Memory, History, Testimony: The Representation of Trauma in Iurii Dombrovskii's and Vasilii Grossman's Writing

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DECLARATION

I, Jekaterina Shulga, confirm that the work in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with interrogating the major fiction of Vasilii Grossman and Iurii Dombrovskii in the context of trauma theory, identifying the ways in which the theory illuminates the representation of catastrophic events in Russian fiction and at the same time probing the limits of trauma theory itself. Trauma theory has often been deemed to be a "Western" concept, and its applicability to the Soviet experience has been questioned. Recently the concept has gained some ground in Soviet studies as well. Focusing on the relationship between an event and its traumatic impact, I investigate the narratives that are created about this relationship, with a particular focus on identity and unrepresentability, two concepts which are central to both trauma and Soviet studies. In my research I have found that the relevance of trauma theory can be challenged but not rejected in its entirety. The fiction of Grossman and Dombrovskii allows a creative approach to collective experience, which enables the event to be processed in unexpected ways.

NOTE ON CONVENTIONS

I have followed the Library of Congress transliteration conventions. For references, I have been guided by the Modern Humanities Research Association (2008).

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Memory, History, Testimony: The Representation of Trauma in the Works of Iurii Dombrovskii and Vasilii Grossman

1.1 *Traumatizing Modernity*

The term "trauma" designates several, at times contradictory, elements at once: it is a psychological illness, a historical event and a collection of symptoms.[1] It is therefore a concept that transgresses disciplinary boundaries, complicating the ways in which trauma can be understood and applied in various fields; as Roger Luckhurst comments: "[t]rauma is [...] always a breaching of disciplines".[2] Cathy Caruth elucidates this by suggesting that the "phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding".[3] This limit has to do with the fact that trauma is concerned with the psyche, an aspect of humanity that is still being explored and contested. It also brings into question the relationship of self to experience, or to reality.

The roots of trauma theory lie in psychoanalysis, and its development can be closely connected to the notion of modernity.[4] As Lyndsey Stonebridge explains:

> It [trauma] is modern, because the experience of modernity makes thinking about and experiencing the world harder even as technology has supposedly

[1] The Oxford English Disctionary suggests three ways in which the word can be used: as a physical injury, a psychological injury and a figure of speech.
[2] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 4.
[3] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 4.
[4] Luckhurst explains modernity as such: "The fixity of place, the dense network of social relations and local traditions typical of the village, for instance, is dislocated by a new orientation of the individual to an abstract, national and increasingly international space. Similarly, the local rhythms of time are replaced by a standardized time that routinizes labour time and co-ordinates national economics and transport systems. Individuals are 'disembedded' from cyclical rituals and traditions and experience a release from narrow expectations that is at once liberating and angst-ridden. Self-identity, in other words, is uprooted from traditional verities and subject to a kind of permanent revolution". Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 20.

> made things easier. Modern war, the marriage of technology with barbarism as it was thought of by many in the middle of the twentieth century, has become the highly charged emblem of a moral, psychological, and existential paralysis of thought.[5]

The acceleration of time through fast travel, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation all challenged people's perceptions of their world. The expansion of the railway system, and the accidents that followed as a result, brought the effects of heavy industry and industrialisation into people's homes as it affected the general public rather than the narrow confines of factories.[6] Luckhurst points out that although there is a lot of focus on the railway accident in the genealogy of trauma, it was in fact the accidents in factories that showed the beginnings of traumatic encounters. Moreover, the railway accidents also destabilised the medical world as often victims escaped physically unharmed but exhibited signs of hysteria. This recurrent accident led to a definition of a psychological condition known as the "railway spine"[7], which adjusted the definition of the word *trauma* from a purely physical wound to a psychological one.[8] Later, the industrial nature of warfare during the First World War would result in a similar paradox: a soldier could be physically unharmed but psychologically traumatised, or "shell shocked". The development of the concept "psychological wound" or "trauma" could thus be seen as a response to the rapid modernisation and industrialisation of people's lives. Luckhurst also connects trauma to modernity in his study of trauma's genealogy, and suggests that, "[h]umans might regard technology as the prosthetic extension of their will to mastery, yet nearly every new technology hailed in this way also attracts a commentary that regards it as a violent assault on agency and self-determination. This ambivalent commentary nearly

[5] Lyndsey Stonebridge, "Theories of Trauma", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, ed. by Marina MacKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 194-206 (p. 194).
[6] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 24.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1995).

always invokes the traumatic."[9] Thus, modernisation not only resulted in more violent accidents and physical traumas, but its very progress destabilised people's perception of their world and was felt as a traumatic assault.

Richard Terdiman further shows that this rapid modernisation, especially during the nineteenth century, also complicated the relationship between memory and history: "[a]ny revolution, any rapid alteration of the givens of the present places a society's connection with its history under pressure."[10] He suggests that modernity lead to a "massive disruption of traditional forms of memory" and that within this atmosphere the functioning of memory and history were critical preoccupations in the effort to think through the modern.[11] Terdiman draws on the writing of Walter Benjamin, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Marcel Proust and Sigmund Freud, to show how memory was at the centre of an attempt to understand modernity by writers, artists, critics and analysts of the time. Furthermore, this memory crisis was evident in the development of hypnosis, as Ruth Leys explains: "[h]ypnotic catharsis thus emerged as a technique for solving a 'memory crisis' that disturbed the integrity of the individual under the stresses of modernity."[12] The relationship between memory and history endangered by modernity was reflected in the centrality of memory to trauma theory as analysts discovered the damaging effects of memory. Trauma and memory thus emerged as problematic notions both within psychoanalysis and culture.[13]

Although trauma theory developed in response to modernity and history, hysteria and mental health illnesses did not suddenly arise with the ascent of modernity. Therefore it is only possible to talk of the concept of trauma as being linked to history, not the actual

[9] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 20.
[10] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 3.
[11] Ibid., p. 5.
[12] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 4.
[13] The early theorists on trauma and hysteria – Charcot, Janet, Breuer and Freud – all focused on the relationship between memory and trauma.

psychological condition, which extends beyond history.[14] Within trauma theory, a historical event and its traumatising effect are often intimately entwined, and indeed the theory has developed largely in a response to the many historical events that challenged and affected the way the world, and the self within that world, were perceived. The most prominent theorists of trauma, such as Cathy Caruth, Bessel van der Kolk, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman and Dominick LaCapra, all focus on the interrelationship between trauma and history. Caruth, for example, applies a deconstructive reading to Freud's writing on trauma to see the ways in which it was affected by contemporary historical developments.[15] Van der Kolk and Alexander McFarlane explicitly connect history to trauma: "[e]xperiencing trauma is an essential part of being human; history is written in blood."[16] This belief is often contested within the various fields within which trauma theory is employed, as critics question whether trauma resides within history or within the psyche.[17] Trauma has developed alongside historical events, making it seem as if it is history that traumatises. Indeed, the term PTSD was coined and defined by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 in response to the psychological disturbances observed in soldiers of the Vietnam War.[18] In part, this great focus on history as the traumatising other is related to the prominence of the studies of Holocaust within trauma theory.

The fact that trauma theory is largely developed through the study of Holocaust survivors and their testimonies makes the Holocaust, as Luckhurst calls it: "extremely transmissible". [19] Felman, Laub and Caruth base a large portion of their analysis on the trauma of the Holocaust. Laub, a survivor himself, has conducted countless interviews with

[14] Incest, rape and other types of violence are all traumas that are not tied in with history.
[15] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
[16] Alexander McFarlane and Bessel Van der Kolk, '"The Black Hole Of Trauma"', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), (p. 487).
[17] Jeffrey C Alexander, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2004); Leys, *Trauma*; Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics", *Paragraph*, 30 (2007), pp. 9-29.
[18] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 59.
[19] Ibid., p. 69.

