

BIOLOGY, REASON AND LITERATURE IN ZOŠČENKO'S
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An important aspect in the presentation of the conflict between the 'old' and 'new' men in Soviet literature is the pronounced 'biological' flavour of the 'old Adam' and the contrasting ascetism, purity and self-control of the new Soviet man. The 'biological specimens' are victims of nature, prey to their passions, weaknesses and vices, an integral part of nature's crudest and lowest manifestations. The new man, sprung from the womb of nature as he is, nevertheless hovers in the higher spheres of 'refined matter', where biology is relegated to its proper place - a point of departure for the new man who has overcome himself in rigid self-discipline.¹

M. Zoščenko's work (*povest'*) *Pered voschodom solnca* (1943-72) (from now on referred to as *PVS*) takes up the conflict between the biological and the rationalistic man.² It is developed in a series of oppositions in the *povest'*, one of which is political. Fascism which glorifies crude instincts is opposed to (Soviet) communism which represents the control of animal instincts. The author declares that the purpose of his work is to unmask the rudimentary 'philosophy' of fascism, which declares that 'consciousness brings man untold disasters, that human happiness may be found in a return to barbarity' (36). The narrator of *PVS* conceives of his struggle against primitive aspects of his psyche as a parallel to war events. His own base self is the 'fascist enemy' which he sets out to conquer; his reason is the 'red hero' which triumphs over the 'black abysses' of the subconscious, where the 'enemy' hides.³

In spite of the criticism of fascism and although the narrator demonstrates the conquest of reason over instinct, the work met with great indignation. Its

publication was disrupted and only in 1972 a sequel appeared. Indignation was no doubt caused by the fact that the author took the task of showing the old Adam too seriously, devoting much space to him and hardly any to the 'transformed man'. He showed in detail all his 'unnecessary grief' (38) and little of his new-found happiness. This happiness, furthermore, is dubious. Naturally, the idea that even a Soviet man may harbour a 'fascist' inside him was unacceptable, particularly at war time. Yet another reason for the non-acceptance of the work may have been the fact that the *povest'* deals extensively with the least rectifiable aspect of human existence, namely death. True, also this theme is treated in an optimistic vein, as a phenomenon which reason may overcome, but the 'symptoms' of death fear are presented in such vivid detail that the reader may doubt if death really is 'conquered', as the narrator claims.

The purpose of this study is to follow up the theme of death and fear of death in *PVS*, as well as other biological, instinctive fears which the author suffers from and declares war upon. There is also a discussion of the effect which the narrator's acquired rationalist philosophy has upon his concept of morality. Finally an attempt is made to establish literary models, which influenced the work - a question which is particularly relevant in view of the professed autobiographical aspect of *PVS*.⁴

The narrator of *PVS* suffers from melancholy and misanthropy. In addition phobias and irrational fears plague him. Finally he places his last hopes for a cure from these evils in scientifically developed psycho-analytical and physiological methods. He combines the theories of Freud and Pavlov. In order to diagnose his ills he takes the Freudian methods of unburdening himself through confession (the writing of *PVS*) and of reliving the past, penetrating ever deeper into it through an activation of memory. In order to cure himself he applies the Pavlovian theory of conditioned reflexes to his psychological problems. These two theories determine the structure of the work, which in its first half consists of a series of significant recollections, told in anecdotal form and arranged in such a way as to show the growing intensification of the author's reflex reactions to certain stimuli. The second half is a scientific commentary which includes explanations of Freud's and Pavlov's ideas, illustrations of these through case histories other than the narrator's own (but basically variants of his case), the author's final diagnosis of his illness, his

eulogies to science for what it has achieved and his hopes for what it may yet do. One could say that the first part presents a mystery, the second the keys to the mystery, which enable the reader to unlock it (upon a second reading).⁵

Looking upon reflexes as the 'primal matter' of the psyche (169) the trauma-plagued narrator attributes utmost importance to finding those stimuli which once created a 'nidus of excitation' in the vortex of the brain (170), which in its turn stimulated a pain centre. He looks in his memories, dreams and oddities of behaviour for those objects which repeatedly in the past caused him such a shock that the protective reflex reaction of pain and fear would appear at the mere thought of these. The initial pathological reactions took place in the narrator's infancy, i.e. the time when man is still completely an 'animal', wherefore, unable to think, he may come to attribute negative qualities to the most innocuous objects. When reason develops the knowledge of what the frightening stimuli might have been is lost, or rather, pushed into the primitive lower regions of the psyche, the 'lower storey of the brain', as the narrator puts it. These dark regions harbour the primitive reflex reactions of man which need no logical cause to be triggered into action. From these depths the forgotten stimuli-objects decisively influence the behaviour of the adult, in our case, the narrator, without his being aware of it.

With the help of Freudian methods the narrator finally, in long 'detective work' finds the dangerous objects, which in the light of reason prove harmless. These are: water, a stretched out arm, the female breast and thunder (223). Connected with these stimuli are various objects and phenomena symbolically associated with them. The female breast e.g. is associated with the 'branch symbol' of the cow, thunder with guns and bombs (falling from the sky). The identification of these *bol'nye predmety*, as the author calls them following a French authority, proves difficult. Some are ambiguous, causing fear and delight (the female breast). In some cases the narrator skilfully deludes himself by instinctively seeking out the subconsciously dreaded object, but only when it is at a safe distance. This leads him to believe that he does not fear it, whereas, actually, he does. The narrator would e.g. lull himself into a false sense of security by watching tigers in zoos, these being a branch symbol connected with flashes of lightning as well as with 'dangerous women'. The main reason for the difficulty

is to be sought in the fact that the language of reason and the language of the subconscious differ. Reason speaks in denotative terms and logical chains of words, the subconscious in images, based on the 'irrational logic' of feeling. Perhaps only the fact that the narrator is an artist makes it possible for him to penetrate beyond the threshold of rational knowledge, stored in consciousness, and discover the world that was his 'before sunrise'. - In order to study the devious paths along which the symbolism of the four stimuli developed in the narrator's past, what strange and grotesque arabesques, in the Gogolian-Belyian sense, they weaved into the texture of his life, some of the anecdotes will be discussed.

