Heller cites Wells, Flammarion, Jack London and I. Erenburg (who will be discussed below) as the forefathers of this sub-genre

(p. 38). Britikov mentions Wells' *The World Set Free* as the most probable source of *The Revolt of the Atoms* (I, p. 640). Britikov also goes on at some length about the sociological, psychological and moralistic aspects of Orlovskij's tale (Britikov I 639-43), while the Western critics tend to consider the entire genre as subliterary and quite unoriginal (Heller 38; Suvin 254).

A. Palej and A. Shishko

Part of the catastrophe genre were the tales *Gol'fshtrem* (Gulf Stream - 1927) by A. Palej and *Appetit mikrobov* (The Microbes' Appetite - 1927) by A. Shishko. The first dealt with the contrast of "Old World" socialism and the increasing alienation of Western capitalism, the United States in particular (Suvin 254). Shishko's novel depicted chemical warfare and robots. Both were of no real literary consequence, being basically imitators of the works of Wells and Erenburg (Suvin 254).

THE POLITICAL ADVENTURE (RED PINKERTON)

Closely related to the catastrophe sub-genre was the political adventure or crime story. The major tie was the abuse of science for capitalist gain, but often the setting was the near future. The concentration on the revolutionary ideal was minimal although the story inevitably ended with world revolution. The real attraction of the sub-genre lay in its rapid development of action (Suvin 253; Glad 188; Heller 38-9).

M. Shaginjan

Although published serially (as were most science-fiction stories of any length) between 1924 and 1926, Marietta Shaginjan's fictional autobiographical trilogy of the escapades of Jim Dollar was started in 1922 (Britikov I 483). Of the three novelettes in the series, the most popular was and remains *Mess-Mend* (Suvin 253-4). According to the afterword by the author, *Mess Mend* "parodies the Western European adventure novel form and does not imitate it, as certain critics incorrectly think."[27] The general reaction of those critics was negative. First, the "sovietised" detective-spy, based on Burroughs' Red Pinkerton, was met with disapproval (Britikov 77-8). In keeping with the tone of Shaginjan's comment, the critic Georgij Gorbachev felt that the story was too full of propaganda to be a proper thriller, and that Shaginjan's imitation of the Western European adventure novel smacked of submission to the "bourgeois" attitude (Struve 143-4). Britikov, too, debates the literary and moral values of *Mess Mend*, but he tends to concentrate on the mechanics of the novel (I, p. 484-7). In his opinion, Shaginjan's use of "gadgets" as a symbol of the power of the proletariat—and the only major science-fiction characteristic of the work—is too tenuous, and he asks if this is because "it was not understood that in 'a novel written as a joke', there are inappropriate themes which cannot be expressed jokingly?" (I, p. 386).

Although the critics were leery of the story, the public en-

joyed the adventurous blend of the comic and the mysterious (Struve 143). Any social or political comment dwindled to obscurity in the presence of such dizzying plot movement. In the preface to one of the first publications of the novel, N. Meshcherjakov states that "it has no place for... boring psychological examination. Indeed, in the Jim Dollar novel we see only action."[28]

I. Erenburg

The role Erenburg's novel *Trest D. E.* (The Trust D. E. - 1923) played in the development of adventure science fiction is unclear. In Heller's opinion, this tale belongs in the class of revolutionary utopianism, although its ties to the catastrophe novel are noted (pp. 36, 38). It is not clear, however, what it is about *The Trust D. E.* that leads Heller to such a conclusion. His short description of the plot could be a summary of most of the plots of the adventure novel type (p. 360).

Glad, conversely, categorises *The Trust D. E.* as firmly "catastrophic" (p. 190). In a description of the plot much like Heller's, Glad's reasons for this classification are unclear, and he neglects to realise that his description has much in common with the "Red Detective" sub-genre he has described a few pages before (p. 188). Europe is destroyed by the scientific inventions of a Dutchman working for a group of American capitalists. The role of Soviets or even European revolutionaries is minimal, despite the world revolution that ends the novel. Suvin, however, describes Erenburg's novel

as having "strong elements of a... crime story" and includes *The Trust D. E.* with Shaginjan's *Mess Mend* and certain other authors, such as Lavrenev, Shklovskij and Ivanov (p. 253), as does Britikov when giving a list of adventure-fantasy works (Britikov I 384).

Most of the science fiction produced during the 1920s was an author's single foray into this genre, and Erenburg's novel was no exception (Suvin 253). Erenburg is far better known for his other works, and in fact *The Trust D. E.* is given only a cursory mention by Britikov in his three articles and one book on Soviet science fiction, while Ljapunov does not mention him once.[29] As was the case with Shaginjan, Erenburg did not break new ground—he merely followed the current trend, producing a novel that was enjoyable but hardly noteworthy.

V. Kataev

Valentin Kataev, mentioned above for his novel *The Ruler of Iron* in connection with the catastrophe sub-genre, made a contribution to the Red Pinkerton genre with the story *Ostrov Erendorf* (Erendorf Island - 1924). This novel had much in common with *Mess Mend*, or at least as Shaginjan would have her novel interpreted. Kataev, who once collaborated with the renowned humorists Ilf and Petrov, considered *Erendorf Island* a parody of the Western adventure novel, and a parody of itself. As Britikov states, "V. Kataev clearly ridiculed the 'overinterpreted' Western model—and himself consciously imitated them, thus creating something that was at

once a parody and a self-parody" (I, p. 384). Britikov says elsewhere, however, that "for a literary parody the form of the novel was absurdly expansive, and for a novel the parodic content was anaemic". (*Russ-Sov* 75). As in the *Ruler of Iron*, the idea of using "reverse current" to magnetise everthing and thereby acquire dictatorial control was patently absurd, and this absurdity, combined with the action-packed plot, made *Erendorf Island* a popular part of the Red Pinkerton/adventure novel sub-genre, despite its literary drawbacks (Britikov I 384).

B. Lavrenev

Boris Lavrenev began his literary career writing poetry with several of the futurist groups of the 1910s and 20s, but his *Krushenie respubliki Itl'* (The Fall of the Itl Republic - 1926) was his sole attempt at science fiction (Struve 118, 121). Influenced by Anatole France's *Penguin Island,* this story tells of the establishment of a democratic republic in southern Russia. However, the action of *The Fall of the Itl Republic*, which entitles it to a place in the Red Pinkerton sub-genre, lacks earnestness, and has been called by Soviet critics "more of a Ruritanian musical comedy" (Struve 121).

V. Shklovskij and V. Ivanov

It is now apparent that the Red Pinkerton genre was an attempt to parody the Western adventure-detective novel, while imbuing it with a certain amount of pro-revolutionary propaganda. This

combination found a glowing example in Shklovskij's and Ivanov's *Iprit* (1926). A Soviet sailor is shipwrecked in England where he has to deal with a mad anti-Soviet capitalist. There are numerous sub-plots but in the end the sailor manages to incite world revolution. The parodical vein is obvious in the depiction of a German who claims to be God and destroys the American economy by putting a curse on the stock market. Its authors' talent notwithstanding, the literary quality of *Iprit* is doubtful.

Vsevolod Ivanov was a well-known member of Zamjatin's Serapion Brethren, and his literary ability is most recognised for his *Armoured Train 14-69*. Zavalishin calls him "the most talented writer among the Serapion Brothers" (p. 227). It is interesting that while writers like Lunc, also a member of the Serapion Brethren, showed characteristics of Zamjatin's scepticism in their attempts at science fiction, Ivanov's choice of sub-genre was far removed from the dystopian (Zavalishin 228).

Ivanov's partner, Victor Shklovskij, was associated with the Formalist movement before the Revolution, but contributed frequently to the Futurist journals *LEF* and *Novyj LEF* (Zavalishin 187-8). For Shklovskij, as well, the Red Pinkerton sub-genre was not his regular field. The collaboration of two authors in the production of a novel in a genre in which neither specialised is more noteworthy that the novel itself which, like Erenburg's *The Trust D. E.* and Lavrenev's novel, is largely ignored by critics not concentrating on sci-

ence fiction. Even then it is usually glossed over as merely another example of the stereotypical Red Pinkerton genre.[30]

SUMMARY

There are thus five major trends in the hectic period of Soviet science fiction of the decade immediately after the 1917 Revolution. The political atmosphere of the time necessarily engendered a flurry of actions and reactions among the literary community. The technological utopia of the Proletkult was the natural child of the movement toward a bright, communist and industrialised society, supported by the New Economic Plan. The dystopian reaction of Zamjatin and his followers was an inevitable polemic on the part of those whose realism or scepticism prevented them from blithely accepting the ideals of the technological utopists. Partly in reaction to the technological utopists and partly as a continuation of the trend started centuries before, the sociological utopia persevered in its quest for a future society based on the value of both humanity and technology. Ciolkovskij's and Tolstoj's popularising science fiction heralded the beginning of what is now considered true science fiction—the combination of technology, sociology and politics. The catastrophe novel and Red Pinkerton/adventure novels appeared as a Soviet reaction to the recent world war and Western science fiction trends and, while having many characteristics of the science-fiction novel, did little to raise the quality of the genre. The Red Pinkerton sub-genre, with its thrilling escapades and dire

polemics against the evils of the capitalist West, formed a suitable basis for the type of science fiction that was to remain popular throughout the politically and literarily oppressive reign of Joseph Stalin.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1 See Graph IV, p. 101.

2 Cioikovskij's *Outside Earth* and Komarov's *Coldtown*, for example.

3 Marc Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature*, New York: 1977, p. 37; Zavalishin 146.

4 Heller 33; Vera Alexandrovna, *A History of Soviet Literature*, Westport, CT: 1971, p. 10; Vyacheslav Zavalishin, *Early Soviet Writers*, New York: 1958, pp. 146-7.

5 A. Fastev, "O Tendencii proletarskoj literatury," *Literaturnye manifesty*, Moscow: 1929 (repr. Munich, 1969), p. 134.

6 A.F. Britikov, *Russkij sovetskij nauchno-fantasticheskij roman*, Leningrad: 1970, p. 95. [note: hereafter Britikov's *book* will be referred to as *Russ-Sov*].