Holocaust survivors whilst, Caruth has focused on the impact of the Holocaust on the writing of various thinkers of the twentieth century.[20] All three critics describe both the Holocaust and trauma itself as that which cannot be accessed and understood by the human mind; it is something that remains forever outside human comprehension. As Saul Friedlander suggests, using Lyotard's imagery, the Holocaust is like "an earthquake which would be so powerful as to destroy all instruments of measurement."[21] The disruption of moral, ethical and linguistic structures through which to understand the Holocaust makes this a "limit" event that challenges our ability to comprehend history. Caruth suggests in reference to trauma that "we seem to have dislocated the boundaries of our modes of understanding" and that "we can no longer simply explain or simply cure", reflecting the ways in which the Holocaust is conceived.[22]

The erasure of structures through which to understand the Holocaust has come to bear particularly heavily on the notion of testimony. Laub has suggested that the Holocaust is an "event without a witness": "Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime; but the inherently incomprehensible *and* deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims."[23] By this Laub means that the inhumanity of the Holocaust removed all ability of the victim to appeal to another human, or even to themselves as human, and thus the event could not be registered. There were no witnesses from outside of this universe either, as "no observer could remain untainted, that is, maintain an integrity – a wholeness and separateness – that could keep itself uncompromised, unharmed, by his or her very witnessing."[24] Similarly, Primo Levi has suggested that there cannot be a witness to the Holocaust as no one has lived through it to the

[20] Caruth explores trauma in relation to Freud, Duras, Resnais, Lacan, de Man, Kant and Kleist in Caruth, *Unclaimed*.
[21] Saul Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1992), p. 5.
[22] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 4.
[23] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), p. 80.
[24] Ibid., p. 81.

very end. In his study of Levi's writing on the Holocaust, Agamben defines the impossible witness as the *Musselmann*: "the *Musselmann* is the non-human, the one who could never bear witness," and "the one who cannot bear witness is the true witness, the absolute witness", a definition that is mutually exclusive and leads to an impasse.[25] This "absolute witness" and the impossibility of its existence, makes the Holocaust what Laub calls "the black hole".[26] As an event that cannot be accessed in any manner as it forever remains outside representation and comprehension, it becomes lodged in the psyche in literal form but cannot be accessed; analysts van der Kolk, Laub and Caruth conceive of trauma in these terms. [27]

Other critics oppose seeing the Holocaust in such absolute terms, as it threatens to invalidate the testimonies of those who have survived on the one hand, and may bring any serious historical enquiry to an impasse on the other.[28] Irrespective of which position one adopts, it is important to note the great influence of the Holocaust within the cultural notion of the inaccessible event. Van der Kolk, for example, transforms Laub's definition of the Holocaust as a "black hole" to speak of trauma as a "black hole": the two have become synonymous.[29] The notion of a lack of witnessing, the incomprehensibility of the industrial nature of the event, and the complete moral and ethical collapse exemplified by the Holocaust have also led to it being described as a "unique" event.[30] Using a theory that is based on an event that can have no comparisons is fraught with difficulties, because it suggests that the Holocaust is in fact comparable to other traumas. However, it is equally impossible to divorce

[25] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 150.
[26] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, p. 64.
[27] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction: Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Trauma", *American Imago*, 48.1 (1991), pp. 1-12; Cathy Caruth, "Introduction: Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Trauma II", *American Imago*, 48.4 (1991), pp. 417-423; Friedlander, *Probing the Limits*; Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma", in *Trauma: Explorations of Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 158-182.
[28] See Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 322; Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 50-51.
[29] McFarlane and Kolk, "Black Hole".
[30] For more on the debate about the Holocaust's uniqueness see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 13 (1999), pp. 28-61.

trauma theory from its roots in Holocaust studies. Therefore, to be able to engage with the theory of trauma one has to place one's analysis within a specific cultural and historical context, and thus highlight its difference from the Holocaust, thereby interrogating the theory in order to locate its own limits and move beyond them.

This uniqueness problematises the application of trauma theory to other traumatic events, such as those of the Stalin-era Soviet Union. As Luckhurst suggests: "[f]or the more the Holocaust is proclaimed a 'unique' and incomparable trauma, the more it in fact becomes a comparative measure and metaphor for all atrocity."[31] This comparative question affects the analysis of other historically catastrophic events, as Jehanne Gheith suggests: "certain interpretations of the Holocaust (and perhaps the Vietnam War) have become authoritative around historical catastrophe and trauma; where Gulag survivors' experience and narration differ from these, they become less visible."[32] Leona Toker similarly points out the complexity of comparing the Holocaust to the Gulag, and also its inevitability:

> I do not claim more urgency for Gulag narratives than for the literature about other mass atrocities: each historical phenomenon must be studied in its specificity. [...] Yet the literature of the Holocaust and that of the Gulag refer to fully developed semiotic systems that shed light on each other's veiled aspects, either through analogies or though contrasts.[33]

Although it seems that trauma theory may preclude an understanding of certain catastrophes because of its close connection with the Holocaust, it also shows that the theory needs interrogation and expansion to include a more varied perception of what it means to be traumatised. In her critique of modern trauma theory, Susannah Radstone equally suggests that the theory needs critical examination: "the thrust of my argument is not that the

[31] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 69.
[32] Jehanne Gheith, "'I Never Talked': Enforced Silence, Non-Narrative Memory, and the Gulag", *Mortality*, 12 (2007), pp. 159-175 (p. 161).
[33] Leona Toker, *Return From the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 7.

boundaries of trauma criticism's reach should be expanded, but rather that questions remain concerning the inclusions and exclusions performed by this criticism."[34] Amongst other factors, the focus on narrative as healing in trauma theory excludes the experience of the Gulag, which is often remembered in non-verbal and non-narrative terms because of the pressures of imposed official silence.[35] Furthermore, even the symptoms of trauma that are central to the definition of PTSD are sometimes absent: "Many people who survived the Gulag remember in ways that do not involve repetition compulsion, flashbacks, or direct narration."[36]

One of the problems with the application of trauma theory to catastrophic events is precisely the focus on the event and the expectation of certain traumatic symptoms in response to that event. Radstone takes issue with the idea that it is the event that traumatises. Basing her theory on Ruth Ley's genealogy of trauma and Laplanche's reading of Freud, she proposes a counter theory to the one suggested by Caruth, Laub et al. Radstone uses Leys' division of the mimetic and antimimetic view of trauma to show how trauma has become synonymous with the event that caused it, to the detriment of a deeper understanding of the human psyche. Trauma, as Radstone suggests, is not purely an absence of knowledge, but it also involves deep, often unconscious, process of meaning-making and memory association. As she explains:

> In the psychoanalytic theory that has developed in parallel to that drawn on by trauma theory, then, a memory becomes traumatic when it becomes associated, later, with inadmissible meanings, wishes, fantasies, which might include the identification with the aggressor. What I take from this is that it

[34] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", p. 24.
[35] Gheith, "'I Never Talked'", p. 165.
[36] Ibid., p. 166.

> is not an event, which is by its nature 'toxic' to the mind, but what the mind later does to the memory.[37]

The focus on the event as inherently traumatic has developed in response to the view of trauma as constituted by the psyche. In Leys' terms the antimimetic theory of trauma is a reaction to the mimetic theory. The mimetic theory suggested that trauma was "understood as an experience of hypnotic imitation of identification – what I call *mimesis* – an experience that, because it appeared to shatter the victim's cognitive-conceptual capacities, made the traumatic scene unavailable for a certain kind of recollection."[38] Hypnosis for Leys is not a tool to unearth memories but a psychic state in which imitation or identification with the perpetrator is possible. The antimimetic theory however, evolved in reaction to this, attempting to establish a dichotomy between the event and the autonomous subject, thus imbuing history with a traumatic meaning. As Radstone and Leys both show, this antimimetic view of trauma is at the root of Caruth's, Laub's and Felman's theories of trauma, all of which locate trauma within the event rather than the psyche. This problem of the psyche versus the event is perhaps the core issue which complicates the application of trauma to a variety of cases. As Radstone questions: "If trauma theory's encoding is extraordinary, then can that 'encoding' become the foundation for a general theory of representation? [...] For is it that theories of trauma are taken to illuminate the relation between actuality and representation in general, or is it that actuality is beginning to be taken as traumatic in and of itself?"[39] It is this uncomfortable relation between history, psychoanalysis and trauma that creates some of the problems in applying trauma theory across cultures and disciplines. It seems to propose that every similar event should lead to similar traumatic results, which is often not the case. The Gulag experience as suggested by Gheith is one such example.

[37] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", p. 17.
[38] Leys, *Trauma*, p. 9.
[39] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", p. 13.