It is made clear in *PVS* that water to the narrator is a symbol of death and 'eternal oblivion', that he fears 'death by water', the dissolving in its darkness. (See the chapter "Černaja voda", VI.) The narrator's fear of water extends to swallowed liquids. The absurd neural connection between swallowing a liquid and dying was made by the narrator when he was a pseudo-logically reasoning infant. It was confirmed by observations which were misinterpreted. Thus in the story "Razryv serdca" (144/6), placed in the section of *PVS* dealing with the age 5-15, the death of the narrator's father is described in the following manner: "Ja podchožu k pis'mennomu stolu i načinaju činit' karandaš. V uglu u okna kruglyj stolik. Na nem grafin s vodoj. Otec nalivaet stakan vody. P'et. I vdrug padaet. On padaet na pol. I padaet stul, za kotoryj on zadel. Ot užasa ja kriču". - Later, after overhearing the doctor's diagnosis - *razryv serdca* - the child apparently establishes this causal link: A glass of water made my father's heart burst. This assumption is confirmed in the child's mind by a literal interpretation of his mother's words about both him and his father (and grandfather) having a 'closed heart' ("Zakrytoe serdce", 142/3), i.e. a heart without any outlet for feelings. These then fill the heart to the rim and even a glass of water may cause the full and closed heart to burst. This mingling of concrete and emotional phenomena does not seem wrong to the child, as he also links tears - the outlet for an overfilled heart - with this water complex. Observing his mother's violent crying over her dead husband, he thinks: 'No, I could not cry like that. Probably I have a secretive (closed) heart' ("Da on umer", 145/6).

The horror of suffocating in or by water, the fear of being 'blown up' from inside (which resembles the

'bomb-theme' and 'gas-theme' in Belyj's *Peterburg*) also comes out in the story "Pytka" (57) where the narrator as a result of a suicide attempt has to have a lavement of the stomach. Not the suicide attempt (the 'flight forward' into death, willed death) but the 'cure with water' ('imposed death', murder) leaves a sombre imprint upon the youth, whose extreme sensitivity is brought out in the fact that a teacher's critical remark caused the suicide attempt. One may assume that parental remarks had an even stronger effect on the sensitive youth.

These notions of the 'closed heart' and its fragility haunt the adult narrator also, although in a new form. In the First World War his heart is damaged by gas, which, like water, is a suffocating element. After this the narrator frequently experiences 'spasms of the heart', which 'close' it, i.e. contract its muscles. The terrifying scenes of death and destruction at the front are thus linked with the contracting spasms. Any form of 'closedness' becomes associated with death in the narrator's mind. Also when the war is over, spasms of the heart remain, as a manifestation of death fear rather than a physical ailment. In the miniature story "Novyj put'" e.g. (95) the narrator, after his mother's death moves to another flat, and a motherly woman. While moving his few belongings which could not cause much physical exertion, he experiences a violent beating of his heart. but an effort of will (a command from the 'upper storey' of the brain) puts an end to this 'heart attack'. which is but masked death fear. Grief over the death of his mother, who made him aware of his 'closed heart', the knowledge that he too - like his father and mother before him - has to die cause the attack of spasms.

Later, when the narrator has realized that his heart attacks are spasms caused by fear, he cures himself by breaking conditioned reflexes of the type indicated above (drinking water causes death). He acquires an 'open heart' and becomes a normal man (158). Reason has conquered fears by proving their grotesque insubstantiality (drinking water does not at all cause death). As a result the nerves are freed from excessive spasm-causing inhibitions (179/180). The narrator who was so afraid of water that he claims he might have died from thirst (236) is in the end cured when a balance between 'storage' and 'outlet' has been found. As he puts it towards the end of *PVS*, man is not a 'pail' containing precious fluids which are wasted when spilt, as nature replenishes the losses. On the contrary, if the fluids never are expended the

organism may 'dry out' (276).⁶ Too strong a flow of the 'vital fluids' is, however, also harmful, at least to others. The narrator, at the initial stages of his 'opening up to life', is transformed from humble 'underdog' into a 'superman' with a 'barbarian's vitality' (238), into a man who 'like a tank' (238) invades the *Lebensraum* of others, demolishing everything in his path. Pessimism here reaches a climax, as it would seem that the human condition is seen as a choice between self-effacement and bullying, fear and brutality, pain or 'zoological' normality. True, the narrator tames his too great enjoyment of life at the expense of others, through his devotion to work, which in his case is art. Thus reason rescues man also from this dilemma, as the narrator arrives at the conclusion that reason is the source upon which art should feed.

The concrete beginning of the narrator's water phobia was, he assumes, a frightening experience made by the infant whilst being bathed. The instrument which immersed the infant into the bath was an 'arm'. As a result of this and other unpleasant actions towards the infant, the arm became an object of horror - a *strašna ja ruka* (213). An 'arm' interrupted pleasure, e.g. when it removed the mother's breast from the sucking infant (217). An arm, usually a male one, punished. In fact, a male 'punishing arm' seems to appear whenever the infant is enjoying itself (the expression *kara jušćaja ruka* appears on pp. 223, 224, 225, 236, 239 etc.). Unfortunate circumstances confirm the child in the belief that a male arm without justification interferes in all pleasures and delights, creating a vague sense of guilt, which develops into a pathological guilt trauma in the adult. No doubt the guilt syndrome is a dominant factor in the narrator's melancholy. The guilt feelings of childhood are transformed into a protest against any form of paternal authority, including the highest of all, at least in pre-revolutionary times, i.e. God. The adult narrator protests against an old type of morality, the religious 'crime and punishment principle'. The narrator's attempts to solve all his problems through reason is, it seems to me, an attempt to combat the concept of inherited, irrational guilt and to replace it with a new scientific morality where there is no 'guilt', but only 'mistakes', 'misconceptions' and 'misinterpretations' which can be rectified. The roots of rebellion were planted in infancy and childhood. Many of the stories dealing with this period of the narrator's life demonstrate that one of the child's main concerns was to assert innocence, escape punishment and to prove a crime not to

have been one. The variations of the 'guilt-theme' base themselves on the keyphrase 'I am not guilty'. *Ja ne vinovat* is the title of a story (131/2).

In the story (from age 5) "Ja bol'she ne budu" (120) eating 'forbidden fruit' (not out of hunger but curiosity, as in the garden of Eden), a bowl of figs, leads to physical punishment. The child feels that this punishment is only partially deserved, as he ate but a part of each fruit. Performing her punishment for this 'crime', the mother 'drags' the child towards a bed - a branch symbol which is distasteful to the adult narrator. A 'punishing arm' and a pulled 'tormented arm' are thus involved here, a detail which perhaps is reflected in the story "Zveri" discussed below. - In the story "Ne nado stojat' na ulice" (120/1), dealing with the same age, the child's father puts the blame of an accident on the child without showing any sympathy for his pains. He declares to the child that he should blame only himself. This remark is bound to have puzzled the child, as naturally he had not wanted the accident to happen. The mother sympathizes with the child but in an 'animalistic' manner. She wants to 'tear the head off' the cyclist who ran over her child. The child's inclination to interpret everything literally, of 'realizing metaphors', gives reason to assume that he believed his mother would do it. Terror is thus added to bewilderment. In the story "Ja ne vinovat" the child's protest against a paternal verdict of guilt, in fact proves successful. An irrational judgement 'from above' is overcome by the child's rational suggestion to share a pudding, the object of strife between father and son. In the story "V master-skoj" (137/8) a visit to the father's studio is described. It is some time since the mother has seen her husband. In her impatience to meet him she 'drags' the child after her by the hand. In the studio the child tries not to disturb his parents, but, unwittingly, he is guilty of annoying his mother. His presence hinders the parents from making love. On the way home the impulsive mother begins to scold her son: "Net, bol'she ja tebjja nikogda s soboj ne voz'mu. - Mne chočetsja sprositi', v čem delo, čto proizošlo. No ja molču. Ja vyrastu bol'shoj i togda vse sam uznaju. Uznaju, počemu byvajut vinovaty ljudi, esli oni rešitel'no ni v čem ne vinovaty". Presumably the author later understood why he was 'guilty' but understanding did not erase the memory of slight and having been considered superfluous and annoying. It seems likely that the story "Zveri" (110/11) deals with this childhood trauma in allegorical form.