7 Gleb Struve, *Soviet Russian Literature*, Norman, OK: 1951, p. 40.

8 The source for the statements concerning the Bible and Dostoevskij in Zamjatin's *We* is Richard Gregg, "Two Adams and an Eve in the Crystal Palace: Dostoevsky, the Bible and *We*," in E. Brown, ed., *Major Soviet Writers*, New York: 1973, pp. 202-8.

9 Jurij Olesha, *Izbrannoe*, Moscow: 1974, p. 45.

10 Alexandra Aldridge, "Origins of Dystopia: *When the Sleeper Wakes* and *We*," in Erlich and Dunn, eds., *Clockwork Worlds*, Westport, CT: 1983, pp. 63-84.

11 Wells himself said that *When the Sleeper Wakes* was one of the "most ambitious and least satisfactory of [his] books."

12 Bobrov, Sergej, *Vosstanie misantropov*, Moscow: 1922, p. 22.

13 In a 1921 article in *Krasnaja Nov'* (Red Virgin Soil), Bobrov defended Dostoevskij as a "healthy realist," ("Koni o Nekrasove i Dostoevskom," *Krasnaja Nov'*, 4 (1921), pp. 246-49) only a year later calling him "sick" and stating that he had no place in Soviet literature ("Ja, Nikolaj Stavrogin...," *Krasnaja Nov'*, 2 (1922), pp. 332-36), a view which, from the early 1930s until

Stalin's death, prevailed in the USSR.

14 Britikov fails to mention him a single time in his book and his three articles on Soviet science fiction.

15 Zavalishin calls *City of Truth* his most significant, while Struve chooses *Vne zakona* (The Outlaw).

16 "Gorod pravdy," *Beseda,* 5 (1924), p. 67.

17 M. Gor'kij, "Lev Lunc" [obituary], *Beseda*, 5 (June 1924), pp. 61-2.

18 See Graph I, p. 100.

19 See section "N. Fedorov".

20 A.F. Britikov, "Evoljucija nauchno-fantasticheskogo romana," *Istorija russkogo sovetskogo romana,* II. M.-L.: 1965, p. 375. There are two other articles by Britikov on Russian and Soviet science fiction in this two-tome collection—"Zarozhdenie sovetskoj nauchnoj fantastiki" (tome I, pp. 367-92) and "Nauchnaja fantastika: social'nyj roman o budushchem" (tome II, pp. 638-94); henceforth, citations of Britikov's *articles* will be given as follows: (Britikov II 375).

21 From the forward of *Put' k zvezdam: Sbornik nauchno-fantasticheskix proizvedenij,* Moscow: 1960, p.3.

22 From *Texnika molodezhi,* No. 8, 1961, p. 32.

23 B. Ljapunov, *V mire mechty,* Moscow: 1968, p. 14.

24 Robert Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil,* Princeton: 1968, p. 249.

25 V. Gakov, "Laser Ray in 1926: Alexei Tolstoy's Science Fiction," in *Soviet Literature,* 1 (418), 1983, pp. 161-9.

26 Especially *The War in the Air,* and *When the Sleeper Wakes.*

27 M. Shaginjan [as Jim Dollar], *Mess-Mend ili janki v Petrograde,* Moscow: 1960, p. 346.

28 Preface to M. Shaginjan, *Mess-Mend ili janki v Petrograde,* Moscow: 1924, p. 3. Quote taken from Glad, p. 189.

29 The two books mentioned by Britikov and Ljapunov are, respectively, *Russkij sovetskij nauchno-fantasticheskij roman,* (see above) and *V mire mechty,* (see above).

30 Britikov and Suvin merely mention the work without going into detail, although Glad uses the plot if *Iprit* as an example of the Red Pinkerton genre.

III. THE STALIN ERA: 1932-1956

INTRODUCTION

The years between 1932, the year of the First All-Union Writers' Congress, and 1956, the year of the revisionist Congress following Stalin's death in 1954, were bleak years for Soviet science fiction. The utopian and utopic promise of the decade after the 1917 Revolution was crushed under Stalin's merciless battle against internal and external enemies, real and imagined. Nevertheless, certain of the sub-genres that continued to exist in these twenty-five years owed much to the science fiction that had preceded them and, to a lesser extent, preserved the genre for a renaissance at a later date. Among the various authors the one who stood out most was Aleksandr Beljaev. His style and themes varied according to the literary and political atmosphere, and his work can be considered a barometer for the entire science-fiction genre of that time.

A. BELJAEV

Aleksandr Beljaev was born in 1884 in Smolensk, where he was educated in an ecclesiastical seminary. After a year with the local theatre, he entered law school, established a private practise and travelled extensively through Europe. He eventually took up writing when he joined the People's Commissariat for Post and Telegraph. As a child, Beljaev read Jules Verne and, in his own works, "was completely carried away by [him]."[1]

Beljaev, although "not a good writer," is an officially recognised Soviet classic (Heller 46). The three major factors contributing to the continuing success of his works are these: primarily, that he was the first Russian to devote himself solely to the writing of science fiction, and the only one to do so until the end of Stalin's regime; secondly, that in his sixteen years of writing, he produced more than seventy novels and short stories, as well as a collection of essays on science fiction;[2] and thridly, that Beljaev was a staunch supporter of the Soviet government.[3] The influences on Beljaev were many, both foreign and domestic, and the sources for his ideas are apparent.

The influence of Verne is obvious in Beljaev's work. Heller says of him that "his reputation as the 'Russian Jules Verne' is justified: he alone created an entire library of science fiction" (p 46). Suvin notes that in most of his works, Beljaev "fused breathtaking Vernean adventures of a romantically alienated hero with new and bold scientific themes" (p. 263). Beside Verne's influence, the influence of H.G. Wells is obvious in Beljaev's works as it is in most adventure- and socio-political-oriented science fiction of the first few decades of the Soviet era (Suvin 263).

Beljaev's style was not wholely dependent on foreign writers, however. One of the greatest sources of Beljaev's technological ideas was K. Ciolkovskij. Beljaev's stories *Vozduzhnyj korabl'* (The Flying Ship - 1934) and *Zvezda Kèc* (Star Kets - 1936) were based on

Ciolkovskij's anticipations of dirigibles and artificial satellites (Heller 47). In fact, *Star Kets* was dedicated to Ciolkovskij himself, the letters K, E and Ts being that writer's initials.

Beljaev began writing science fiction in 1925 when his first novel, *Golova professora Dowella* (Professor Dowell's Head), was published in serial form. From that time until the First All-Union Writers' Congress in 1932, Beljaev's works were much like the Red Pinkerton sub-genre, employing the stock devices of sinister capitalists, foreign spies and popularising-science intrigue (Glad 33). In his review of it, Ja. Rykachev calls the novel:

> ...superficial Western science fiction that is characterised by the use of pseudo-scientific material... Such are the fruits of the false artisitic system which has totally determined the failure of A. Beljaev and turned his book into an annoying anachronism.[4]

By the time the "closer to life" tenets were introduced by the Writers' Congress, Beljaev's tack had altered noticeably, but not completely.

Ljapunov and Nudel'man state that "1930 marks a first break in the works of Beljaev... He was more and more drawn to a different theme: the construction of socialism."[5] In fact, all writers in the Soviet Union found that the single-mindedness of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, the major literary group during the first Five Year Plan, in its drive to enforce the depiction of the con-

struction of socialism through the depiction of industrial construction was mirrored in the doctrine of socialist realism presented at the First All-Union Writers' Congress. The basic dogma of socialist realism was "a truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development." The power of the Union of Soviet Writers was far greater and more binding that RAPP's had ever been so, in order to be published, a writer was forced to conform to the rigid demands of socialist realism (Slonim, 159-65). Consequently, Beljaev began to avoid the gratuitous excitement of the Red Pinkerton sub-genre—shunning it, in fact—and started writing in a popularising scientific vein, as is the case with two of his novels mentioned above (Heller 47). In 1939, *Detskaja Literatura* published an article by Beljaev entitled "O moix rabotax" (About My Work), in which Beljaev states the basic philosophy behind his science fiction:

> It is easiest to construct an entertaining novel with a pointed plot on the subject of class struggle. Here you have character conflicts, the tensions of the struggle and every kind of mystery and unexpected development... But it is most difficult for an author to create an entertaining plot in a work that describes the future's classless society. It is most difficult to anticipate the conflict of positive heroes among themselves, or to guess at even two or three traits of the man of the future. Yet the depiction of this future society, of the scientific, technical, cultural, economic and everyday prospects is no less important than the depiction of the class struggle. I have chosen the more difficult.[6]

The extent to which Beljaev succeeded in his endeavour is debatable. Glad states that Beljaev avoided the difficulty of imagining conflict in the classless future by setting his stories in the present or near future, and in capitalist countries where the communist revolution had not yet occured (p. 68). Heller, too, makes note of the lack of conflict and description of the "man of the future" in Beljaev's later works:

> What resulted were tableaux, scattered here and there, of park-cities without the least hint of problems, conflicts and other "little traits" of the man of the future's character about which he had spoken. What is more, the science-fiction ideas had disappeared God knows where. More precisely, they had been reduced to an inconsistent list of known scientific data. Bit by bit, Beljaev distanced himself from the fantastic. (p. 47-8)

Even the Soviet critic Britikov, who is quite laudatory in his analysis of Beljaev's contribution to Soviet science fiction, says of him that, despite all the technical preparation, Beljaev failed to present life-like figures, like Ichthiadner (from his novel *Chelovek amfibija* (The Amphibian Man - 1928)), or major philosophico-psychological problems of the future (Britikov I 657). In another of his critical works, Britikov states that "Beljaev was not literarily gifted, as was Aleksej Tolstoj, for example," but goes on to add that the author himself was aware of this fact, and quotes him as saying "the images are not always successful, the language is not always rich"

(*Russ-Sov* 105). Not only had Beljaev failed to create works of any great interest or literary value, he had in fact retreated to the Red Pinkerton sub-genre he supposedly opposed by introducing a "fairy-tale metamorphosis" or "detective and spy-thriller elements" (Suvin 263).