However, as both Leys and Radstone acknowledge, the division of the mimetic and antimimetic aspect of trauma theory is not a straightforward one. Radstone points out that Caruth's, Laub's and Felman's focus on the unexperienced nature of trauma aligns their analysis with the mimetic paradigm, whereas their focus on the event brings their theory to the antimimetic pole.[40] It seems that both camps – Radstone and Leys, and Caruth, Laub and Felman – agree on the symptoms of trauma, and point out the inaccessibility of the traumatic memory. However, they differ in their versions of the unconscious. Whilst Radstone suggests that it is the meaning conferred onto the memory that traumatises, Caruth et al. see the memory as a literal and inaccessible fragment lodged within the mind but outside perception. One of the aspects that Radstone suggests makes the theories radically different is their perception of subjectivity. In her genealogy, Leys suggests that one of the crucial reasons for the emergence of the antimimetic theory was the fact that the mimetic model posed a "threat to an ideal of individual autonomy and responsibility", as it showed the individual to be susceptible to suggestion.[41] Regarding trauma as a purely external event allowed the view of the individual as a "sovereign if passive victim".[42] For Radstone, suggesting that trauma happens within the unconscious mind rather than being dependent on an outside event opens up the theory to two key points: that the "subject [is] caught up in processes not all of which are available for conscious recall"[43], and that not all historical events are equally traumatic, especially on a collective level. She further qualifies this by stating that:

> I make this point not in the interest of diverting attention from the actuality of historical catastrophes and the suffering caused, but to stress that cultural theory needs to attend to the inter- and intra-subjective processes through which meanings are conferred, negotiated and mediated.[44]

[40] Ibid., p. 15.
[41] Leys, *Trauma*, p. 9.
[42] Ibid., p. 10.
[43] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", pp. 19-20.
[44] Ibid., p. 18.

Indeed, Caruth rarely mentions to whom trauma is happening and in what context; her reading is concerned with a deconstruction of a literary or philosophical text, which is why her theory has been of such great value. (It has been easily transferred to literary studies in particular.)[45] It is the blurring of disciplines that trauma seems to engender that is partly responsible for the many controversies of the theory. Jeffrey C. Alexander, for example, brings trauma theory to an analysis of cultural construction and equally opposes the view of an event as inherently traumatic: "trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society."[46] Like Radstone's argument about the meaning making attributed to a traumatic encounter, Alexander also shows that events become traumas through the meanings that are attributed to them.[47] Alexander's view of culture resembles Radstone's view of the mind. The relationship between an event and trauma is thus not one of a straightforward cause and effect, in either psychoanalysis or the cultural sphere.

Discussing the mimetic and antimimetic models of trauma, Luckhurst states that "[t]he oscillation of these poles dominates the history of trauma back to its genealogical origins in the nineteenth century"[48], and therefore it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss them in depth and choose one over the other. However, it is vital to problematise the relationship between a historical event and a trauma that may result from it. This thesis looks precisely at the relationship between the two as it is expressed in testimony, which is the focal entry point to the discourse of trauma. Despite Radstone's critique of the dominant trauma theory, the symptoms as defined by Laub, Caruth and Felman are of great importance in recognising and engaging with that trauma, as it is these that are embedded within testimony. However, as Radstone states above, allowing the psyche to take part in the meaning-making process, even

[45] Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000); Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2002).
[46] Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 2.
[47] Ibid., p. 10.
[48] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 13.

if it is unavailable to consciousness, creates a subject that is not passive, but partakes in the creation of meaning. Moving away from the event as trauma and the subject as passive creates a space of negotiation and construction of narrative between experience and representation. Furthermore, focusing on the inter- and intra-subjective processes allows one to integrate more than the traumatic experience within an individual's constitution of the self and thus to look beyond trauma.

1.2 *Soviet Subjectivity*

As discussed above, the use of a theory developed through the study of the Holocaust is fraught with difficulty, and both Gheith and Toker point out the exclusion of other traumas to which it may lead. Gheith suggests several reasons for why trauma theory has focused on the Holocaust and largely ignored the Gulag. One of the reasons is that the Gulag was continuous with the Soviet society and therefore it is sometimes difficult to separate the trauma of one from the trauma of the other. [49] Another reason is the fact that the present and contemporary socio-political and international relations shape the way in which the memory of the Holocaust is created, whilst the same structures are absent for the Gulag, for example, there were no trials or public accountability. As Alexander suggests above, historical events are made traumatic, but are not necessarily traumatic in themselves. The Gulag can be seen as an example of such an event, while individuals may have been traumatised, historically it remains in the margins of trauma theory because of the context in which it occurred and is remembered. Gheith shows that it is the non-narrative forms of memory that accompany Gulag survivorship which excludes the Gulag from trauma theory, where a greater emphasis is placed on verbal testimony. The distinct lack of opportunities to testify in USSR led to non-verbal forms of remembrance taking the place of testimony. As Gheith explains: "The ground

[49] Gheith, "'I Never Talked'", p. 160.

for testimony did not exist in the Soviet context: there were few places where it was safe to speak of one's experiences since the communist regime that had incarcerated people continued in power for the next 50 years. The external imperatives for Gulag survivors not to speak about their experiences in the camps were often internalised".[50] This internal and external silence shows the effects of society on the representation and understanding of trauma. It is therefore vital to read trauma within a cultural context in order to understand its silence, which is often read purely as a pathological symptom of trauma. In the case of the Gulag, in contrast, silence may in fact be a narrative in itself about trauma. Another aspect of this silencing is the competing narratives that exist about an event, which replace a unitary narrative of trauma with other perspectives. As Radstone suggests, and Gheith shows, traumatic events are not always depicted or understood as traumatic in and of themselves.

Similarly, other Soviet events that can be seen as traumatic have a complex relationship to the notion of trauma, such as the siege of Leningrad. As Lisa Kirschenbaum shows, the public myth about an event can have a profound effect on the way in which that event is experienced: "[t]he concept of the 'spirit of Leningrad' provided a useful basis for coping with, understanding, and remembering traumatic events."[51] Kirschenbaum shows that the relationship between the state's and official narratives about the siege on the one hand, and the people's narratives on the other, was not a simple "replacement of life experiences"[52] but an interaction between the two. People's relationship to starvation is one such example: "[e]ven Leningraders who held official narratives in contempt seemed to accept their basic premise that a person's reaction to starvation was essentially a measure of humanity – and stopped short of claiming that most Leningraders had failed to measure up."[53] This is not to

[50] Ibid., p. 164.
[51] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995: Myth, Memories and Monuments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 68.
[52] Dariusz Tolczyk, *See No Evil: Literary Cover-Ups and Discoveries of the Soviet Camp Experience* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. xv.
[53] Kirschenbaum, *Siege of Leningrad*, p. 67.

say that the Leningraders did not feel or suffer from the trauma of the siege, but that the relationship between the event, the experience of it, and the narratives about it, is highly complex. Individuals saw their suffering not only through their own experience but also through both the official and the collective (not necessarily official) myths and narratives created about the event. Kirschenbaum's research raises questions as to how an event is remembered if it is narrated and perceived in certain terms when it is happening. Can meaning formation during the event have an impact on the experience of that event? Again, as Radstone suggests, this is not to deny the horror of historical catastrophe, but to raise questions as to the relationship between an event and its subsequent traumatising effect. Can narrative not only cure but also silence and preclude certain types of experience?

This relationship between the official and the private life is central to an understanding of the Soviet experience. Recent research has suggested that the division between the two was not a straightforward dichotomy, but an intricate relationship in which individuals engaged with official narratives and propaganda to form their identity in conjunction with official ideology. Oleg Kharkhordin, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stephen Kotkin, Jochen Hellbeck and Igal Halfin are some of the most prominent scholars working on the notion of Soviet subjectivity.[54] In his study of the construction of Magnitogorsk as an expression of Socialist realisation, Kotkin suggests that "Stalinism was not just a political system, let alone the rule of an individual. It was a set of values, a social identity, a way of life".[55] It is this social identity, or to be precise its formation, that these scholars examine. Kotkin, Hellbeck and

[54] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2005); Igal Halfin, "Between Instinct and Mind: The Bolshevik View of Proletarian Self", *Slavic Review*, 62 (2003), pp. 34-30; Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Igal Halfin, *Red Autobiographies: Initiating the Bolshevik Self* (Seattle: Herbert J. Ellison Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies, 2011); Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[55] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, p. 23.