During one of his numerous visits to the zoo, the adult narrator claims to have witnessed a scene of primeval horror.⁷ He watches how two bears, a male and a female, first tear off the paws of a bear-cub (presumably their own) in an adjoining cage and how they then, stimulated by pain and blood, engage in the sexual act. This terrifying scene follows immediately upon an idyllic one, in which a tiger and a dog demonstrate a touching friendship (this part of the story seems to have been taken from an *azbuka*: these abound in such idyllic stories). The author comments: "I begin to see what the difference is between animals and people". Undoubtedly, the difference which the narrator finds, or wants to find, between man and animal, is the distinction which reason lends man.⁸ Animals are prey to their instincts, irrespective of whether these are good or bad. Both their kind and cruel actions are biologically conditioned, not the result of a conscious moral choice. The basis for the touching friendship between dog and tiger is purely biological. The dog nursed the tiger-cub when it lost its mother. Man's actions should be guided by morality and reason, but this is rarely the case. Even a mother's love is but a 'dog love', a nursing reflex, which is immediately forgotten when other biological urges make themselves felt, i.e. when the husband appears to demand his rights. Then the children are put into an 'adjoining cage'. Should they dare to make a nuisance of themselves, their 'paws' are 'torn off', their pitiable complaints neglected, severe punishment administered (for no crime), so that the parents freely can indulge in their brutish sexual act.

It is logical that the third *bol'noj predmet* should be the female breast - source of delight and suffering, well-being and revulsion - a pleasant object torn away from the sucking infant by a merciless male hand. A too literal interpretation of his mother's words about her once having been frightened by thunder whilst nursing him and about him 'sucking up the fright with the milk' (220) makes the narrator associate the female breast with terror. Also the fact that the mother, in order to wean him, smeared her nipples with quinine, thus 'poisoning' the milk, causes the narrator to regard women as impure and sullied creatures, even causing rashes (on a psychological basis, see "Bednyj Fedja", 248/9). A link in this chain of associations is the story "Nu, teper' spite" (127/8), where these phobias are treated in the form of an allegory.

The story relates the bedside stories of the narrator's *njanja*. She tells about a nice fairy who

keeps finding frogs and snakes under her cushion and in her shoes. All this *nečist'* is let loose by an evil fairy who, annoyed that the good fairy has made friends with the frogs and snakes, turns into a cow. In the morning the child refuses to drink his milk, as he suspects that it comes from the transformed fairy. Presumably he fears that her milk is tainted by the *nečist'*. Also the transformation from a pretty, light fairy to a clumsy cow is frightening. It is perhaps not by chance that, discussing the poetry of the symbolists and dismissing most of it as false and cloying, the narrator should have chosen a poem by Bal'mont about a fairy to illustrate his point. One could draw the conclusion from the narrator's literary judgements that he is opposed to the depiction of women as ethereal, angelic and unearthly beings, their essence being more 'cow-like' than 'fairy-like'.⁹ The opinion of Soviet critics that *PVS* reveals a cynical attitude towards women (17) has some basis. An 'un-romantic' and 'physiological' attitude towards women dominates in *PVS*, and not infrequently the narrator wishes to 'un-mask' them, in the tradition of the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger. It should be pointed out, however, that pity towards women is also an important element in his attitude, perhaps inspired by his childhood pity for his mother whose unrequited love for her husband the boy understood early in life.¹⁰

No doubt the animalistic aspect of human nature is particularly strong in women. *PVS* is full of women characters whose impulses and instincts are stronger than reason, and its corollary, i.e. morality, duty and loyalty. Unhindered by reflection these women possess truly 'barbaric strength'. The story "Ja sam vinovat" depicts a woman of this type.¹¹ She is 'beyond good and evil' for the simple reason that she would not know what these concepts stand for. She is interested only in satisfying her desires, which she does unthinkingly, like an animal. Stimulated by the narrator's kisses during a walk, she is confronted by the problem that they have no room to go to. She therefore disappears (for twenty minutes) to another lover (with a room) who satisfies those desires which were aroused by the first lover. She cannot see that her behaviour is wrong but laughingly declares to the narrator that 'it was his own fault'. Thus she also adds to his guilt syndrome and the feeling that he is always guilty without exactly understanding why (*bez viny vinovat*).

Among the 'strong women' filled with an irrational 'will to live' there is one of considerable propor-

tions, a woman as grotesque as Špon'ka's aunt. It is the circus rider Èl'vira ("Èl'vira", 61/2). Under the circus cupola her strong arms hold three men. Transferring her affections from a general to the narrator she causes him to see the war as a welcome escape from her love. Whether possessing such massive proportions or not, women in *PVS* are often shown to be 'overwhelming', as overwhelming as Mother Nature herself. This aspect of womanhood is connected with yet another facet of the nursing trauma, namely the fact that mothers may unintentionally harm the infants at their breast. This recurring motif indicates the symbolic aspect of women as symbols of Nature, which feeds and kills her 'children' with the same mindless, purposeless indifference. In the narrator's case, his mother once swooned whilst nursing him, when she heard a clap of thunder. She dropped the child on the bed and fell down (presumably also on the bed). She damaged the infant's arm in the process. In this incident we find yet another reason for the narrator's dislike of beds - a place where he was punished and hurt by his mother.¹²

Analysing this incident the narrator particularly mentions that it must have been frightening to the infant to be aware of the mother's senseless body (221). It probably appeared huge to the infant and could have suffocated him by sheer weight, had it fallen upon him. What almost happened in the case of the narrator does take place in the infancy of a 'very handsome young man' (perhaps the narrator's 'double', see the story "Istorija molodogo čeloveka", 243/4). His mother fell asleep when nursing him and woke up only 'when the infant was almost blue'. Naturally this young man has a neurosis of the stomach whenever he feels obliged to approach a woman. - Suffocation is thus a danger connected with water and woman in like measure. The 'drowning sensation' of the sexual act is symbolic of the 'dissolving' in death. Woman opens the gates to death. In love for her the light of reason is extinguished and primeval darkness envelops man. For this 'betrayal of light' he, like Adam in Eden, is punished from above by a paternal authority, for the crime of having made love to Eve. He re-experiences this ancient terror and guilt. Childish fears of paternal authority at home reinforce instincts inherited from the infancy of mankind. The concept of 'inherited guilt' connected with the 'fall' mingles with the irrational guilt feelings of infancy. Unfortunate circumstances, as usual in the narrator's case, increase the intensity of instinctive reactions. The 'storiette'

"Umiraet djadja Saša" (164) - a chronologically earlier variant of the 'drinking leads to death' motif - tells how the child was drinking milk when he heard his dying uncle's cries of death agony. A fatal knot is here tied of various associative threads: milk, women, cows, drinking, disrupted pleasure, etc. are linked to the idea of horrible suffering and death.