In 1934 Beljaev talk with H.G. Wells at the Astoria Hotel in Leningrad. When Beljaev asked whether Soviet science fiction were read in England as much as English science fiction were read in the Soviet Union, Wells had this to say:

> Due to my ill health, I am unfortunately unable to keep track of all that is published in the world. But it was with grreat pleasure, Mr. Beljaev, that I read your marvelous novels *Professor Dowell's Head* and *The Amphibian Man.* Oh! They differ most advantageously from Western books. I even somewhat envy their success!

While Beljaev was a nationally and internationally recognised science-fiction writer, his works lacked the literary style of Aleksej Tolstoj and the innovation typical of Verne and Ciolkovskij, Beljaev's main sources. As for Beljaev's influence on later writers, this very lack of literary talent nullified any profound effect. In Britikov's *Russkij sovetskij nauchno-fantasticheskij roman*, certain of Beljaev's ideas are said to have been used by later authors, such as the Strugackij brothers, but the ideas these authors used were ones Beljaev had himself taken from other authors (p. 113). To wit, the Strugackijs' "Svechi pered pul'tom" (Candles before the Console)

presents the idea of transplanting the conscious of a genius into an artificial brain. Britikov sees this as an adaptation of Beljaev's *Professor Dowell's Head*, many elements of which can be found in the Frenchman Maurice Renard's *Le Docteur Lerne* (Suvin 263).

Beljaev will remain an important figure in Soviet science fiction, but more by dint of quantity than quality.

THE DEATH OF THE SOVIET UTOPIA

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Jan Larri's *Land of the Happy* basically marked the end of the social utopia until the post-Stalin Thaw. There were, however, a number of works that had certain aspects in common with the social utopia but, as both Heller and Suvin point out, it was unthinkable to produce a work that anticipated possible developments when only Stalin was capable of foreseeing the future of the Soviet Union (Heller 47; Suvin 264). Nevertheless, by adhering strictly to the doctrine of the Communist Party, some authors managed to obliquely incorporate certain sociopolitical utopian ideas, preserving this sub-genre until the anticipatory work once more became acceptable (Suvin 264).

L. Leonov

One such author was Leonid Leonov. His novel, *Doroga na okean* (The Road to the Ocean - 1936), was for the most part a war utopia (discussed below) but was on one level a sociopolitical utopia (Suvin 264). Three chapters of this novel deal with the future, although they are not actually set in the future. Two of them are elaborate

descriptions of wars between socialism and the West, but the third is strongly reminiscent of the dream-type anticipation introduced by Chernyshevskij's "The Fourth Dream of Vera Pavlovna" in *What Is To Be Done?*. In this case it is not through a dream that the future is visualised, but through a conversation between the hero of *The Road to the Ocean* and the "writer" (Heller 45). Suvin calls the depiction of the war-torn future, with its interplanetary flight, "worthy of Wells and the *Iron Heel* " (p. 264). It is necessary to consider this novel a social utopia because of the emphasis it places on the morale of the citizen of the future socialist world. Britikov states it best when he says:

> *The Road to the Ocean* was one of the first novels in which there appeared a controversy not between the supporters and defenders of communism, but between those who would have it be a peaceful paradise and those who seek in communism a trying and heroic time. (*Russ-Sov* 177)

Leonov examined, albeit in a minor capacity, the development of the morale and attitude of communism, and the need for a continuation of the social and political struggle that created the Soviet Union.

THE WAR UTOPIA

Patriotism had become a mania in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, probably because anyone not overtly patriotic was the object of suspicion, and even then many overt patriots were viewed with distrust. However, much of this patriotism was demonstrated by a

hate for the external enemy, fascism. Long before Hitler invaded Poland, there appeared a new sub-genre of the Soviet utopia—the war utopia. This utopia, in which communism battles (and always con-quers) fascism, first appeared in 1930, although it gained its greatest momentum in 1936, the year of the Spanish Civil War (*Russ-Sov* 170). As mentioned above, Leonov's *The Road to the Ocean* conformed to this sub-genre, although communism's opponent was as much capitalism as fascism.

According to Britikov, the common thread of all these war utopias was the "motifs of the liberating revolutionary war and the defense of the Soviet Motherland" (*Russ-Sov* 170). What made them science-fiction was the use of marvelous war machines as yet beyond the technology of the times. Heller, however, considers the war utopia as having very little in common with science fiction. He says that the war utopia borrowed much of its tone from the technological and proletarian utopia of the Revolution which was, although altered to conform to the political atmosphere of the time, "a little passé" (Heller 49). There are numerous examples of this type of literature. Britikov cites a number of writers who, from the beginning of the 1930s up to 1940, produced many novels, stories and novellas that belong to this category (*Russ-Sov* 180). Of particular interest is the fact that starting in 1937 the journal *Ogonek* published a cycle of short stories under the title "The War to Come." The war utopia was well established.

Among the various minor authors Britikov lists as proponents of the war utopia, a few are worth examining in more detail. These are V. Kurochkin, G. Bajdukov, P. Pavlenko and N. Shpanov.

V. Kurochkin and G. Bajdukov

Moi tovarishchi (My Comrades - 1937), Kurochkin's book of war novellas, contains "highly tenuous" fantastic war technology (*Russ-Sov* 170). For example, Kurochkin describes bridges that collapse when a train's shadow falls on the light-sensitive elements embedded in them. Britikov qualifies his sceptical view of the technology in Kurochkin's works by stating that such quasi-science fiction is sufficient for the basically realistic intention of the work (*Russ- Sov* 170). Bajdukov, a pilot, wrote his "war-technology" utopia, *Razgrom fashistskoj èskadry* (The Rout of the Fascist Squadron) in 1938, with the express purpose of popularising the idea of a diesel bomber—an idea which was, in Britikov's words, at least partially fantastic (*Russ-Sov* 170-1).

N. Shpanov

Although most science fiction of the Stalinist era was directed toward a juvenile audience (Suvin 264), Shpanov's "Pervyj udar" (First Strike - 1939) was hardly intended for such reaaders. Britikov quotes A. Jakolev, a renowned aircraft designer, as saying about Shpanov's story that it:

> ...was advertised as Soviet war science fiction, but is was in no way intended for children. The book was published by Military Publishers... in the series "The Commander's Library"! The book was destined to popularise our military-aviation doctrine." (*Russ-Sov* 171)

What Shpanov in fact had done with "First Strike" was to "fantastically hyperbolise the enthusiasm for certain of our tactics with the idea of the omnipotence of the bomber aircraft... not taking into account... the entire complex of factors affecting the outcome of a war" (*Russ-Sov* 172). As well Shpanov assumes that an imperialist war will eventually become a socialist revolution, and describes the German workers singing the "International" while impatiently awaiting the bombing of their factories (*Russ-Sov* 172). The echoes of the proletarian utopia are obvious in Shpanov. What Britikov fails to mention about Shpanov's story is that it was withdrawn from circulation shortly after publicaton, for the idea that the USSR would be the first victim of Nazi Germany was hardly in keeping with the newly-signed Stalin-Hitler friendship pact. It was returned to circulation after the Second World War, when Nazi Germany was again the enemy (Struve 298-9).

P. Pavlenko

Pavlenko's *Na vostoke* (In the East - 1936) differs from Shpanov's anti-fascist diatribe on two major counts. First, much of the novel is given over to description of the peacefully enthusiastic

expansion of the Communist influence into the eastern Soviet Union. However, much of the construction and development in the east was devoted to preparations for an impending war with Japan (Struve 279). Eventually Japan declares war on the USSR and, true to the tenets of the war utopia, the Communists are victorious, due in particular to the invention of a "mysterious and deadly new weapon" (Struve 280). Also unlike Shpanov's gratuitous violence, Pavlenko envisioned a "conflict with capitalist [illegible]ons worked out without much blood or extended exertion of [illegible] (*Russ-Sov* 174). Despite its somewhat "antimilitaristic [illegible]t and peacemongering attitude, Pavlenko nonetheless promoted the glory of the Soviet Union at war, and preached Party policy on fascism and imperialism (*Russ-Sov* 175).

The war utopia thus had combined several of the utopian and science-fiction movements of the previous decades, specifically the communist patriotism of the technological utopia of the Proletkult, the marvellous Soviet technology of the popularising science fiction of the twenties, and the evil, money-grubbing capitalist subjugation of the European proletariat. However, because of the limited range of its view of the future, the war utopia remianed "quasi-science fiction." It is important to note that none of the writers of genuine science fiction, regardless of his support of the Communist ideology, turned to the war utopia as a medium for expressing his ideas.

THE BATTLE WITH NATURE

Whereas the war utopia adopted the patriotic fervour of the technological utopia, its other aspect, the fundamental opposition of man to nature, became the cornerstone for a sub-genre of science fiction in the 1940s and '50s. As Heller puts it, "the domination of nature became [man's] sole reason for living" (p. 50). In fact, in the official Soviet terminology, "man and nature are dialectically opposed, and this opposition can only be surmounted if man forces nature into his service" (Heller 50). Part of the reason for this shift from the theme of Communists versus Capitalists and Fascists to Communists versus nature is found in the fact that the Communists had already defeated the Fascists and established an uneasy detente with the West. Britikov states that:

> Under Communism, the happiness of those who died in the war with nature would become equivalent to the happiness of those who gave their lives to the social revolution: both were inspired by the awareness that they were lifting humanity up to the heavens on their shoulders. (*Russ-Sov* 178)

This idea of forceful subjugation of nature to man's will was in direct opposition to Fedorov's scientific-theological premise that the "domination of nature was not its submission to human caprice, nor its exploitation, but the introduction into it of divine will and reason" (Heller 50). Fedorov's ideals, however, were passed over for the possibility of a more glorious depiction of the struggle of Com-

munist man to be found in the eternal battle with nature.