Halfin all look at the ways in which the individual engages with official ideology through language and various practices.[56] Kotkin shows that whilst previous scholars often assumed the existence of an "objective antagonism"[57] between the worker and the state, research shows a surprising amount of support for official institutions. He further suggests that "[i]t was not necessary to believe. It was necessary, however, to participate as if one believed – a stricture that appears to have been well understood, since what could be construed as direct, openly disloyal behaviour became rare."[58] The gap between what people truly believed and how they acted is something that Alexei Yurchak explores in the period of the "late socialism" (1960s-1980s), when discourse became ritualised and "it became less important to read ideological representations for 'literal' (referential) meanings than to reproduce their precise structural forms."[59] Yurchak shows that this allowed people a certain amount of freedom as it was possible to reproduce a discourse without having to embody it. During the Stalinist times however, the situation was different. Hellbeck and Halfin study diaries and autobiographies showing the way in which official ideology became deeply embedded in the way in which individuals understood themselves.

Hellbeck's study of diaries shows that people engaged with official discourse attempting to internalise it, even employing self-censorship. This self-censorship however, does not imply the fear of disclosing "a subjective truth", Hellbeck suggests, but to "preserve a truth they entertained of themselves."[60] Soviet subjects were thus grappling with ideology not only in public but also in private, attempting to merge with this ideology and become the vessels for revolutionary change.

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[56] Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*; Igal Halfin, *Language and Revolution: Making of Modern Political Identities* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2002); Halfin, *Red Autobiographies*; Halfin, *Terror*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.
[57] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, p. 199.
[58] Ibid., p. 221.
[59] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 14.
[60] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, p. 103.

The importance of language, discourse and narrative all become central in the studies of Soviet subjectivity, as they focus on the way that identity is created through the way in which one talks of oneself: one's self-representation. This was particularly important during the Soviet era as one had to represent oneself as a true Proletarian/Bolshevik/Communist, something that is hard to qualify by other means. Halfin analyses the autobiographies that individuals presented for Party membership showing how they attempted to fit the prescribed notion of identity. It is the discourse that is of interest to Halfin, as the autobiographies due to their function as Party applications cannot be read as reflections of the self. At the same time he suggests that: "[a]utobiography dos not only express the self; it creates it."[61] Soviet citizens thus used official ideological discourse to create a self that fitted the prescribed norms, and even if "Soviet citizens may well have had alternative forms of self-identification,"[62] they had to engage in the official Communist discourse if they wanted to remain within the collective. As Hellbeck explains: "[t]he collective, imagined as a living, breathing body, was the ultimate destination of Soviet self-realization. In joining a collectivity the individual self became aligned and enlarged. An individual's relationship with the collective vastly surpassed any relationship with another person in meaning and the ability to furnish a sense of community."[63] Thus, becoming part of that community through discourse and self-representation was essential to survival.

This focus on language within the studies of subjectivity has led other scholars to question this commingling of disciplines. Eric Naiman for example suggests that:

> Subjectivity – who a person is, what he thinks, how he views the world – intellectually, affectively – and how he sees himself defined by membership in a community – is literature's stock-in trade: literature's readers expect to find characters with richly constructed psyches. A historian, on the other

[61] Halfin, *Terror*, p. 19.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, p. 97.

> hand, can tell us what a person said or did, but the disciplinary ground begins to shift when he writes about what people felt and thought.[64]

Naiman's counterargument is that language did play a great part in Soviet society through ideology, that it was a skill to be mastered.[65] It is thus possible to analyse the language, even if it is impossible to discover how people truly felt. This literary approach to history on the other hand makes this type of research easily transferrable to literature. Similarly it is possible to analyse the language of literary testimony without psychoanalysing the characters. Language, in the case of Soviet subjectivity, holds two seemingly opposite positions: it is an entry into the way people conceived of themselves and at the same time may serve as a cover up of one's "true" person in order to fit in with the notion of the Soviet New Man.

One aspect that Halfin and Hellbeck propagate that strikes a discord with both Naiman and Alexander Etkind is the scholars' focus on subjectivity as an aspect of modernity. Etkind suggests that Hellbeck posits Soviet subjectivity as a counterpart to Western subjectivity, which Etkind sees as radically different.[66] He shows that the Soviet state attempted to be modern but its "results were decidedly anti-modern"[67] and that "the ideological ends of the regime demonstrated its most archaic, backward looking features".[68] Naiman also remarks on the modern aspect of Hellbeck's research: "Hellbeck's subjects are fragmented by modernity, produced by modernity to see as a curse the opacity and contradiction that otherwise might make the human condition a source of wonder and delight; they are characters in a novel who strive frenetically – and pathetically – to climb out of their text and into the epic that they imagine is being written on the next desk."[69] Naiman again points out the literary character of Hellbeck's approach, showing, perhaps, how modern attitudes towards subjectivity affect the

[64] Eric Naiman, "On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them", *Russian Review,* 60 (2001), pp. 307-315 (p. 313).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Alexander Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History,* 6 (2005), pp. 171-186 (p. 175).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., p. 176.
[69] Naiman, "Soviet Subjects", p. 314.

way in which we read the past. He questions: "Are we not reading totalitarianism the way totalitarianism, itself, would 'want' to be read?"[70] Etkind also proposes to move away from a term that may be associated with Western modernity, as it threatens to "make the regime look better than it made itself".[71] He thus proposes a term that is less specific: "the Transformation of Human Nature".[72] This concept both implies the goals of the regime and the participation of individuals. It is this complex relationship between the individual and the state through ideology, language and discourse that affects the way in which traumatic historical events were registered and spoken about. As shown above, there is a similar tension in trauma theory between the event and the self, questioning the extent to which the psyche or the self partakes in creating memory and identity. Subjectivity is important in both areas, but is also loaded with its own contradictions and limits.

In her research on death in Russian culture, Catherine Merridale suggests that trauma is a Western medical concept that is not applicable to the Russian/Soviet case.[73] As she suggests: "[a]lthough the Soviet Union was a violent place, the notion of trauma is not easy to apply to its people."[74] What Merridale finds is that the discourse about the past is focused on stoicism and survival rather than trauma and suffering. Implied in her argument is the idea that using the notion of trauma would in fact strip the individuals of their agency, forcing them to comply with a notion of experience and suffering that is deemed to be universal. This is in direct contradiction with the other reason for silence surrounding trauma, which is a fear of betrayal of trauma as seen in, among others', Caruth's work, that to speak of trauma is to betray it, making silence the only adequate response. However, in a similar manner, Merridale concludes her book with silence, stating that: "the voices that I really need to hear will never

[70] Ibid., p. 311.
[71] Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity", p. 177.
[72] Ibid., p. 176.
[73] Catherine Merridale, "The Collective Mind: Trauma and Shell-Shock in Twentieth-Century Russia", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (2000), pp. 39-55 (p. 55); Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta Books, 2000), p. 330.
[74] Merridale, *Night of Stone*, p. 283.

speak."[75] She also points out earlier in her study that "the implication [...] that all silences are potentially pathological, that privacy, like democracy and international peacekeeping, is a luxury that can healthily be enjoyed only after everything that was twisted is straight and every personal history aired" is violent.[76] The transfer of a theory whilst overlooking cultural context may lead to an overlooking of people's true experience of history, as Gheith has shown. To not disturb the past is to respect the past and the individual. However, silence is also an expression or a symptom – if one sees it through trauma – and therefore it speaks of something, and to overlook it can be just as violent. This is where trauma theory and Merridale clash in the approach to history and its effects, or its residue in people's lives. This is a problem that Catriona Kelly also points out in her study of trauma in the history of Leningrad:

> In terms of academic discourse on this type of experience, there are important disciplinary divisions; psychology, anthropology, and cultural studies are all a good deal more comfortable with the concept of trauma than are historians, who, where they deal with it at all, tend to look at historical contexts where trauma may or may not be articulated, and at the political and social effects of suffering, rather than the nature of suffering and its impact on the individual consciousness. The association of trauma with impotence and silence does not always accord well with the evidence of the last several centuries, when some groups and cultures have articulated pain extremely effectively.[77]

What Gheith's, Merridale's and Kelly's research all show is that silence, an inability to narrate a memory or an unwillingness to do so, or indeed a well formulated narrative, may all engage with trauma despite seeming not to. This suggests that the relationship between

[75] Ibid., p. 347.
[76] Ibid., p. 330.
[77] Catriona Kelly, "'The Leningrad Affair': Remembering the 'Communist Alternative' in the Second Capital", *Slavonica*, 17 (2011), pp. 103-122 pp. 103-104).

silence and speech within trauma is not a straightforward division of pathology and normality, and that the expression of trauma is more varied than the theory has allowed thus far.