Nature gives life. Life has to end and nature puts an end to life. Returning to the dark womb of nature, dying man often clings to infantile reflexes, particularly 'natural man', the 'child of nature', who does not experience any conflict between 'biology' and his reason. This idea seems to underly the story "Umiraet starik" (87/8), where a peasant, feeling the moment of death approaching, asks to hold on to a young woman's breast. Clinging to this symbol of infantile bliss, he calmly gives himself up to the *Urmutter*. This old man returns to the realm 'before sunrise' without fear, as (conscious) fear of death arises with the awakening of reason. 'The child (and the animal) does not know what death is ... Awareness of it comes with the development of the intellect' (278) the narrator states. Suicides are usually committed by impulsive, irrational and childish people who are not aware of their death fears, as these are hidden deep in their subconscious.

The narrator who is a man of intellect and fully aware of what death means, does not expect to fall back upon infantile reflex reactions in senility. For him the primitive type of death where dying becomes a 'natural event', is not dignified enough. He looks for another and better solution than a mere return to Mother Nature to overcome his fear of death. He does finally find it in the cultivation of proper habits, which develop functional reflexes. He teaches himself to think calmly of the inevitable, to evaluate properly the usefulness of death as a means of renewal, to control the rise of irrational fears. The war between the lower and the upper storey of the brain, between instinctive reflexes and acquired habits, finds its culmination in the conscious creation of a controlled 'death acceptance attitude'.¹³ Before reason produces this sound and willed 'death acceptance', the narrator has many a moment of horror, however.

Registering with his great power of observation all the uncouth and grotesque manifestations of death, the narrator is terrified by the helplessness of the dead, who have to suffer whatever is done to them without protest. In the war story "V sadu" e.g. he watches a mass burial of soldiers. It frightens him to see how the dead men are lumped together like logs and that

they cannot protest against this treatment. The passivity which death forces upon man is one of its darkest aspects. The intellectual narrator has a need to be always in control of a situation. Death, this most unreasonable manifestation of unreasonable nature, puts an end to human control, by lowering man to the status of unconscious matter. Death is a painful and terrifying form of humiliation. Already as a child the narrator was struck by the fact that death degrades man, that it is a grotesque event as well as a melancholy one. In church, at his father's funeral, the child observed the dead: "... ležat blednye, nepodvižnye, kak voskovye kukly (...) kakoj-to puzatyj tolstyj čelovek. Takoj puzatyj, čto vrjad li zakroetsja grob pri takom brjuče. Vpročem, prižmut kryškoj. Ceremonit'sja ne budut. Vse ravno on teper' ne čuvstvuuet, ne vidit". ("Na kladbišče", 146/7).

The fourth basic stimulus proved to be thunder, or more exactly, an *udar* (223), i.e. any unexpected blow (from above). Like the other stimuli this one assumes many shapes and combines with the others in various complex patterns. Thus claps of thunder are associated with roaring tigers (221), which in their swift 'pouncing' movements and bright colouring symbolize flashes of lightning, unexpectedly hurled down from the skies to destroy man. Tigers are also linked to 'stunning women', such as Tata T., a 'tigress'. She has the 'bright, dazzling colours of a young tigress' and looks beautiful in furs (52). Love and punishment, sin and its wages, are naturally linked in this stimulus and its branch symbols. The elements water and fire may even combine to bring about the destruction of the narrator when he assumes the role of lover. In the story "Svidanie" (53/4) the youthful narrator takes his friend Nadja to a cinema called *Molnija* where they for two hours exchange kisses. But even this innocent love pleasure is marred, as fear of punishment stirs in the narrator's subconscious, stimulated by the unfortunate name of the cinema as well as the fact that he met Nadja at a monument devoted to a shipwreck.

Yet another variant of the punishment trauma is the triangle drama motif. The punishing judge of the heavens is here represented by a husband, who, wronged, wields a pistol instead of thunderbolts. Invited to a tête-à-tête by the 'tigress' Tata T. the narrator and she are surprised by the elderly and surly husband who suddenly opens the door. The narrator does not accept the offer to return the next day and instead he departs from the city. In this case a whole series of

bol'nye predmety and their symbols influence his decision: his fear of revengeful father figures who 'strike' suddenly, his fear of doors which opening unexpectedly reveal the horrors of retribution, culminating in death, his fear of daytime love, associated with being deprived of the lifegiving breast, i.e. again the loss of life. His unsolved childhood trauma, his Oedipus complex, leads the narrator time and again into triangle situations which allow him to re-experience his jealousy of and protest against his father, as well as the disappointment with the mother who eventually always takes the father's side. Another reason for his preference for married women is to be found in the narrator's 'Podkolesin complex', which is a part of his 'flight complex'. The narrator is in a constant state of flight, fleeing women, their punishing husbands, cows and tigers, thunder and lightning, water and fire, and in the final analysis - always death. He is fleeing the situation 'from which there is no way out' (274, footnote).¹⁴

Death is the situation where man is trapped. Even the rectifying of misconceptions about death cannot hide the fact that it is inevitable and frightening. Even normal man fears death. In a religious world view only God can be blamed for the existence of death, in the sense, that having power over life and death, God could abolish death, but does not do so. The narrator of *PVS* 'blames' God for this refusal to eliminate death. His 'conquest' of death therefore assumes an anti-religious flavour. Creating a new concept of death the narrator battles with God and His authority.