G. Adamov

The major proponent of this type of science fiction was G. Adamov, and his three most renowned works in this area are *Pobediteli nedr* (The Conquerers of the Earth's Entrails - 1937), *Tajna dvux okeanov* (The Sec- ret of Two Oceans - 1939) and *Izgnanie vladyki* (The Banished Sovereign - 1946). The first two describe marvelous subterranean and submarine vehicles that demonstrate the feebleness of nature when opposed to man. The third relates the success of Soviet scientists as they thaw the Arctic. These novels were written for children. The heroes are often children who expose malefactors. As well, there was an element of popularising science fiction, in that the stories were crammed with simplified scientific data and descriptions of nature "taken straight from botanical atlases" (Heller 50). The pre-adult format was the norm for most forms of science fiction between 1935 and 1956 for, as Suvin states, "only in 1935 was SF, properly sterilised, partially rehabilitated as a marginal—juvenile and popularizing—genre" (p. 264).

V. Nemcov

Closely akin to the theme of Communist man versus nature was the theme of the old versus the new, of the good versus the better. The most typical author in this particular vein was V. Nemcov and his novel *Zolotoe dno* (The Golden Deep - 1948). This story is not so much about the never-ending battle with nature, although

this aspect does play a part, but rather centres on the conflict of two good Communists, each of whom thinks his method is best. An engineer from Baku has begun an experiment in drilling for oil in the ocean when a Muscovite engineer arrives with his own plan. A rivalry develops between them, but they finally realise that neither plan is better and become fierce friends, working together for the greater glory of the Soviet Union (Heller 51). The science fiction in this tale is tenuous at best, for the means of oil extraction are not particularly fantastic. This type of novel conforms well to the aim of the science fiction of the time; that is, that children's literature should be instructive and educational.

V. Oxotnikov

Perhaps closer to genuine science fiction was V. Oxotnikov's *Dorogi vglub'* (The Roads of the Deeps - 1950). A young Komsomol member invents a subterranean machine that greatly facilitates underground mining. His idea is rejected by the pragmatic head miner in favour of the tried-and-true methods. The young inventor enlists the aid of his Komsomol friends and they build a working model, with which the superiority of the innovative is established. There is, however, a second point to this story. The head miner indiscretely talks to foreigners about the youngster's machine, and the machine is created outside the Soviet Union. Not only is there a moral that promotes the new, there is a moral that underlines the necessity for distrust and suspicion when dealing with non-Soviets.

It seems the xenophobic traditions of the Red Pinkerton sub-genre were as popular during the Cold War as they were after the First World War.

According to Heller, the majority of science-fiction novels were in this form (p. 52), meaning either the battle against nature or the conflict between the good and the better. As Heller goes on to add, these novels and stories hardly rated as science fiction, and their authors often renounced the name "science fiction" in favour of the more generic "novelette" or "novel." They were also very similar to the "socialist [illegible]els for adults, such as E. Permjak's *Dragocennoe nasledstvo* (The Precious Heritage - 1953) and A. Andreev's *Shirokoe techenie* (The Wide Current - 1953) (Heller 52). These works were often called "scientific production novels," but a more general and popular term, at the beginning of the '50s, was "near fantastic" or "at the frontier of the possible."

This name was already installed when S. Ivanov wrote his article "Fantastika i dejstvitel'nost'" (Science Fiction and Reality) for the first issue of *Oktjabr'* in 1950, in which he criticises those science-fiction authors guilty of admiring the western style and presents what he considers to be the main problems facing Soviet writers of science fiction. In the following quotation, which Heller cites in full, lies a basis for understanding the causes of the decline in fantasy in fantastic fiction.

> The Party and Government depicts for us every day the future's prospects through practical deeds. Is not Comrade Stalin's historic directions for our industry's development over the next several Five-Year-Plans the most important theme for writers? Is not the decree of the Party and Government on the establishment of shelter belts over a fifteen year period, in the course of which almost one half of our country will be transformed in such a fundamental way that even the climate will change—is this not exceptionally worthy material for the work of our science fiction writers? Does not the decree of the Party and Government on the introduction of subtropical citrus plant cultures into the North, does this too not serve as material for a series of canvases for our artists of words? And the theme of a new Moscow from the perspective of its reconstruction on the basis of the plan even now being developed? We repeat, the conditions for the development of science fiction and Soviet adventure literature are absolutely extraordinary and limit- less. . . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Soviet science-fiction should depict our country's future... removed from the present by one or two decades, or perhaps only a single year. Not long ago... L. Uspenskij violently argued the necessity of writing about what will be over a hundred or even two hundred years. This, in our opinion, was not an accidental mistake. This was an attempt by an acolyte of Western European science-fiction literature to direct our literature along the same lines.[8]

It is obvious that severe limits had been placed on science-fiction writers but as often as not these limits were voluntarily accepted. The slightest deviation from Ivanov's prescribed limits were grounds for unmitigated criticism (Heller 53). As Heller accurately

notes:

> Science fiction preserved its name only through inertia. It retained nothing of its own, nothing that qualitatively distinguished it from the other genres. (p. 53).

Science fiction had been reduced to a simple, rote exercise for mediocre authors. It had nothing original or interesting to offer. "The genre of Soviet science fiction had died, barely born" (Heller 48).

SUMMARY: THE DEATH OF SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION

In the years immediately after the 1917 Revolution, it seemed that the blossoming of the genre of science fiction was only the beginning of a type of literature that was to become a major part of the Soviet literary scene. However, the quantities of that time marked the apex of Soviet science fiction, and it was almost four decades later that science fiction again found a place in Soviet literature with Efremov's *Tumannost' Andromedy* (The Andromeda Nebula - 1957) (Suvin 263, 265). The factors contributing to the decline of the genre from the early 1930s to the mid-1950s are many, and they are interrelated.

There were a number of reasons for the boom of science-fiction literature in the 1920s. Most obviously, the Revolution had engendered an optimism and faith in Communist humanity that naturally appeared in the utopian works of the Proletarian writers. Anxious to achieve the lofty social goals to which they aspired, the

writers naturally turned to depiction of the future as the most efficacious medium for hastening the attainment thereof. The same future-orientation applies to those, like Zamjatin, who distrusted, if not opposed, the principles of the Bolsheviks and their implications for a new world. At the same time, science fiction was waxing in popularity in the West, and the works of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, either politically innocent or at least not anti-socialist, became favoured reading material in the Soviet Union. Perhaps the most influential cause of this boom was the fact that almost all important writers in the Soviet Union produced at least one work related to science fiction, and all had a great interest in this genre (Heller 53). The quality of Soviet science fiction was on a par with the rest of Soviet literature of the time; in fact, it was somewhat beyond it, for it allowed much more experimentation and innovation than most other genres. Soviet science fiction was a healthy, respected member of the literary family in Russia, while Western science fiction still struggled to elevate itself beyond the ranks of pulp fiction (Heller 53).

The First All-Union Writers' Congress in 1932 brought a swift end to this situation. In a country where the primary purpose of literature was to depict the "realistic" socialist man building a "realistic" socialist world, the anticipatory and imaginative vein had little place. Only in children's literature, where a certain amount of fantasy was expected, could there be an outlet for the writ-

er of fantasy. Although some of the science-fiction literature of the 1930s and 1940s was not directed at children, its generally childish simplicity held little interest for adults and even children's literature was expected to be an instructive and realistic genre, as Maksim Gor'kij's article, "Temy" (Themes), clearly states.

In this article, itself a section of Gor'kij's treatise on children's literature, there is a lengthy list of suitable themes, including "the Earth," "the significance to man of his discovery and use of iron and other metals," and "the history of engines, from the steam-driven to the diesel."[9] Fortunately, this technical list is somewhat mitigated by the inclusion of themes such as "the marvellous in the work of science" and "the techniques of the future." These themes, however, do not provide much freedom for the depiction of the highly fantastic. Gor'kij's example of the marvellous in science involve descriptions of glass manufacturing and making rubber out of potatoes, while the "techniques of the future" include radio engineering, solar energy, temperature differences and other bland subjects (Gor'kij 222). It is therefore hardly surprising that the majority of science-fiction literature was directed at children, and most of that was like Adamov's technical recitations.

The final blow to Soviet science fiction during this period was S. Ivanov's "Science Fiction and Reality." That which Ivanov promoted was very close to the future Gastev, the proletarian utopist, had envisioned; that is, that society would become so closely regul-

ated and conformist that man and mankind would be basically a machine, allowing no devia- tion. As Heller puts it:

> S. Ivanov is a parody of Gastev, a Gastev reduced to microscopic dimensions... One finds in him the same intolerance, the same fanaticism, the same method for replacing life with a mathematical equation, the same desire to plan every thought, every movement and every dream. (Heller 54)

It is most interesting to note that one of the first Soviet science-fiction writers, Zamjatin, had predicted just such a [illegible]tition (Heller 54). In his article of 1921, "Ja bojus'" (I'm Afraid) [illegible]ten one year after *We,* Zamjatin states: "I fear that Russina literature has but one future—its past."[10] At first, it seemed that the innovative and fantastic utopias, so unlike their precursors, had proved Zamjatin wrong. Ten years later, when the First All-Union Writers' Congress introduced its doctrine of Socialist Realism, science fiction and utopianism came under attack. That which remained of the genre quickly submitted to the censor's demands and became a subliterary genre of vaguely imaginative and minimally interesting children's literature (Heller 31, 53; Suvin 264). It was only with Efremov's *The Andromeda Nebula* in 1957 that science fiction was resurrected and revivified, due mainly, as Zamjatin had so accurately predicted, to a return to its past—the utopia (Heller 31).

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1 A. Fyodorov, "The Hundredth Birth Anniversary of Alexander Belyaev," in *Soviet Literature*, 2 (431) 1984, p. 166.