Both Anna Krylova and Polly Jones have analysed the depiction of trauma in Soviet fiction within its historical, cultural and ideological context.[78] Krylova focuses on the literature produced at the end of World War II in 1944-1946, and the way in which it dealt with the psychological and physical traumas of the war. Krylova shows that in the post war years the "new hero of the Socialist Realist literature was physically and psychologically mutilated".[79] It was within the literary sphere that "healing" of these wounds took place: "[g]iven their fixation on the body, Soviet psychiatrists had no claim to the role of 'soul-healers' of society, nor did the public expect soul healing from them. [...] Soviet literature attempted to fill the void produced by the psychiatric profession's epistemological blinders and official silence."[80] This "healing" however was restricted to the ideological itinerary of the time, after the war it was possible to speak about trauma but only in terms of courageously overcoming it, something that Merridale often discusses as well. The notion of "soul-healers" also shows the extent to which the Soviet view of writers as "engineers of human souls" was taken, as writers took part in what Etkind prefers to call "the transformation of human nature". Fiction thus not only represented reality but also attempted to transform it. Literature therefore can become part of the myth-making organism that prescribes ways to deal with reality, as Kirschenbaum suggests in relation to Leningrad. Krylova explains that: "Defining 'engineering' as 'healing of wounded souls', writers made a self-conscious effort to doctor veterans returning from the front. Their mission involved the reinscription of mental and

[78] Polly Jones, "Memories of Terror or Terrorizing Memories? Terror, Trauma and Survival in Soviet Culture of the Thaw", *Slavonic and East European Review*, 86 (2008), pp. 346-371; Anna Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls': The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-46", *The Journal of Modern History*, 73 (2001), pp. 307-331.

[79] However, one may argue that the mutilated body was common to Soviet Literature in general (eg. See Lilya Kaganovsky, "How The Soviet Man Was (Un)Made", *Slavic Review*, 63 (2004), pp. 577-596.) Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls'", p. 310.

[80] Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls'", pp. 318, 319.

physical cripples back into prewar images of family happiness."[81] The contrast between the traumatising and masculine front and the warm, feminine and healing home front had deep implications for the ways in which female trauma could be viewed. Krylova shows that literature dealt with the trauma of the soldiers in a profoundly gendered way; women were the necessary "Other" who would recognise the mutilated soldier and help heal his soul.[82] This focus on the mother or wife as the one who recognizes the traumatised soldier and takes on his suffering led to the ignorance of women's trauma, and Krylova suggests that this may have had a great impact on women in the post-war period: "Soviet writers not only ignored the female side of the war story but also created new traumatic possibilities for women in postwar Soviet society."[83] Literature thus could not only heal but also damage, if endowed with as much power as the State had given it.

Polly Jones also shows that traumatic memories and the traumas of the past were brought forward for debate and were not always as repressed as hitherto believed. She traces the use of memories of terror within literature and literary debate of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization to conclude that:

> In allowing past experiences of terror and victimization to be discussed in public for the first time, the party and the Soviet literary community also had to confront diverse perspectives on the workings of memory. Although this debate was richer than had been possible under Stalin, Stalinist attitudes to memory still found their reflection in the overriding belief that memory could and should be manipulated, both by the state and by the individual.[84]

Although some debate about the psychological effects of terror was allowed in the public sphere, the official stance was to transform "victims into survivors, and memories into dreams

[81] Ibid., p. 330.
[82] Ibid., p. 324.
[83] Ibid., p. 331.
[84] Jones, "Memories of Terror", p. 369.

of the future."[85] Jones and Krylova show that the question is not whether trauma existed or not, but how it was articulated and conceived in the Soviet public sphere. Just as Merridale discovered in her research and Jones and Krylova show in their studies, the Soviet approach to trauma both silenced the debate on psychological trauma and turned the traumatic event into an opportunity for displaying stoicism. In Alexander's terms, trauma was not constructed on a cultural and collective level, even though it may have existed in the personal and private sphere.[86] In a way literature bridges the gap between trauma as a psychoanalytic concept and trauma as a culturally constructed occurrence. It may both articulate the suffering and at the same time override it and silence it. Simultaneously, it is the creativity at the heart of literary writing that allows for trauma to be re-written and perhaps healed. So, although Laub believes that art can aid recovery: "[a]rt can aid survival (as well as recovery) by widening one's vision and offering alternative perspectives and ways of seeing things"[87], it is also evident that art, like any other cultural production, can be influenced by external forces and demands.

Two most prominent features of both trauma theory and the Soviet experience are the focus on identity and the notion of unspeakability, or unrepresentability, or in the Soviet case the tension between silence and speech. These two aspects are of particular significance as they both are connected to narrative. As studies in Soviet subjectivity have shown, it is partly through narrative that identity is constituted, while, as trauma theory has suggested, the memory of trauma is inaccessible and therefore unrepresentable in narrative. These positions seem mutually exclusive – if there is no narrative there cannot be an identity – yet these notions are not absolute and they intermingle and relate throughout the fiction of Grossman and Dombrovskii.

[85] Ibid., p. 370.
[86] Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 2.
[87] Dori Laub and Daniel Podell, "Art and Trauma", *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 76 (1995), pp. 995-1005 (p. 998).

In this approach I incorporate the theory of testimony proposed by Stevan Weine. In his study, Weine calls for an integration of history into the understanding of testimony, allowing for the one to influence the other. "To better address historical truth, testimony needs a new conceptual basis for linking trauma, narrative, and history."[88] Weine finds this conceptual basis in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose ideas on speech genre, dialogism, polyphony and unfinalizability Weine wants to see applied to acts of testimony. This view of testimony as dialogic is supported by amongst others Laub (Weine's colleague).[89] However, Weine focuses on the intermingling of personal, collective and historical narratives and perspectives to produce a testimony. These various strands are the result of different needs placed on a testimony, such as telling the truth, reconciling personal memory and speaking for the dead. Weine sees testimony as a possibility for healing in the same manner as Laub does; however, unlike Laub he proposes that catastrophe itself is a moment of growth and possibility, another aspect that he derives from Bakhtin. As he suggests: "In testimony, the survivor works with a receiver to create a story that, as a polyphonic and dialogic narrative, offers the survivor potential for growth in consciousness and ethics in regard to his or her experience of political violence."[90] Weine is against what he calls "clinical testimony"; rather he proposes that testimonies should be seen as stories that "belong to a broader understanding of human meaning and communication, embedded in life itself, and engaged with history, culture, and suffering."[91] Not only does this form of reading accommodate outside influences it also allows an integration of the other aspects of an individual's psyche.[92] For Weine it is in the nature of trauma narratives to be dialogical and polyphonic in their search for a way of representing the inconceivable and therefore they should be read as such.

[88] Stevan M. Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe: Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press 2006), p. 144.
[89] Laub and Podell, "Art and Trauma".
[90] Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. 95.
[91] Ibid., p. xviii.
[92] Susannah Radstone argues that it is precisely the ignorance of unconscious desires, such as identification with the aggressor, which limits current trauma theory, Caruth's in particular. Radstone, "Trauma Theory".

Literary trauma narratives and testimonial narratives are not necessarily the same. Lurie Vickroy explains "trauma narratives" thus: "[t]rauma narratives go beyond presenting trauma as subject matter or character study. They internalize the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of traumatic experience within their underlying sensibilities and structures. They reveal many obstacles to communicating such experience: silence, simultaneous knowledge and denial, dissociation, resistance and repression, among others."[93] To this one may add the socio-cultural aspects that equally affect the way in which a testimony is told. This socio-cultural aspect can be embraced by the notion of identity. As Luckhurst shows, trauma and identity politics became deeply entwined with the emergence of PTSD: "PTSD is a socio-political category that has routed a significant strand of identity politics into the language of survivorship."[94] This was then followed by the emergence of the Holocaust survivor, something that Luckhurst points out is a relatively new concept despite its pervasive influence.[95] However beyond that, identity is embedded in trauma theory itself. A traumatic event is depicted as shattering a person's very experience of him/herself. In the early developments of a theory about trauma Pierre Janet saw trauma as a dissociation of the psyche, something which van der Kolk and van der Hart both use in their definitions.[96] The concept of dissociation is based on the fact that often a victim of trauma cannot access the memory of the trauma but acts it out unwittingly. Janet suggested that this is a traumatic memory which is not integrated into narrative (normal) memory and remains hidden in the subconscious, creating a division between the two. This dissociation in some cases leads to multiple-personality disorder, which further highlights the relationship of trauma and identity.