The religious concepts which the narrator combats in *PVS* (without expressly saying so) are these: the arm of almighty God (*karajuščaja ruka*) takes hold of the sinner with irresistible strength and throws him into the black abyss of death, as punishment for guilt, incurred without evil intentions (inherited sin). The narrator believes in God with his emotions ('atavistic instincts'), but he wants to overcome faith with the help of reason. He sees himself as a 'prodigal son' who refuses return to his Father's house. He indicates that a reconciliation between a heavenly Father (or any paternal authority) and a prodigal son is but a 'tale' (see the motto to chapter IV, 119, which is repeated in the text, 158). The narrator makes a point of saying that he is 'not at all religious' but believes in the 'iron formulas of science' (40). One of these iron formulas which he accepts is the view that religion is created by primitive man as a response to dangers in surrounding nature. Religion, in this view,

can thus be discarded in a civilized age, when man knows that electric friction causes thunder and lightning and not the 'punishing hand of almighty God', His *strašnaja, karajuščaja ruka*. It is in these anti-religious terms that the author struggles with his phobias and complexes: "V odno mgnoven'e uvidel sebja takim, kak ja byl, - temnym, malen'kim dikarem, ustrašennym každoj ten'ju. Zataiv dychanie, ozirajas', prislušivajas' k ryčanju tigrov, ja šel i bežal skvoz' zarosli lesa. I čto moglo byt' u menja v serdce, krome toski i ustalosti" (226). The narrator shares the general Soviet concept of religion as a complex of ideas which enslave man, causing him to glorify suffering and passivity (291) and to fear a terrifying afterlife. Declaring God non-existent the narrator can discard the idea of eternal punishment. No longer must he 'suffer' death. He rejects the 'passive death' of religion where the soul is 'given up' to God and the body to nature. Instead he chooses the 'active death' of Soviet man, expressed in the formula 'conquest over death' (chapter XI is entitled "Razum pobeždaet smert'"). The reasonable solution is, as has been said, the creation of a sound 'readiness' for death, by acquiring the proper habits in regard to this phenomenon. This solution makes it possible to avoid a surprising death, which strikes its victim unawares, like a 'thunderbolt'. At the same time it makes death a powerful factor in life by forcing man to be constantly preoccupied with it. If the thought of death becomes an ingrained habit little mental energy is wasted, of course, but even the narrator admits that 'readiness' can be carried too far. He tells the story of a man who kept a coffin in his study with a special 'window' for the face, in order to get used to and accept the idea of death (an idea which seems borrowed from monastic life). A peasant who keeps a wooden cross at home as a reminder of death meets with the narrator's approval, however (286-9). This peasant thus compares favourably with the helpless peasant in "Umiraet starik", discussed above, who needed 'animal comfort' because he chose the 'passive way'.

In addition to religion, literature confronts the narrator with the problem of suffering and death. Art, as it has hitherto been, has frequently contained irrational and even pathological aspects. Ironically enough, the narrator who admits to having written a work where he has discussed matters 'usually not treated in novels' (39), who is opposed to fascist philosophy and therefore presumably also to the notion of *entartete Kunst*, stands up for 'normal art', de-

claring that 'absolute health' is the 'ideal of art' (275). He denies that genius and insanity are linked (275), and is prepared to sacrifice art, if they should prove to be after all. (The 'normal genius' might prefer to devote himself to life rather than art.) He puts himself up as a good example of a rational writer (after his cure), neglecting the fact that he almost exclusively treats his pathological self in *PVS*. He denies that the ruling control of reason has diminished the power of his art and asserts that, on the contrary, it has increased: "My hand has become firmer. My voice more sonorous. And my songs more cheerful" (309). These arguments are not very convincing and perhaps the narrator, instead of defending 'normal art', is in fact parodying the concept of the 'optimistic writer'. The narrator is aware of the restrictions which 'aesthetics of optimism' impose. He wonders e.g. whether it is compatible with the canons of socialist realism to discuss the theme of death, and although he decides that it is, the very question indicates doubt (280). Probably the narrator does fear that excessive rationalism would destroy the immediacy and magic of art (what he calls the 'immediacy of sheep', 294), even art itself. It remains open to debate whether he thinks that health is worth that price. It is possible that the narrator, in view of fascist warfare, is prepared to sacrifice the irrational element in man, as it mostly leads to evil. Out of two evils - the cold rule of reason and the destructive despotism of animal irrationalism - he chooses the lesser, i.e. reason. Speculating, I would suggest that the narrator sees the realm of the irrational subconscious as one from which both good and evil rise. He prefers, however, to take 'no risks' with the unpredictable creature man. Like the Grand Inquisitor he decides that freedom of choice is more than man can bear. These suppositions seem confirmed by the story "Presyščenie" (244/6).

The story tells of a femme fatale who causes her many lovers untold sufferings. Spoiled by success she becomes oversatiated and bored. Seeing the apathy of this 'tiger woman', the narrator ponders, if he should restore her rapacious vitality to her (by disclosing the reasons for her apathy), but decides not to do so. It is better to leave her subdued and indifferent to life than to restore her animal lusts, as she would undoubtedly again enter the path of destruction and evil. Deeply disillusioned with mankind, man and woman, the narrator believes that a bored tiger in a cage is to be preferred to an amused tiger let loose. He dis-

cerns no other alternative.

The conquest of reason over instinct is thus imperative, but the narrator parts with sadness with the irrational world of art, if indeed he does part with it. His interest in aesthetics, the fact that he throughout his work relies on literary allusions, his use of epigraphs, would seem to indicate a reluctance to part with pessimistic literature of the past. Some examples of the narrator's dependence upon old (= prerevolutionary) literature are now discussed.

Like A. Belyj in *Peterburg*, Zoščenko turns to that literary work which is the cornerstone of the Petersburg myth, i.e. Puškin's *Mednyj Vsadnik*, in order to build his own myth around it. Except for the ending of *Mednyj Vsadnik* (from now on referred to as *MV*), where Evgenij's 'cold corpse' is found, the narrator's fate in *PVS* resembles that of Evgenij to a remarkable degree.¹⁵ Evgenij suffers a shock during the flooding of his city, when he loses his loved ones. He now no longer believes in a kind Providence. Life has lost all meaning to him. He goes insane. In this state he instinctively attempts to understand who or what caused his illness and misfortune. He revisits the place where he suffered his initial shock, thus attempting a 'Freudian' cure through repeating the shock effect. The 'method' proves effective, as Evgenij understands who it is who is responsible for his sufferings: "Evgenij vzdrognul. Projasnilis' | V nem strašno mysli. On uzna, | I mesto, gde potop igral (...) i togo | Kto nepodvižno vozvyšalsja | Vo mrake mednoju glavoj ...". Evgenij recognizes him who "Nad vozmuščennoju Nevoju | Stoit s prostertoju rukoju ...". His anguish is caused by an authoritative father figure which represents (unjust) punishment, who stretches out a punishing arm ("s prostertoju rukoju") ready to pounce on a helpless and innocent victim to punish him for crimes committed by the 'father' himself. The protest against the 'father of the state' evokes immediate wrath: "Mgnovenno gnevom vozgorja", the statue of Peter begins the pursuit of Evgenij who is doomed to a nightmarish flight: "I vo vsju noč' bezumec bednyj | Kuda stopy ni obraščal, | Za nim povsjudu Vsadnik Mednyj | S tjaželym topotom skakal".