2 B. Ljapunov, *V mire mechty*, Moscow: 1969, p. 59.

3 Fyodorov says that "his political position was unambiguous" (p. 167).

4 Ja. Rykachev, "Golova professora Douèla," *Detskaja literatura*, 1 (1939), p. 53. [translation from Glad, p. 34]

5 B. Ljapunov, R. Nudel'man, "Predislovie," A. Tolstoj, *Sobranie sochinenij v 8 tomax*, I, p. 14.

6 A. Beljaev, "O moix rabotax," *Detskaja literatura*, 5 (1939), p. 25.

7 G. Mishkevich, "Tri chasa u velikogo fantasta," *Vtorzhenie v Persej*, Leningrad: 1968, p. 440.

8 S. Ivanov, "Fantastika i dejstvitel'nost'," *Oktjabr'*, 1 (1950), p. 159.

9 Maxim Gorky, *On Literature: Selected Articles*, Moscow: [n.d.], pp. 214-227.

10 Zamjatin, E., "Ja bojus'," *Lica*, New York: 1967, p. 190.

IV. THE AUTHORS AND THEIR MEDIUM

INTRODUCTION

The main focus so far has been on the critics' view of science fiction and science-fiction authors. The opinions of the writers themselves is of great importance, for therein may be found valuable background for the science-fiction works these authors produced. As well, most science-fiction writers were extremely well-read in their field and often wrote as critics of their peers' works. This section presents a number of quotes from Soviet authors and critics on the subject of science fiction. The writers cited have been discussed in previous chapters, and a comparison is made between the writers' science-fiction philosophy and their actual writings as viewed by the critics.

AUTHORS ON SCIENCE FICTION

A. Tolstoj

The following quote is from Aleksej Tolstoj, author of the famous *Aelita*.

> We build a material world, industrialise the country, perfect the instruments of productioon, strive for the automation of machines only to free the surplus of human energy, to enrich the spiritual strengths and direct them toward magnificent and infinite growth. The person is of paramount concern in all our efforts—his happiness and his development. We understand man as the highest form of nature. He is in an eternal battle with her. He subjugates

> her, reconstructing her for his own ends according to his own reasons... If we want to fantasise over what will be in ten years, we must foremost direct our attention toward man's psychological development.
>
> ...The man of the future... will be handsome and clever, steadfast and honest. His feelings will be profound and clear, for he will be raised on the great art born of a young and strong class. He will be a bridge from our heroic era of fighters for a new world to the man of the future, whom we imagine on a liberated earth amidst azure cities of communism.

The tone of this citation from the early 1930s is more characteristic of the technological utopists and the "war with nature" writers of that era than the revolutionary-utopian- and popularising-type writing the critics perceived in Tolstoj's *Aelita, Azure Cities* and *Engineer Garin's Death-ray.* Although the "subjugation of nature" of which Tolstoj speaks is difficult to find in his novels, the image of the "man of the future" is clearly depicted in Gusov, the revolutionary hero in *Aelita,* and in the hero of *Azure Cities.* In fact, the phrase "azure cities" appears in this quote.

A. Beljaev

While the quote from Tolstoj seems contrary to his writing style, the following one from Beljaev, from the same period, is in no way contrary to the technologico-popularising vein in which most of his many works were written.

> For all its peculiarity, science fiction is a part of Soviet literature, and the object of Soviet literature is the par-

ticipation in the building of socialism.

Inasmuch as science fiction deals with the questions of science and technology, one is naturally led to conclude that our science fiction should first and foremost be one of the means for the agitation and propagation of science and technology. It should expand scientific knowledge and attract the interest of readers—youths, especially—to scientific and technological problems.

Science fiction must not become a boring popularising science handbook or a literary-scientific miscarriage. The science-fiction novel and story should be works of art in their own right.

One must strive for that point where, having become interested by a vivid description of a scientific problem, the reader of the science-fiction work would undertake a study of the literature pertaining to the idea in question. With this in mind, the best science-fiction works should re-cognise that which flings new, fruitful ideas into the world, ideas which promote the appearance of a new inventor or a new scientist.

Another area of the matter which it is essential that science fiction solve runs along social lines. Soviet social science fiction or, more precisely, the social category of Soviet science-fiction works, should have a solid scientific base as does the scientific-technological category.

And upon this difficulty—the illustration of the social future—stands a greater one: the depiction of the man of the future. That is the task that must be treated by the Soviet writer working in the sphere of science fiction (Ljapunov 14-17).

Beljaev's predeliction for glorifying technology that is apparent in his works is outlined here as one of his criteria. His demand, however, that "the social category of Soviet science-fiction works"

have a scientific basis is hardly reflected in his works, where his characters were mostly stereotypical, lifeless role-players of the Red Pinkerton type and his plots avoided the conflict of philosophical and psychological depiction of the future society (see sect. "Beljaev").

E. Zelikovich

The last pre-World War Two quote is from Zelikovich, one of the last writers of sociological utopia in the 1930s, who differed dramatically from Tolstoj and Beljaev in his definition of science

> The peculiarity of "science" fiction is the construc- of its works on objects and concepts from science's nal. The definition, if accepted, automatically cuts an- Gordian knot around which passion still burns: must ce fiction be truly scientific?
>
> Both the best science-fiction classics and the majority of contemporary science-fiction works are non-scientific. Nevertheless, they are obviously science-fictional. In them authors operate within real categories and not fairytale fancy.
>
> Infinitely expanding in breadth, height and depth, science fiction has become boundlessly varied and versatile in our time. The boundaries of its species and subspecies, genres and sub-genres, have become blotted and run like ink: one flows unnoticeably into another. As a result, classifying science fiction has become extremely difficult. The very qualifier "science" often disappears. In latter years we regularly encounter simple "fantasy," which is so much more capacious. These considerations in no way exclude those works which are constructed from

strictly scientific material. (Ljapunov 88-90)

It is obvious Zeliovich did not consider the promotion and popularisation of technology the cornerstone of this genre. His rejection of the demand that science fiction be firmly based on science is in harmony with the general tone of his science-fiction work discussed above, *Coming World,* in which there is a total lack of official coordination or registration (see sect. "Zelikovich").

G. Adamov and V. Nemcov

The "Battle with Nature" sub-genre, popular in the 1930s and '40s, found two of its most prominent writers in Adamov and Nemcov. These two quotes from the 1940s clearly illustrate why they may be considered as such.

> Adamov:
>
> Science fiction is one of the most powerful and effective instruments for the fostering of great qualities necessary for the Soviet man in our developing country. This literary genre provides a wide scope for romanticism, heroism and international flavour. This genre lends itself to the presentatioon of grand and inspirational perspectives, ideas and goals which call man to fight for them, and which demand perseverance, initiative, bravery, courage and knowledge, knowledge, knowledge.
>
> Our Soviet science fiction... should be—this is basic and important—a participant in the construction of the future communist society. It should call man to this construction with all the powerful means of artistic and scientific realism...
>
> Our dream should be the one of which Lenin spoke. It should not demagnetise the reader, but rather mobilise

him, planting trust, firm conviction and effective faith. (Ljapunov 17-18)

Nemcov:

Science fiction appeals mostly to the youth, and the extent of influence of books of this genre is difficult to evaluate. Science-fiction works are extraodinarily divers and, in order to define science fiction's goals, it is appropriate to remember V.I. Lenin's works: "One must dream."

Lenin was citing the famous quote by Pisarev which states that "man must run ahead and see the completed picture of the creation which is only beginning to take shape in his hands. Otherwise it is difficult to imagine the reason that would compel man to toil over and finish his tiring works in the fields of art, science and practical life."

Who then, if not the fantasists, will depict tomorrow's bright world in the name of which we live and struggle!

I consider the depiction of the communist world of the near future the most important task. Who will be the man of the future? What will be his inner world? What will remain in it of our great time? How will the hero be at work, in daily life, what will his habits and tastes be? And what will love be like—that greatest and fiercest sentiment, agitating every generation?

We live in a difficult time, in a constant battle for national happiness. Of course, it is wonderful to dream of settling far-off worlds. But I am sure that now more than ever a love for home, Earth and man is awakening in the youth—the builders of a new life. (Ljapunov 108-112)

Adamov's and Nemcov's juvenile style of literature was dedicated to popularising technology and promoting the "great qualities necessary for the Soviet man." The two preceding quotes are a

rote repetition of the strictures of socialist realism, and Lenin's name figures prominently in them. It is thus not surprising that they state nothing original but are content with paraphrasing Stalinist doctrine.

E. Efremov

If Soviet science fiction was born with the appearance of Aleksej Tolstoj's *Aelita*, then it was reborn in Efremov's *The Andromeda Nebula*. It is therefore approriate that, as a quote from Tolstoj began this section, a post-Stalin quote from Efremov should end it. The eloquence and perceptiveness of Efremov is a reprieve from the pedantic propaganda of unimaginative authors like Adamov and Nemcov. This quote illustrates Efremov's knowledgeable grasp of Soviet science fiction and his thought concerning its place in literature.

> The developmental tendency of contemporary science fiction is a parting with the social utopia for scientific-problematic imaginings according to the changes of the younger fantasists—primarily those young scientists and engineers who see in science both the main goal of human life and the salvation from all its cares and woes. A similar tendency is apparent in foreign, primarily Anglo-American, science fiction.
>
> A special "method" in science fiction does not exist. One can speak only of the one or the other method which in general does not differ from other forms of literature.
>
> Science fiction is mistakenly contrasted with realism. In its furthest development, science fiction will more and more approach so-called "mainstream literature" as

> regards the intensity of the psychological analysis and reflection of man. On the other hand, mainstream literature will more and more devote its attention to science and the regularities of the social and industrial aspects of society, approaching science fiction along similar lines. The final stage is the intermingling of these types of literature, for fantasy is the common denominator of all literature and all artistic works in general.
>
> Science fiction should be social, philosophical and technological, differing only in the "relative percentage" of these components within the limits of artistic authenticity.
>
> If one is not speaking very concretely, then for me the most important thing is the boundlessness of the world, reflected in human knowledge and showing itself always broader through science's further discoveries. But this is not the only thing. It is no less important to examine how all this reflects on man and life in society. Find analogous or even identical processes and ideas in the past and extrapolate them into the future. In my opinion, the history of life and the earth in science is of greatest interest.
> (Ljapunov 73-7)

These five quotes do not, of course, reflect the entire range of sub-genres and authors in Soviet science fiction, but do provide an understanding of the attitude of science-fiction authors toward their work throughout the entire period of Soviet science fiction. It is perhaps not untrue to state that previous to the 1917 Revolution, the genre of science fiction did not exist as such, but rather as an *outré* form of speculative literature. At any rate, the genre of science fiction was never discussed as such before the Revolution.