1.3 *Identity*

[93] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival*, p. 3.
[94] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 62.
[95] Ibid., p. 71.
[96] Kolk and Hart, "Intrusive Past".

The relation between trauma and identity is negotiated through memory. Trauma is intimately connected to memory, as it is within remembering that trauma is embedded. As Luckhurst states: "[a]side from myriad physical symptoms, trauma disrupts memory, and therefore identity, in peculiar ways."[97] Laub focuses on the impact of trauma on memory and in turn, the effect of memory on the understanding of trauma. His theory is developed from his work with Holocaust survivors, where he focuses on the oscillation of knowing and not knowing the event of trauma.[98] Trauma is seen as an event that is not fully comprehended by the mind and therefore remains outside its normal functioning. However, it does play a vital part in the person's life as it returns often in an overwhelming and literal form. The traumatised person can thus relive the trauma but not engage with it; it is both known and unknown to the person. In his exploration of various states of knowing massive psychic damage, he identifies eight forms of traumatic knowledge, such as: not knowing (amnesia), fugue states (intrusive appearance of fragmented behaviours, cognitions and effects), fragments (decontextualised memories), overpowering narratives (the narrator is overtaken by a memory that obscures the present), and witness narratives (distance and perspective is obtained).[99] The various forms of traumatic knowledge outlined above, are also the symptoms of trauma, such as flashbacks of dissociated images that haunt the victims. Knowing and not knowing trauma is central in the sense that the individual cannot truly comprehend the experience and verbalise it in order to bear witness to the event, sometimes not even to him/herself. This division of the self into a known and unknown part cuts to the very core of the person's self-understanding and identity.

Caruth further explains this by suggesting that a person carries "an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely

[97] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 1.
[98] Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and The Struggle", *American Imago*, 48 (1991), pp. 75-91.
[99] Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 74 (1993), pp. 287-302 (p. 290).

possess."[100] It is precisely this focus on the event and history that prompts Radstone and Leys to disagree with Caruth's trauma theory. However, it does highlight the complex relationship of the self to history that is at the centre of traumatic experience. At the same time, becoming a "symptom of history" may strip the individual of agency and risks undermining the other aspects that make up an individual. Radstone further suggests that by retreating from the unconscious processes and focusing on the event, Caruth et al. ignore two important facts: that within the unconscious there is no division between the pathological and the normal, and that the "darkness" does not only come from without but also exists within the psyche.[101] In contrast she proposes to "substitute a passive but sovereign subject, for a subject caught up in processes not all of which are available for conscious control"[102]. Yet even this shift does not completely avoid the notion of the split self, as it still holds that there is an aspect that is unknowable within trauma, even if that aspect is not an event but an unconscious process. This doubling of the self into an inaccessible trauma and the self is also taken up by Robert Jay Lifton. In an interview with Caruth, he explains that in "extreme trauma, one's sense of self is radically altered. And there is a traumatised self that is created."[103] Both authors and analysts show that this split of the self takes place in the survivor's memory and the only way to heal from trauma is to reconstitute that memory through a coherent and integrative narrative. "So the struggle in the post-traumatic experience is to reconstitute the self into the single self, reintegrate itself."[104] This reconstitution takes place through testimony where the survivor attempts to create a coherent narrative of the past though the help of a listener or witness. Radstone suggests that this is the externalisation of the internal meaning making that happens within the psyche creating "a model of subjectivity grounded in the space *between*

[100] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 5.
[101] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", pp. 18-19.
[102] Ibid., pp. 19-20.
[103] Cathy Caruth, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton", in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 128-150 (p. 137).
[104] Ibid.

witness and testifier within which that which cannot be known can begin to be witnessed."[105] It is precisely this "in between" space that is of interest in this thesis, as it is where language and (fictional) narrative become central in the creation of identity in its relation to trauma.

At the same time as an integrative narrative has to be created in order for healing to occur, narrative also has to display various competing and at times contradictory strands – one of which is precisely the knowing and not-knowing of the trauma. The self thus becomes reliant on a narrative; an approach that is very close to Paul Ricoeur's thinking around the self, narrative, and time.[106] In fact, Luckhurst uses Ricoeur's notion of "concordant discordance" to suggest a way in which the narrative can represent trauma.[107] This aspect is close to Weine's argument about the polyphonic nature of testimony. Weine further suggests that a survivor could be seen in terms of Bakhtin's notion of Dostoevskii's hero as someone who is seeking "self-definition" and who is preoccupied with "becoming self-conscious".[108] It is through testimony that the person is able to engage with both the memory of the event and consciousness, which according to Weine can best be achieved through a dialogic and polyphonic narrative:

> In polyphonic and dialogic testimony it is the elaboration, not the erasure, of the picture that is the important element. [...] It is also essential that this elaboration not stop at some boundary just outside of the self, and fail to consider broader social, cultural, political, spiritual, developmental, and ethical concerns and struggles. A more elaborated story may help the survivor to grow in terms of his or her consciousness and ethics.[109]

[105] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", p. 20.
[106] See for example Roceour's trilogy: Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), vol. (3). And Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity", *Philosophy Today,* Spring (1991), pp. 73 - 81.
[107] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 85.
[108] Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. 152.
[109] Ibid., p. 104.

Testimony is thus both an access point to trauma and memory, and a pathway to healing; the self is created and re-created through narrative. For Weine testimony allows for growth and an expansion in understanding of the event in all its aspects. Furthermore, incorporating various social, communal, ethical, and historical points of view allows the person to see themselves as more than just a traumatised victim and to see their trauma in a wider context. In terms of the Soviet experience of trauma, it also allows for the influence of the dominant ideological discourse, which has been overlooked by critical approaches thus far. Studies in subjectivity show how people were attempting to create their identities through increasing their revolutionary consciousness in narrative. In the same manner, testimony attempts to reconcile the self and identity with its relation to trauma. Weine's and Ricoeur's view of narrative thus allows for the integration of these various aspects without foreclosing the narrative as a singular perception of trauma.

1.4 *Unspeakability*

One of the greatest obstacles to creating a narrative and therefore a stable identity is the rupture of personal perception of time and memory that trauma creates. As suggested by Laub, traumatic memory is intrusive and fragmented, constantly interrupting a person's experience of time and life. Furthermore, this memory is inaccessible to voluntary recall: "[t]he ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it"[110], as Caruth explains. Narrative has thus to represent this tense relationship between knowing and not knowing the memory of the event, and its consecutive impact. Laub sees the verbalising of the event as central to any form of healing or understanding:

> [m]uch of knowing is dependent on language [...] Because of the radical break between trauma and culture, victims often cannot find categories of

[110] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 152.

> thought or words for their experience. That is, since neither culture nor experience provide structures for formulating acts of massive aggression, survivors cannot articulate trauma, even to themselves.[111]

Because of this lack of structures through which to represent trauma, it is often described as "unspeakable", unrepresentable, and that it is experienced as an absence.[112] This however is contrasted with the constant repetition of the traumatic event in the form of intrusive memory fragments and the literal nature of that memory. This is precisely what Caruth explores in her work by looking at "the complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it."[113] Using Freud's example of Tasso's "Tancred and Clorinda" poem, she suggests that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature [...] returns to haunt the survivor later on."[114] This unassimilated nature can be connected to Radstone's explanation of the space "in between" where trauma is witnessed, rather than either within the event or completely within the psyche.[115] At the centre of this problem is the belief that trauma in its truest form may be unrepresentable, as a narrative cannot combine both knowing and not-knowing simultaneously.