In Belyj's novel Evgenij is pursued through the centuries until he is reincarnated in Dudkin. Another 'reincarnation' of 'poor Evgenij' is the narrator of *PVS*.¹⁶ He is haunted by irrational guilt feelings which assume the symbolic shape of a "čugunnaja ten' prošlogo". (86/7). He too is doomed to anguished flight: "I kuda

by ja ni obraščal svoj smuščennyj vzor - vsjudu ja videl odno i to že. Gibel' ožidala menja v ljuboj moment moej žizni" (308) (Cf. *Kuda stopy ni obraščal*). The expression *smuščennyj vzor* is more literary than a similar one in the 'source', where it is said that Evgenij, after the fatal night, did not dare to raise his glance towards the statue: "Smuščennyh glaz ne podymal | ...". Gogol' and Puškin have blended in the narrator's style.

The kinship between Evgenij and Zoščenko's narrator is also a 'psychological' one. Both suffer from spasms of the heart. Passing the statue, Evgenij reacts in this manner: "V ego lice izobražalos' | Smjatenie. K serdcu svoemu | On prižimal pospešno ruku, | Kak by ego smirjaja muku, ...". They also share the inclination to fall into a kind of stupor when they seem impervious to outer impressions. In Evgenij's case the shock effect of the flood is described thus: "Bez šljapy, ruki šzav krestom, | Sidel nedvižnyj, strašno blednyj | Evgenij ...". The narrator of *PVS* experiences similar reactions when confronted with water: "Ja počemu-to ležu na polu. Ruki u menja raskinuty. I pal'cy ruk v vode ... Mne ne chočetsja podnjat'sja ... do večera ležu v kakom-to ocepenenii". ("V gostinice", 116).

There are other details which link *PVS* to *MV*. Even the 'bear-cub situation' has a counterpart in *MV* where Evgenij puts his forehead against the iron bars surrounding the monument of the Rider ("... čelo | K rešetke chladnoj privileglo"). Perhaps it is significant that statues of lions make up part of the traumatic scene in Evgenij's case, thus corresponding to the destructive tigers in *PVS*. Also the image of the flood in *MV* as 'evil waves, entering windows like thieves' may well have helped the narrator of *PVS* to express his interlinked fear of thieves (burglars, beggars), trying to enter his abode and that of water, seeping into his domicile through all openings. In the story "Dvadcat' tret'e sentjabrja" (105/6) the allusions to *MV* are obvious.

To return to the protagonists of the respective works, they are both susceptible to nightmarish dreams ("Ego terzal kakoj-to son", it is said about deranged Evgenij). Above all, they are both placed in a similar existential attitude, where life seems to be a meaningless nightmare. While the 'I' of *PVS* wonders if it is worth while to strive towards any goal, when we are 'but guests' in this world (182), the same mood is evoked in *MV* in these terms: "... il' vsja naša | I žizn' ničto, kak son pustož, | Nasmeska neba nad zem-

lej". Naturally the 'existential parallelism' is broken when Zoščenko's narrator is cured from his pessimism.

The allusions in *PVS* are not only to *MV*. There are also allusions to Belyj's *Peterburg*, particularly in regard to the Oedipus situation. In *Peterburg* Nikolaj Ableuchov is one of several prodigal sons. His aversion towards his father is based on a sexual trauma, which causes him to hate his *roditel'*. This trauma creates problems in Nikolaj's relations with women.¹⁷ This sexual motif is connected with a death motif in the novel, as Nikolaj is repelled by the signs of decay and old age in his father, which foreshadow his own decline. For this reluctance to repeat the established pattern of life Nikolaj is pursued by paternal nemesis, symbolized by the metallic statue. A closer comparative study of the two works would undoubtedly reveal many more parallels.

It could be claimed that irrational art, rather than sober reason, becomes the narrator's true ally in his struggles with phobias and fears.¹⁸ The myths, symbols and images of art (as well as religion) reveal patterns and parallels, give form to formless fears and can be used as magic spells to exorcise horror. They make life meaningful in spite of the inevitable end in the 'abyss', which even reason cannot make less inevitable. Thus the symbolism of the Petersburg myth reveals and confirms to the author his hatred of despotic authority which punishes the weak for their weakness and turns them into 'beggars of life'.

In view of this power of art to reveal truths which include the truth of reason but also go beyond it, it is probably not accidental that the only female being with whom the narrator shares a spiritual experience is a little girl called *Muza* (the childhood story "Muza"). She shows him books as befits a muse. She is, above all, merciful and accepts the author exactly as he is. She accepts him as her *ženich* in spite of his slight stature, physical weakness and bad marks at school. To seal their pact she kisses him, and although the narrator is 'horrified' at the kiss, horror this time more resembles awe: "Začem vy ěto sdelali? - govorju ja, užasajas' ee postupku. - Pocelui skrepljajut dogovor, - govorit ona. - Teper' my ženich i nevesta. My idem v stolovuju". (This is a reversal of the usual 'I go away' ending, cf. note 14).

Literature not only provides the narrator with a betrothed, but also with a kind and rational father figure in the person of M.Gor'kij. In the reminiscence "U Gor'kogo" (98/9) the writer's paternal kindness, his concrete and sensible concern for the narrator

are shown. Towards the end of *PVS* the narrator states his sympathy for Gor'kij's ideas about suffering and the need to hate this 'shameful thing' ("pozor mira", 292).¹⁹ Literature, including the biographies and lives of other writers, furthermore gives him 'brethren in misfortune'. Amongst these are Gogol' with his constant need of travel, i.e. flight, his fear of women, his food traumas (often overstuffing himself, yet dying from hunger), Poe with his water phobia and guilt-ridden love, Balzac with his fear of marriage and Madame Hanska, Flaubert with his disgust for the flesh and 'clinical' attitude towards love. Amongst his contemporaries he chooses Majakovskij with his fear of bacillae (i.e. *nečist'*, cf. the anecdote about the fairy turned into a cow) and Blok and Esenin, attempting to hide their despair behind masks.