SCIENCE-FICTION MEDIA

Although most of the works discussed in the previous three chapters are either novels or short stories, there were other forms of science fiction available to the reader or viewer, Soviet especially. Pre-Revolutionary Russian science fiction, however, was basically limited to two types—the novel and the short story. Although there were instances of science-fiction poetry, such as parts of Chernyshevskij's *What Is To Be Done?*, by and large the form of utopian and science-fiction literature conformed to the prose type of literature. Therefore, a detailed examination of the media of pre-Revolutionary Russian science fiction is not warranted.

The situation changed dramatically after the Revolution of 1917. The social upheaval engendered by the Revolution naturally promoted a sense of development and renovation in all fields of life, including science-fiction literature. The novel and short story remained strong, but there was a trend toward experimentation in literature. Science fiction, innately experimental and extrapolatory, was the obvious vehicle for such experiments. Thus there appeared science-fiction poetry, film, drama and anticipatory essays.

Science Fiction Poetry

Poetry had always been a major part of Russian literature. Its use as a medium for science fiction had been largely ignored, however, except for the occasional foray by writers like Chernyshevskij. The Revolution brought about great changes in poetry, as demon-

strated by the works of Majakovskij, an important name in the development of Soviet science fiction (see sect. "Majakovskij"). Although *The Flying Proletarian* (1925) can be categorised as science-fiction,[2] Glad describes its use of technology as "an excuse for pure fun making" (p. 168). Majakovskij's contribution to science fiction in the field of poetry was thus minimal: it was in the field of drama that he made his greatest contribution, as will be discussed below.

The most prolific writer of science-fiction poetry was Valerij Brjusov, author of the short story "Republic of the Southern Cross" and the play *Earth*, the two works for which he is most known in the area of science fiction. However, he was also a prominent symbolist poet (Fetzer 226; Suvin 250). Brjusov combined his talent for poetry and his interest in science fiction to produce several collections of verse in which there were over twenty science-fiction poems.[3] "Distances" (1922), an interplanetary revolutionary utopian work, was his best-known science-fiction poem. Brjusov's contribution to Soviet science-fiction poetry, although quantitatively great, is usually overlooked in favour of his science-fiction work in prose and drama.

After 1927, original Soviet science-fiction poetry disappeared altogether, resurfacing almost two decades later. V. Shuxrov and G. Pokrovskij each produced a single poem in 1953 and 1954 respectively. These were the last until after the revisionist Congress of 1956. Poetry, therefore, was not a popular medium for Soviet

science fiction, although it was used to some extent early in the genre's development. When it experienced its most wide-spread use in the years immediately after the 1917 Revolution, science-fiction poetry was almost exclusive confined to the sub-genre of utopian science fiction, as evidenced by Majakovskij and Brjusov.

Science Fiction Drama

Even less popular that science-fiction poetry was science-fiction drama. Also unlike poetry, science-fiction drama did not experience a particular period of greater popularity, appearing sporadically between 1917 and 1956. Majakovskij's two plays, *The Bath* (1928) and *The Bedbug* (1930), had a strong utopian streak that qualified them as science fiction. Before Majakovskij, however, Brjusov wrote *Earth* (1904), a play in which a revolution of the youth shatters the glass dome encasing a giant city. His plays written, although not published, after the Revolution were *The Dictator* (1922) and *The World of 7 Generations* (1923), dealing with the subjects of revolution and the self-sacrificing proletariat (see sect. "Brjusov").

After Brjusov's and Majakovskij's notable contributions to the area of science-fiction drama, there appeared only a smattering of rather obscure works, such as M. Vodopjanov's *The Dream* (1937) and I. Lukovskij's *The Secret of the Eternal Night* (1949). Science-fiction drama did not play a large role in Soviet science fiction. Just as science-fiction poetry's major contributors, Majakovskij and Brjus-

ov, wrote their poems in the utopian vein, so was science-fiction drama overwhelmingly devoted to the same sub-genre.

Science Fiction Film

Much as drama did not experience a period of particular popularity, so did film, its close cousin, tend to appear from time to time and never in large quantities. The first, *The Iron Heel* (1919), based on the book by Jack London, was a silent film. Its scenario was written by Lunacharskij, the Commissar for Education (Suvin 262). The next film, produced in 1924, was an adaptation of A. Tolstoj's *Aelita* and, in Suvin's opinion, "rather bad" (p. 262). That same year a parody of *Aelita* was produced, entitled *The Interplanetary Revolution*. Also adapted for the screen were Shaginjan's *Mess Mend* (1926), Paul Lafargue's *The Sale of an Appetite* (1928), *The Secret Island* (1941), based on Jules Verne's work, and a screenplay of Lukovskij's *The Secret of the Eternal Night* (1955). In all, there were barely twenty science-fiction films, and well over half were adaptations of domestic or foreign works of science fiction. The vehicle of motion pictures was used more as a repetitive medium that an inceptive one. In opposition to science-fiction poetry and drama, science-fiction film was more given over to adventure-type science fiction. This is due in part, no doubt, to the greater capacity of film for depicting the highly technologically and scientifically imaginative: the use of "special effects" was a tool peculiar to motion pictures and it was only natural that it be exploited in making

science-fiction films.

Anticipatory Essays

The anticipatory essay only just qualifies as a medium of the popularising genre of science fiction. Written with purely popularising aims, the purpose of the anticipatory essay was to make the reader aware of the new technology being developed and its possible future applications. It is through the extrapolatory aspect that the anticipatory essay merits recognition as a medium for science-fiction literature. The anticipatory essay was directed, like most of the science fiction between 1930 and 1956, toward the young. Journals such as *Ogonek, Texnika—Molodezhi* and *Vokrug sveta* regularly published anticipatory essays, and often published several under a common heading, such as "A Window on the Future" (*Texnika—Molodezhi,* 1955-56).[4]

It is noteworthy that the quantity of anticipatory essays produced in a given year was not in direct proportion to the quantity of all forms of science fiction combined. In fact, it was often the case that while other forms decreased the anticipatory essay increased in number. The bar-graph in the conclusion (Graph IV, p. 98) illustrates another important detail: the anticipatory essay was most popular during the 1930s and early 1950s, a time when the creation of purely imaginative works entailed not only literary risks, but the very real risk of losing one's life if the content of the work did not conform to the demands of the Stalinist censors.

These various types of science-fiction literature—poetry, drama, film and anticipatory essay—are worthy of note, but not of exhaustive interpretation. There are certain examples of important science-fiction works appearing in these forms, as is the case with Majakovskij, but *original* science fiction remained and remains the almost exclusive domain of the prose forms of novel and short story.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1 B. Ljapunov, *V Mire mechty,* Moscow: 1970, pp. 8-9.

2 A. Evdokimov, "Sovetskaja fantastika: Opyt bibliografii," *Fantastika 67,* Moscow: 1968, p. 395.

3 *ibid.,* pp. 394-6, and "Sovetskaja fantastika: Opyt bibliografii," *Fantastika 68,* p. 345.

4 From Evdokimov, "Sovetskaja fantastika," *Fantastika 67, 68* and *69-70,* and B. Ljapunov, "Sovetskaja fantastika 1946-1956 godov," *Fantastika 71,* Moscow: 1968-71, various pages.

CONCLUSION

PICTURING THE TRENDS

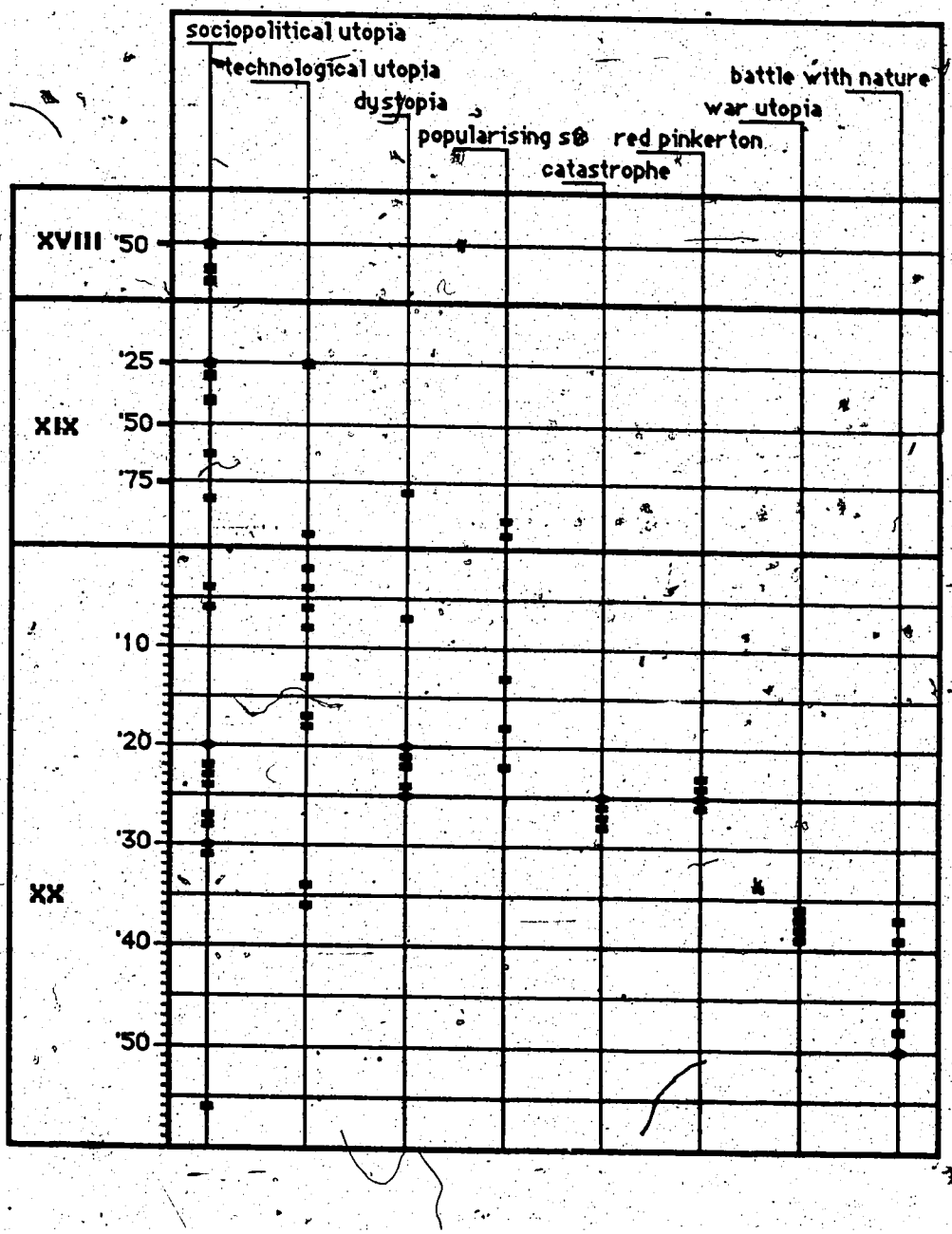
It is obvious that Soviet science fiction produced a number of sub-genres, each having something in common with its precursors and its successors. However, although a chronological scheme has served as a basic outline for the discussion of the history of these various trends, there is certain to arise some amount of confusion regarding their relative places in the overall development of Russian and Soviet science fiction. Graph I (below) provides a clearer outline of the various sub-genres on a chronological scale. One must bear in mind, however, that the entries on this graph have no relation to quantity for any given year, nor do they take into consideration any works other than those discussed in the preceding chapters.