The notion of unrepresentability has already been discussed in reference to the Holocaust. In particular, Thomas Trezise explores the tension between three meanings of the word "unspeakable" in reference to the Holocaust. That firstly, it is "verbally unrepresentable", secondly, it is "inexpressibly bad", and thirdly, it may not or cannot be spoken because of the sacred nature of the object.[116] What Trezise points out is the tension

[111] Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing", p. 288.
[112] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, pp. 4-5; Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing", p. 289; Thomas Trezise, "Unspeakable", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14 (2001), pp. 39-66.
[113] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 4.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Radstone, "Trauma Theory", p. 20.
[116] Trezise, "Unspeakable", p. 39.

between a "factual claim" of impossibility and a "moral prescription"[117] against possibility, both of which dominate discourse on the Holocaust. He shows that the problem in speaking about the Holocaust seems to be the inadequacy of the language available: "[i]t is to acknowledge [...] that this inadequacy does not characterize the framework in relation to an object lying completely 'outside' of it, but instead reflects the internal disruption of the framework by a 'fact' that exceeds its limits."[118] The damage that the event does to language then, is similar to the way that a traumatic event is said to damage the psyche. The disruption is internal to language or discourse, as it is to the psyche, and therefore cannot be adequately represented, as words no longer hold the same meaning.[119] Furthermore, to use literary or figurative language in relation to the Holocaust could be seen as "an imposition of meaning on the otherwise meaningless"[120] and lead to "aesthetic success and ethical failure"[121]. Similarly, van der Kolk and van der Hart question "whether it is not a sacrilege of the traumatic experience to play with the reality of the past [i.e. by constructing a narrative]?"[122] Narratives about traumatic experiences are always posed against the belief that to speak of trauma is to betray it, yet speaking is proposed as the only cure. Simultaneously there are historical events, as argued above, that combine several competing narratives, and, as Kelly suggests, there is evidence of communities articulating trauma very successfully.[123] The view of the unspeakable trauma is thus in danger of discrediting traumas that are well articulated. It is also important to point out, as Gheith does, that unspeakable may also mean "unspoken" – that there was no opportunity to speak of a trauma and therefore it has remained buried under other narratives or just under silence. Merridale suggests that this unspoken aspect is not

[117] Ibid., p. 40.
[118] Ibid., p. 42.
[119] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[120] Ibid., p. 44.
[121] Ibid., p. 45.
[122] Kolk and Hart, "Intrusive Past", p. 179.
[123] Kelly, "Leningrad Affair", p. 104.

pathological and therefore cannot be viewed through the lens of trauma. However, as I argue above, silence also speaks of something and therefore should not be ignored.

To propose that the articulation of trauma is a betrayal of it and to honour the limits may lead to the exclusion of certain traumatic events that do not fit the mould of trauma's unspeakability. In this context it is precisely within literary language that a representation and the impossibility of representation, the knowing and the not-knowing, the within and the outside of the limits can be explored. George Hartman for example, sees fiction as a possible solution to this unrepresentability because "the disjunction between experiencing (phenomenal or empirical) and understanding (thoughtful naming, in which words replace things, or their images), is what figurative language expresses and explores."[124] Luckhurst also suggests that: "if trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative *possibility* just as much as *impossibility*, a compulsive outpouring of attempts to formulate narrative knowledge."[125] Figurative or literary language is of course not the only approach to trauma, but it is one that is able to explore it from without itself, that is, from different perspectives that can be created through imaginative writing.

1.5 *Vasilii Grossman and Iurii Dombrovskii*

Both Dombrovskii's prominent novels, *Khranitel' drevnostei* (*The Keeper of Antiquities* 1964) and *Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei* ((henceforth *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet*), *The Faculty of Useless Knowledge* 1975/1978), and Grossman's *Za pravoe delo* (*For a Just Cause* 1952), *Zhizn' i sud'ba* ((henceforth *Zhizn'*), *Life and Fate* 1980) and *Vse Techet* (*Everything Flows*, 1980) respectively, deal with the legacy of the Stalinist era, they thus respond to catastrophic historical events. Scholars who have compared the writing of Dombrovskii and Grossman emphasise the authors' similar focus on the conflict between slavery and freedom, both

[124] Geoffrey Hartmann, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies", *New Literary History*, 26 (1995), pp. 537-563 (p. 540).
[125] Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*, p. 83.

psychological and physical.[126] Usually the writers are mentioned in relationship to each other as they both wrote about similar concerns and around a similar time.[127] Anisa Zaitseva however explores their similarities more closely, uniting the two writers as belonging to the literary movement called "*literatura bunta*".[128] Zaitseva sees the two authors as particularly similar in the fact that both have written "dilogies" and both put the theme of freedom and slavery at the centre of their works.[129] Despite these apparent formal similarities, the two authors are very different in both their stature as writers in the Soviet Union and, more apparently, in their literary styles. The difference of their styles is on the one hand the greatest obstacle to a comparison of the two writers. However, on the other hand it allows for a multiple view of representation of trauma; the two writers are similar in their approach and themes but use radically different approaches to the same subject, creating an opportunity to investigate the variety of literary representations of trauma.

I would suggest that the two authors are also united in their use of autobiographical material in their novels and creation of their alter-egos in their fiction. The approach to fiction as a form of testimony to both personal and collective experiences is not unique to these two authors (see for example, the works of Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, Siniavskii etc.),[130] but they are further united by the fact that they both re-wrote their alter-egos in the sequels to their major fiction. This allows for a comparative investigation not only between the two writers, but also between the way in which they approach the re-writing and continuation of the self through their dilogies.

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[126] Anatolii Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990); Anisa R. Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskaniia neofitsial'noi literatury serediny XX veka: uchebnoe posobie* (Ufa: RITS BashGU, 2006).

[127] Both Peter Doyle and Frank Ellis point this out in their studies of the authors. Zaitseva however, is the only one to compare the two authors.

[128] Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Shalamov is represented by various characters in *Kolymskie rasskazy* (*Kolyma tales*), Solzhenitsyn in both *Rakovyi korpus* (*Cancer Ward*) and *V kruge pervom* (*The First Circle*) depicts his battle with cancer and his internment in the Gulag. Siniavskii not only created an alter-ego in fiction but also in real life in the form of his pseudonym "Abram Tertz".

It is vital to note the difference in the two authors' experiences of the Stalinist Soviet Union. Grossman witnessed war, was a largely successful Soviet writer and his confrontation with the authorities was of a very different nature to that of Dombrovskii, who was relatively unknown, exiled to Kazakhstan, arrested four times, and imprisoned both in camps and prisons. What is of interest is the way in which they represent these different experiences. Whilst Dombrovskii was imprisoned in Gulag camps, but does not depict this in his fiction (apart from two short stories that were initially chapters in *Khranitel'*), Grossman represents both Soviet and Nazi camps, as well as death in a gas chamber, which he could never have witnessed. This approach to testimony shows the problematic relationship between history and the individual, or between the event and trauma and raises questions about the limits of literary representation.

Considering the subjects and context of both Grossman's and Dombrovskii's novels, trauma theory becomes an apt approach in identifying the ways in which trauma is depicted in Russian fiction in the context of Soviet ideology. As will be shown, the novels engage both with the Soviet ideology and life in the Soviet state, as well as the trauma caused by that life, without giving either narrative precedence. This allows for an investigation of trauma theory and its sometimes universalising notion of suffering, and at the same time allows one to analyse the way in which Soviet trauma can be depicted.