In its mixture of genres, such as allegory, grotesque, scientific treatise, speculative utopia (the chapter on electric and magnetic fields, cosmic radiation etc.), *Bildungsroman* and anecdote, Zoščenko's *PVS* belongs to a symbolist category of *Allkunstwerk*. Symbolist, and more generally, 'modernist' aesthetics have decisively influenced it. The attempt to fuse heterogeneous themes was made in Sologub's *Tvorimaja legenda*, where 'romantic' themes blend with political and scientific ones. In the frequent use of literary allusions and epigraphs to evoke a theme or mood, as well as in the use of *ostranenie* devices (the realization of childish, literal interpretations of reality) Zoščenko's work shares some traits with Belyj's novels. Similar themes and motifs interest both authors, e.g. the attempt to pass beyond the threshold of memory (*Kotik Letaeu*) and the Oedipus situation.²⁰ *PVS* also shares some of the dominating moods with Blok's third volume of verse (such cycles as *Pljaski smerti*), as the frequent use of Blok quotations indicates. V. Rozanov's *Opavšie list'ja* (the genre of which also is difficult to establish), giving the title for chapter III, clearly has much in common with Zoščenko's stylized and fictionalized biography, e.g. the desire to reveal one's most intimate and physiological self, at the same time employing subtle masking devices to hide the self. In Zoščenko's case the 'new self' of the narrator exposes his 'old self' which no longer is he himself (39).²¹ Sharing an interest in the 'physiological aspect' of human existence, the two writers reveal diametrically opposed attitudes towards it however.

Whatever the links between Zoščenko's *PVS* and modernist literature, it is a work which transcends the canons of socialist realism. It could be considered a

work in the literary traditions of the Serapion brotherhood, but for some factors which could be considered as elements of socialist realism. One such element is the either-or attitude of *PVS*, which claims to leave no problem unsolved.

In the world of *PVS* man is faced with a limited choice. He must choose between acquired, motivated and logical habits and instinctive, wild destructive reflexes, between a constantly vigilant consciousness (which yields a sense of duty, morality, control over base impulses etc.) and a slumbering consciousness (which yields egotism, destructiveness, faithlessness etc.), between being a well-functioning machine and an animal. There is no other alternative. Having said 'A', Zoščenko's reformed man must say 'B'. Sympathy for the illogical, irrational and frightened 'little man', considered to be typical of the early Zoščenko, is in *PVS* out of the question.

Having chosen reason which is always 'good' and rejected emotions which are both 'good' and 'bad' (usually the latter) the narrator of *PVS* embraces Gor'kian ideas of 'active humanism' (opposed to the passive, emotional humanism of the past). He accepts Gor'kij's optimistic view of the future as a gradual increase of light at the expense of darkness, or reason at the expense of emotional irrationality. Like Gor'kij, he visualizes the triumph of light in (pseudo) scientific terms, science being an objective yardstick of positive values. The speculations in *PVS* about electricity and magnetism and the radiation exchange between living organisms as well as cosmic radiation, are similar to Gor'kij's scientific-utopian speculations, as expressed in his 'god-building' period, or, more clearly, in his *Fragments from my Diary*.²² In the *Fragments* man is seen as a 'machine', the function of which is to refine matter through mental activity, to "transmute (...) so-called 'dead matter' into a psychical energy". This process of transmutation, Gor'kij hopes, will continue until all gross matter has been transformed into Thought.

In the case of the narrator of *PVS* this trust in 'scientific life' and the power of human Reason finds an explanation in his pathological disgust of the flesh. This disgust is clearly formulated in the earlier story "Siren' cvetet" where the narrator declares: "... avtor v svoich vozzrenijach dokatilsja do togo, čto načal obižat'sja na nepročnost' i nedolgovečnost' čelovečeskogo organizma i na to, čto čelovek, naprimer, sostoit glavnym obrazom iz vody, iz vlagi. - Da èto, pomilujte, (...) vosklical avtor (...) Voda,

trucha, glina i (...) Ugol' kažetsja. I vdobavok v ètom prache ešče čut' mikroby zavodjatsja ...". Although this attitude towards the human body is relegated to the past, it permeates *PVS* also. The author of *PVS* has an equal contempt for 'biological man', although he would deny it. It is true that he is prepared to accept the human body in *PVS*, but only on the condition that it becomes a 'case', enfolding Reason. Reason alone ennobles the 'lump of water and clay' which is the body of man.

Through the various optimistic messages of *PVS* the narrator's self-contempt remains clearly discernable. It is self-contempt which causes him to 'theorize himself into a thing'.²³ Self-contempt is accompanied by a despairing contempt for mankind. In spite of all efforts on the narrator's part, faith in Reason cannot recompense him for his loss of faith in Providence, mankind and himself. Death acceptance cannot replace the dream of life eternal. The happier the narrator claims to be, the unhappier he seems to be in actual fact. This hidden dissonance of *PVS* makes it a moving human document, and a literary work outside any specific school.

NOTES

1. In Ju.Oleša's *Envy* there is such a contrast between the 'physiological' Kavalierov and the football player Makarov who masters his body, as if it were a machine. N.Ostrovskij's Pavka Korčagin is a 'machine man', made out of 'tempered steel' as he is. The conflict between the weak biological man and the strong man of will may well take place within one man, as in Ė.Bagrickij's *TBC*, where the poet's illness represents the biological weakness to be overcome. Cf. also the Proletkul't cult of clean, non-biological matter such as metal.
2. The edition consulted for this study is: M.Zoščenko, *Pered voschodom solnca*, New York 1973. Page references to this edition are found in brackets () in the text. For the rendering of special terminology in English I have consulted the translation of *Pered voschodom solnca* made by G.Kern. See his *Before Sunrise*, Ann Arbor 1974. - The exact genre of the work is not easy to define. The author himself refers to it as a work 'written in many genres' (309).
3. The author establishes symbolic correspondences between the 'black army of fascism' (312) and his 'youthful years which were painted in black' (41) on one hand, and the 'heroic Red Army' (312) and the rising sun of reason, on the other. A symbolic struggle between 'Red' and 'Black' takes place on many levels of *PVS*. Cf. the use of military terminology in the narrator's struggle against his traumas: "Oni prinjali boj <...> kogda solnce osvetilo mesto poedinka ja uvidel žalukuju i varvarskuju morduju moego vraga ..." (237). - For the reactions to *PVS*, see the prefaces by Vera von Wiren and Boris Filippov to the incomplete edition of *PVS*, New York/Baltimore 1967 and the preface by von Wiren to the 1973 edition.
4. The work is autobiographical in form, but the narrator naturally wears a mask. To what extent the narrator and the living personality behind him may be identified is discussed in H.McLean's article "Zoshchenko's Unfinished Novel: *Before Sunrise*", in: *Major Soviet Writers*, ed. Ed.J.Brown, London/Oxford/New York 1973. How closely modelled upon the author's life some details and incidents are comes out in K.Čukovskij's memoirs of Zoščenko. See his *Sobranie sočinenij* (in six vls.), T.2, Moskva 1965. On the other hand some allegedly autobiographical incidents have a literary flavour and probably reveal a symbolic rather than 'realistic' truth about the author. As is usually the case with the confessional genre, facts and fiction blend.
5. The planned title for *PVS* was *Ključ i sčast'ja* which would have suited its 'mystery story aspect', the narrator seeing his struggle with inner enemies as a *sledstvennyj rosyysk* (308). The original title was probably rejected as there already existed a novel with that title, written by the notorious A.A.