One can see the period or periods when a certain sub-genre was most popular. For example, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the technological utopia enjoyed its greatest popularity. Immediately following it, in the 1930s, the dystopian and socio-utopian reaction is clearly visible, a reaction that is discussed in Chapter Two.

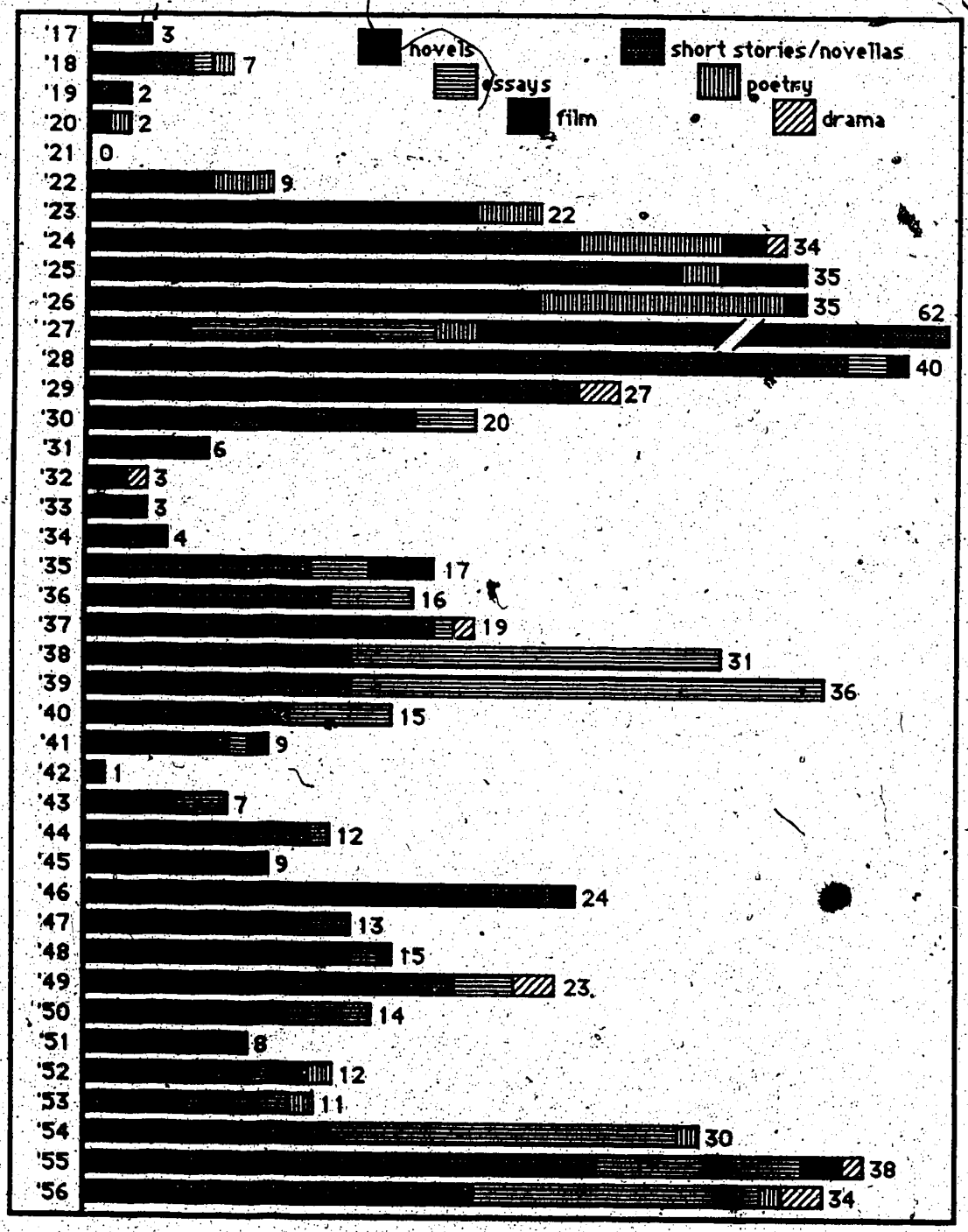
In the above two chapters, "The Revolution Years" and "The Stalin Era," only casual mention was made of the quantity of science

GRAPH I

Chronological Appearance of Science Fiction Sub-genres



Graph II
Relative Quantities of Science Fiction Media
1917-1956



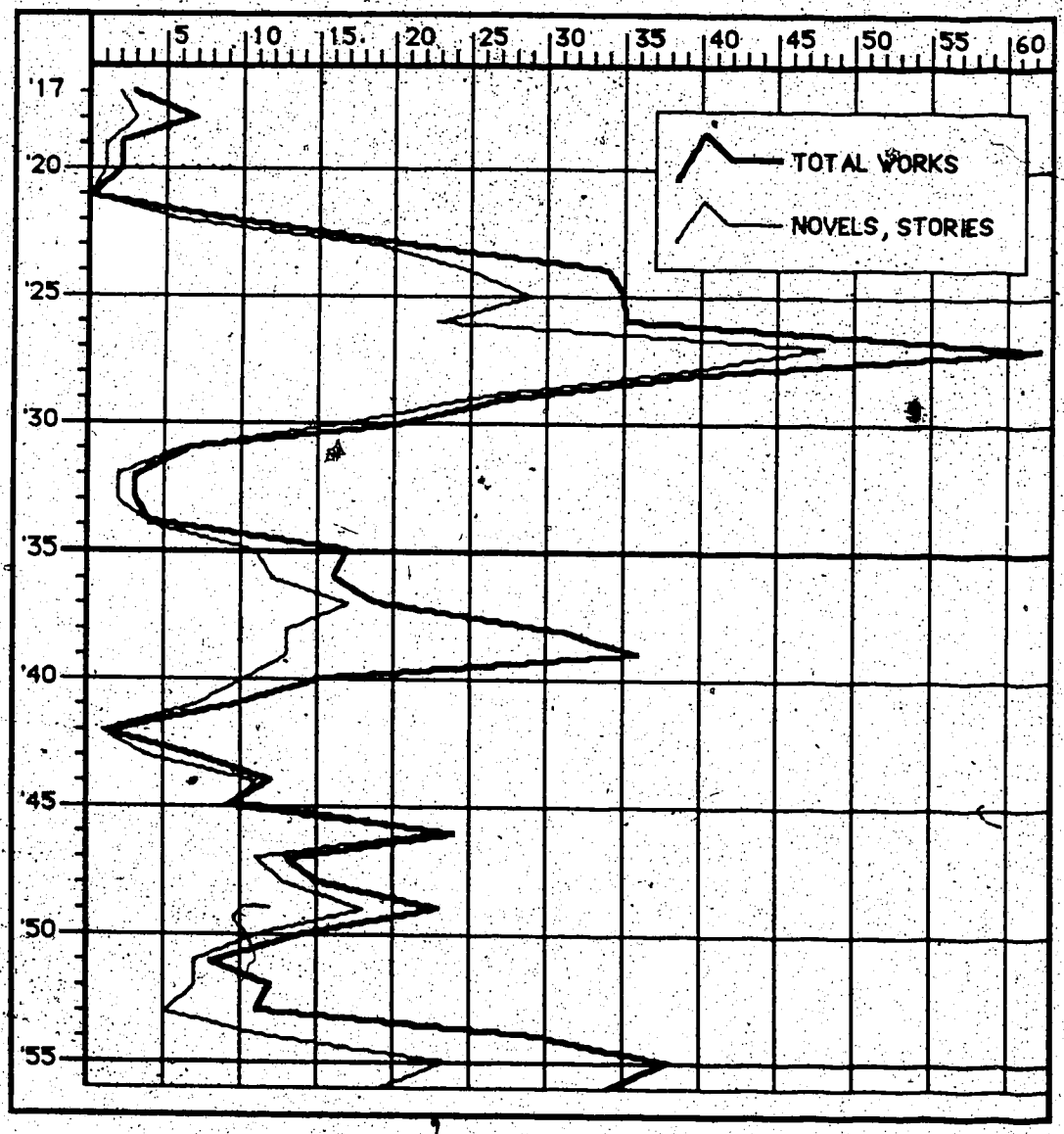
fiction being produced. The actual quantity of original Soviet science fiction is as important as the kinds, for the impact of a work is often directly affected by the literary atmosphere into which it appeared. A science-fiction novel that appears when there are only two or three other original science-fiction works of any kind will be morely widely read and thus have a greater influence. Conversely, a short story that would, in other circumstances, have a tremendous impact on the genre could easily be ignored if it had to contend with over fifty other works of a similar nature. Graph II (p. 101), when compared to Graph I, gives a deeper insight into the place the works herein discussed occupied in their genre.

As can be deduced from Graph II, the bulk of original science fiction produced in a given year was, in the main, prose fiction. It can be seen in the previous graph that the ratio of the novel and short story media correspond roughly to the overall quantities produced for any given year throughout the years 1917 to 1956. Although this depiction clearly outlines the popularity of other types of science-fiction media relative to fictional prose, it cannot accurately depict the relative quantities of each medium *per se*.

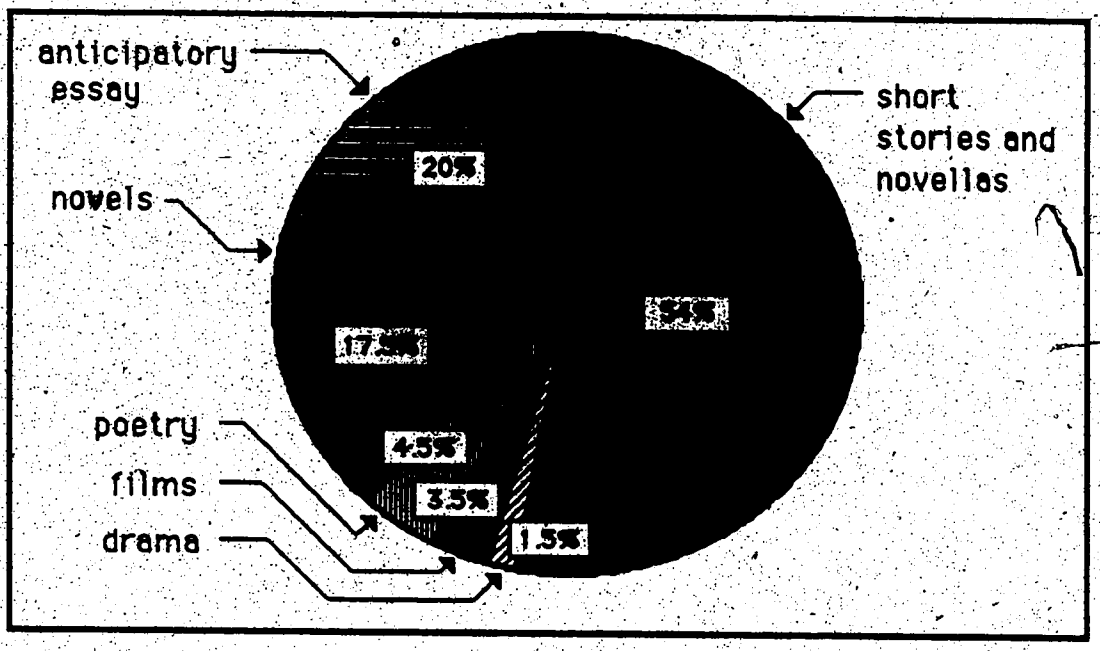
Graph III (p. 103) more clearly illustrates the changing popularity of each type of science fiction. Relative quantities of the various media are shown on a year-to-year basis.

A logical accompaniment to Graph III is one which shows the percentage each medium could claim over the forty-year period pre-

Graph III
Fluctuations in the Quantity of Original Soviety SF
1917-1956



Graph IV
Relative Quantities of Science Fiction Media
over the Forty-year Period
1917-1956



sented. Graph IV (page 104) introduces nothing new, but puts the given information into a form more readily understandable in terms of relative popularity over the entire span of time.

CONCLUSIONS

The genre of Russian and Soviet science fiction is the unfortunate victim of a generally disparanging attitude on the part of the critics. While I have shown that this is not so much the case with the Soviet critics as with their Western counterparts, both the West and the East have failed to give this powerful genre the attention it deserves. One may draw these conclusions for the following reasons.

First, the genre of science fiction was a very accurate and sensitive barometer of the liter- ary, political and social atmosphere of the centuries between Ivan the Terrible and Joseph Stalin. The reaction against the despotism of the Tsars appeared in the form of utopian depictions of a better society. The idealism of the Revolutionary leaders found reflection in the technological utopias of the 1910s and 1920s. The fear some had that the drive of those leaders would lead to catastrophe was voiced in the dystopias of that same era. The Catastrophe and Red Pinkerton sub-genres were in part a reaction to the "opportunistic capitalism" of the West. The paranoia brought on by Stalin's tyrannical rule is clearly reflected in the pre- and post-World War II war utopias. The almost total disappearance of any real anticipatory or utopian work during that time is indicative of the incredible oppression of Stalin's censors. A study of Russian and Soviet science fiction requires an understanding of the social and political circumstances more than any other genre of Russian or Soviet literature.

Secondly, the roots of Russian science fiction are deeply imbedded in the history of Russian and Soviet literature as a whole. The authors who first exhibited marked traits of the utopian writer were important and influential literary figures in their own right. Names like Shcherbatov, Radishchev, Odoevskij and Dostoevskij are well-known to any scholar of Russian literature. Early Soviet writers like Majakovskij, Zamjatin, Gastev and Brjusov were instrumen-

tal in the development of not only the science-fiction genre, but of all facets of Soviet literature. The Socialist Realist writers, Kataev and Adamov to name but two, are more recognised for their non-science-fiction works, although their contributions in the field of science fiction were of great importance during a period when the genre all but disappeared. It is thus apparent that the authors who had a hand in the development of Russian and Soviet science fiction had influence that extended far beyond the bounds of same and to ignore the fantastic works of these authors is to ignore the incalculable influence these works had on literature in general.

Thirdly, it is important to realise that the general aim of Russian and Soviet science fiction were beyond mere juvenile adventure stories. True, during the oppression of the Stalin Era there was little opportunity for any kind of utopian or anticipatory work to present itself. However, the tradition begun with Peresvetov's plea to Ivan the Terrible in the form of an imaginary sociopolitical tale developed into a trend of utopian writing that has supported the genre since the seventeenth century. The quality of this utopian literature was equal to, if not superior to, any of its contemporary genres. Science fiction was and is a first class literary form in Russian and the Soviet Union. When the subject of critical analysis, it is revered and treated with due respect by Russian and Soviet critics. Unhappily, it is all too rarely the subject of such analysis.

The fourth reason is perhaps most overlooked, although in

some ways far more important than mere literary considerations. The political impact of science-fiction works, especially the utopian, was immense. Science fiction was a perfect vehicle for envisioning possible futures, and authors with strong political motives often employed this genre. Lenin himself was an ardent admirer of Chernyshevskij's *What Is To Be Done?* Early Soviet writers, infused with the optimism of their victory over the Tsarist regime, produced numerous works in which the ideal fu- ture was depicted brightly and in intricate detail. The quotes from various science-fiction authors and critics found in the previous chapters clearly shows an awareness of the fact that, as a tool for propaganda and popularising the aims of the Party, no other genre could compare to that of science fiction.

Finally, the simple fact that Western readers know so little about Soviet science fiction whereas in the Soviet Union the names of Verne, Wells, Asimov and Bradbury are synonymous with science fiction should promote great curiosity among Western science-fiction scholars. An analysis of the impact of Jules Verne's works, or those of H.G. Wells, would be incomplete without a careful examination of the influence these two writers had on the literary development of one of the two most powerful countries in the world today.

Russian and Soviet science fiction has a far more influential and important history than its Western brothers. It has been more

extensively affected by political, social and literary considerations, both domestic and international. The role of Russian and Soviet science fiction, its authors and its readers has been too much ignored by literary and political scholars, and any critical analysis of Russian or Soviet literature must take into account this genre.

THE PRESENT FUTURE OF SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION

With such a rich and varied past, it is not surprising that science fiction is one of the most popular genres in the Soviet Union today. The readership of this genre ranges from the schoolchild to the university professor of astronomy.[1] Mirra Ginsburg, a noted translator of Soviet science fiction, gives the following possible explanation of the popularity of this genre:

> Perhaps because the authors are scientists, and thus are accustomed to greater freedom in their work, or because the science fiction form has not received as much attention from the political censorship as the rest of Soviet literature, the writers in this field can often say much more than those working in more realistic and conventional areas. Whatever the cause, the best of Soviet science fiction is far removed from the dreary mainstream of the standardized, made-to-order, didactic writing that still dominates the Soviet literary scene.[2]

One of the aspects of Soviet science fiction that sets it apart from its brother genres is its concentration on the individual. This concentration is not typical of all works, but as Ginsburg states:

> An interesting aspect of many of these stories is the insistence on the value of the individual—both as a person and as a scientific innovator. The latter is often something of an eccentric who works on his own and does not fit into the "establishment," and as a rule he is treated sympathetically—quite a departure in a totalitarian bureaucracy. (p. ix)

It may be that lack of "attention from the political censorship," as mentioned in the first excerpt, is due in part to, ironically, the fact that science fiction is also largely ignored by the critics, a situation I have repeatedly noted and condemned. Were this genre to receive more critical attention, perhaps it would consequently receive more attention from the censor and find itself more restricted. I do not mean to imply that science fiction has entirely escaped such censorship. Ginsburg adds:

> There has been of late a great number of articles, both in periodicals and in science-fiction collections, setting forth the desirable goals and stressing the need to show "Communist man," "Communist achievements," and the "Communist future," as contrasted with the wretched destinies of the non-Communist world. (p. x)

This attitude on the part of the censors clearly shows that Soviet science fiction is far from independent of the doctrine of socialist realism. The present-day socialist realism is less stifling, at least insofar as science fiction is concerned, than that of Stalin's era, but it continues to impede a completely free development of the genre.

In the current trend of Gorbachev's "glasnost'," perhaps Soviet science fiction will find the added strength it needs to surpass the social and literary barriers at which it has been straining since its precursors first appeared in the seventeenth century.

NOTES

1 See note 6, Introduction.

2 Mirra Ginsburg, preface to *The Ultimate Threshold: A Collection of the Finest in Soviet Science Fiction,* Mirra Ginsburg, ed. and trans., Toronto: 1978, p. viii.

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