Verbickaja. - For a discussion of the structure of *PVS*, see Kern's "After the Afterword", *op.cit.*

6. 'Drinking' the pleasures of life, the narrator fears both a 'too much' and a 'too little', as is evidenced by his concern for such factors as abstinency (263), the clogging of arteries (236), vomiting etc., i.e. the whole system of intake and output in bodily functions.
7. A 'visit to the zoo' belongs to the recurring motifs of Zoščenko's literary production. One of the most 'zoological' descriptions of such a visit is to be found in *Vozvraščennaja molodost'*, where the narrator watches 'monkeys': "Užasno burnye dviženija, prjamo daže čudoviščnaja radost' žizni, strašnaja, potrjasajuščaja ènergija i bešenoe zdorov'e byli vidny v každom dviženii ètich obez'jan. Oni užasno besnovalis', každuju sekundu byli v dviženii, každuju minutu lapali svoich samok, žrali, kakali, prygali i dralis'. Èto prosto byl ad. Èto byl nastojaščij i daže, govorja vozvyšennym jazykom, velikolepnyj pir zdorov'ja i žizni". Naturally the author is here not only speaking of monkeys. In a Sologubian tradition, the 'zoo' in Zoščenko's work is an image of human society.
8. McLean doubts that the narrator really finds any difference between animals and men. He writes: "But the implication seems to be that they are no different ... a misanthropic note that also lurks in a good deal of Zoshchenko's humorous work" (1973:318).
9. The 'cow-like' aspect of women haunted the author already in *Vozvraščennaja molodost'*, where the grotesque story of a woman who, having lost her baby, still produces ample quantities of milk, is told. For some time she squeezes this excess milk into a cup, which her husband drinks. We thus have a similar transformation as in the case of the fairy turned cow. Here it is a woman who functions as a cow, and the story is not a fairy tale but a 'scientific fact'. - The husband, incidentally, does not like the milk but drinks it out of a sense of economy.
10. See e.g. "Mama plačet" (136,6), "Mama našla bilety" (136/7). The story "Zamševye perčatki" also testifies to the narrator's pity for the spurned.
11. For other women of this type, see also "Poezd opozdal" (106/7) and "Èto vozmutil'no" (112-14). The 'youth elixir' Tulja in *Vozvraščennaja molodost'* also belongs to this category of women who are filled with a frightening vitality.
12. The narrator of *PVS* implies that there are many parallels between Gogol's fate and his own. A dislike for beds is an oddity they share. Gogol's dislike of beds is discussed on pp.269-271, the narrator's is mentioned on pp.214,220 and 227.
13. Cf. N.Evreinov's idea that 'trying on deaths' was useful because "the salubrious action of playing <...> will effect a cure" (of death fear). See Kern, 1974:346/7.

14. Cf. Kern (1974:359) who notes the "repetition of the same actions with different people" as a characteristic feature of the recollections. He writes: "Leaving a woman, for example, becomes almost a ritual performance in these sketches. This impression is heightened by the repetition of the same words ("I leave", "I go away", etc.)".
15. Zoščenko stated his interest in Puškin in these terms: "Ne tol'ko nekotorye sjužety Puškina, no i ego manera, forma, stil', kompozicija byli vseгда dlja menja pokazatel'ny". How concrete his interest was is demonstrated in Zoščenko's pastiche "Šestaja povest' I.P.Belkina: *Talisman*". "Talisman" is 'old' in form and 'new' in content. Its message is that charms have no magic power. It could be said of *PVS* that the author here similarly 'corrects' the contents of *MV*, showing that protest against authority is feasible. "Talisman" is published in M.Zoščenko, *Rasskazy, povesti, fel'etony, teatr, kritika*, Leningrad 1937 (the quote above is on p.133).
16. Yet another 'reincarnation' is Oleša's Kavalеров whose 'Peter' is Andrej Babičev. Cf. e.g. the scene where Kavalerov shouts 'kalbasnik' at Babičev (corresponding to Evgenij's *užo tebe*) and where Babičev reacts in this manner to the challenge: "Ja videl tol'ko ego, Babičeva, *vozvyšavšego-sja tirol'koj svoej nad ostal'nymi*. Pomnju želanie zakryt' glaza i prisest' *za bar'er*. <...> *Lico Babičeva obratilos' ko mne*. <...> *Strach kakogo-to nemedlennogo nakazanija vverg menja v sostojanie, podobnoe snu*. (The emphasis is mine - IMD). Perhaps the fact that Ivan Babičev alludes to his brother as "šarlatan nemeckij" (in those little ditties he sings in cheap restaurants) is also significant in this connection, as this allusion creates a parallel to the 'Dutch' Peter.
17. Cf. K.Močul'skij, *Andrej Belyj* (Paris 1955), 175: "Povestvovatel'naja proza Belogo opredeljaetsja tremja motivami: vospominanijami detstva, figuroj čudaka-otca i dvojnym semejnym konfliktom: meždu otcom i mater'ju i meždu otcom i synom". Cf. also "Po otnošeniju k Belomu primenimo učenje Frejda o 'komplekse Ėdipa'. Duševnaja rana, polučennaja v rannem detstve, stala dlja nego rokom nasledstvennosti ..." (178).
18. Many of the examples given to illustrate the triumph of reason in *PVS* are unconvincing, e.g. the story of a murderer, who after having read *Vozvraščennaja molodost'* came to believe that feelings can be controlled and regretted his deed (311).
19. For a discussion of Gor'kij's world view, see George Kline, *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia*, Chicago/London 1968.
20. Cf. George Reavey, *Soviet Literature To-day* (New Haven 1947), 103: "The book [*PVS*, IMD] has some resemblance to Andrei Biely's *The Childhood of Kotik Letajev*, but it is more realistically written and purports to have a scientific basis

in place of Biely's mystical approach."

21. The discrepancy between the final printed work and biographical data is emphasized by Rozanov: "Možno rasskazat' o sebe očēn' pozornye veščī - i vse-taki rasskazannoe budet 'pečatnym'; možno o sebe vydumat' 'užasy' - a budet vse-taki 'literatura'". - The kindredness of spirit between Rozanov's and Zoščenko's works is pointed out in McLean's article. S.Monas sees a "Babelian touch" in stories such as "Nervy". See his introduction to *Scenes from the Bathhouse* (Ann Arbor 1961, xvi). Kern discusses the influence of V.Šklovskij and E.Zamjatin on *FVS* (1974:358).
22. See particularly the 'diary entry' on Alexander Blok, where the two writers discuss their ideas of the afterlife, the future etc.
23. Kern, 1974:363.