Before looking at how the fiction of the two writers can be interrogated against trauma theory, it is useful to summarise the basic facts of their biographies. Both writers were active during the height of Stalinism. However, Grossman was able to publish his works between 1934 and 1953, after which his publications became more irregular,[131] whilst Dombrovskii's writing remained in greater obscurity; his two novels published in 1938 and 1955 were largely ignored, and the only relative breakthrough came in 1964, by which time his novel was

[131] Ellis shows that some short stories and collections were published in the late 1950s and early 60s, but generally Grossman's works were suppressed after the "arrest" of *Zhizn'*. See Frank Ellis, *Vasiliy Grossman: The Genesis and Evolution of a Russian Heretic* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), pp. 18-21.

already seen as belonging to a distant anti-Stalinist past.[132] Grossman, thus, to a greater degree than Dombrovskii, was what could be termed a "Soviet writer".[133] Grossman was born in 1905 in Berdichev.[134] His father Semon Osipovich was a chemical engineer and his mother, Ekaterina Savel'evna, a French teacher. Grossman's parents separated when he was young and he spent a great part of his childhood with his mother for the most part in Berdichev. As a young man he moved to Moscow to study chemistry at Moscow State University and it was during this period that his interest in literature and writing was established.[135] Grossman's life is often divided into two distinct periods: his early career when he believed in the tenets of Marxism/Socialism, and his later "conversion" to anti-Soviet beliefs.[136] However, Bit-Yunan shows that this assumption is problematic.[137] In his analysis of one of Grossman's earliest stories "V gorode Berdicheve" ("In the Town of Berdichev", 1934) he shows how the story reveals Grossman's ambiguous relationship towards early Soviet ideology and principles.[138] Grossman's first and second novels *Gluck auf!* (1934) and *Stepan Kol'chugin* (1937-40) could both be viewed to be in keeping with the Soviet style, and both plots correspond to Katerina Clark's definition of Soviet novel types: the "production novel" and the "novel of war or revolution".[139] *Gluck Auf!* is about coal mining. It depicts a Bolshevik's sacrifice of himself for the cause as he drives himself and others to fulfil the quota.[140] John and Carol Garrard, however, suggest that the theme had less to do with fitting in with the prescribed literary norms as with his own experience at a coal mine in Stalino, now Donetsk, where both he and

[132] All further biographical information is taken from this source unless stated otherwise. Peter Doyle, *Iurii Dombrovskii: Freedom Under Totalitarianism* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000), p. 41.
[133] Iurii Bit-Yunan discussed this at a talk at the Pushkin House. Iurii Bit-Yunan, "The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman", Pushkin House, 13 March 2012.
[134] All further biographical information is taken from this source unless stated otherwise. John Gordon Garrard and Carol Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev: The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman* (New York: Free Press, 1996), p. 51.
[135] Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, p. 6.
[136] Ellis, *Genesis*, pp. 21-26; Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. xvi.
[137] See Iurii Bit-Yunan, "O predelakh dopustimogo: Kriticheskaia retseptsia tvorchestva V. Grossmana 1930-kh godov", *Voprosy Literatury*, July-Aug (2010), pp. 155-177.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* 2nd edn(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000; 2nd edn.), p. 255.
[140] Vasilii Grossman, "Gluck Auf!" in *God XVII, Al'manakh* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1934), vol. (4), pp. 5-125.

his father worked.[141] *Stepan Kol'chugin*, on the other hand, engages more directly with historical events in its exposition of the early revolutionary movement and the assassination of Stolypin. The Gerrard's also point out that there are many biographical elements in the novel, as it is largely based on the accounts of his parents and relatives, and that he therefore pays particular attention to the experience of Jews and the anti-Semitism of the times.[142]

The Second World War in Russia started soon after *Stepan Kol'chugin* was published, and Grossman was determined to take part in the war effort. However, his constitution was deemed to be too weak for battle and he took work as a reporter for *Krasnaia zvezda* between 1941-1945 – a job that supplied him with an abundance of material. Apart from writing for the paper, he also composed two novels based on his experiences: *Narod bessmerten* (1942, *The People Are Immortal*) and *Za pravoe delo* (*For a Just Cause*, 1952).[143] *Narod bessmerten* was relatively easily published, and was a great success, it "was the closest thing to virtual reality about the invasion ever published in the Soviet Union, either during the war or in the decades that followed."[144] The novel tells a story about encircled soldiers and ends with their rescue, an improbably positive ending[145], which may have been the reason for its popularity, after all, soldiers as well as the country needed hope, as John and Carol Garrard point out: "his work was about hope, not optimism – an important distinction."[146] This distinction is important to keep in mind for Grossman's other works as well, because hope permeates all of them. In comparison, the publication of *Za pravoe delo* was a much more arduous process. The novel depicts the life of the Shaposhnikov family who live in Stalingrad during the city's invasion. The novel both focuses on the home front and the events at the front through the eyes of officers, commissars and simple soldiers recruited in haste. Grossman submitted the

[141]Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 93.
[142] Ibid., p. 49.
[143] Antony Beevor, *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army 1941-1945* (London: Harvill, 2005), p. vii.
[144] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 158,157.
[145] Ibid., p. 157.
[146] Ibid.

manuscript to *Novyi mir* in 1949 but, the novel underwent harsh censorship and was only published after three years of editorial work.[147] *Za pravoe delo* first went through Konstantin Simonov's editing and then Alexander Tvardovskii's; it had to be cleared of all its "subversive" aspects by the time the novel reached Glavlit. The alterations to the novel were so vast and extended over such a long period of time that Grossman started keeping a notebook of the editing process, entitled *Dnevnik prokhozhdeniya rukopisi* ("The Diary of a Manuscript's Progress").[148] The diary notes the progress of the novel from one authority to another. It even reached the hands of General Rodimtsev, decorated Hero of the Soviet Union, since it describes a battle in which Rodimtsev took part, which shows the importance that the authorities placed on a depiction of the war.[149] The strenuous censorship through which the novel went before its final publication in 1952 shows the precariousness of writing about war and highlights the silence placed on a depiction of a traumatic event. The myth of The Great Patriotic War was closely supervised and only approved accounts and views of it could exist; history was not open to subjective interpretation and the creation of a collective and cultural trauma was prevented. Frank Ellis claims that the choice of subject already counted against Grossman, as no writer wanted to touch upon it at the time.[150] Grossman thus seemed to be moving from being a popular and officially endorsed author to becoming a relatively controversial one. *ZPD* was published again in 1964 by Voenizdat, and featured many of the aspects that were removed from the initial *Novyi mir* publication, as the pressures of the Stalinist publishing system were loosened under Khrushchev. The revision to the novel did not make it controversial, however, they did add a more ambiguous tone to it. Some of the characters' biographies included reference to over-zealous Bolshevism as well as a reference

[147] Much of the information on this process can be found in Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*; Fedor Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma: Kniga o Vasilii Grossmane* (Moscow: Probel, 2007).
[148] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 222.
[149] Ibid., pp. 223-224.
[150] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 78.

to the arrests of 1937 and camps, something that could not be spoken about before Stalin's death.

The apprehensive response of the editors of *Novyi mir* to *ZPD* did not happen in a vacuum, Grossman's ideological inclinations were already under question. His play *Esli verit' pifagoreitsam* (*If you Believe the Pythagoreans*) was published in 1944 whilst he was working on *Za pravoe delo*, and was attacked by critics for its interpretation of history as cyclical, rather than progressive and linear in accordance with Marxist ideology.[151] Grossman's ideas about history were thus already seen as conflicting with the ideology of the state and made him suspicious to the authorities. In his last two novels, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* and *Vse techet*, Grossman was no longer writing for the critics or editors (although he seemed to believe that *Zhizn' i sud'ba* could be published in the atmosphere of the Thaw[152]), and it is in these novels that he expounds his main views on Russian history, producing a version of it that was greatly at odds with the official narrative. The novel is a sequel to *Za pravoe delo* and follows the effects of the war on the Shaposhnikov and Shtrum families. However, it also includes depictions of both Soviet and Nazi camps, as well philosophical chapters on the nature of good and evil, and freedom and slavery. The novel compares Communism to Nazism, and explicitly condemns the Stalinist regime, which led to *Zhizn'* being "arrested" in 1961. This event is believed to be a contributing factor in the rapid decline of Grossman's health. He re-wrote the initial 1955 manuscript of *Vse techet* on his deathbed in hospital, where he died in 1964 from stomach cancer.[153] *Vse techet* is his most experimental work, and also his most harrowing depiction of the traumatic history of Stalinism. It depicts the return of Ivan Grigor'evich after thirty years in camp, only to find that life continued without him and that it is nearly impossible to connect to people outside the camp. The novel also includes a chapter

[151] Ibid., pp. 101-113; Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 214.
[152] Iurii Bit-Yunan and D. Fel'dman, "Intriga i sud'ba Vasiliia Grossmana: Ochevidnye nesootvetstvia", *Voprosy Literatury*, Nov-Dec (2010), pp. 153-182.
[153] See Anna Berzer for an account of Grossman's last days: Semen Izrailevich Lipkin and Anna Berzer, *Zhizn' i sud'ba Vasiliia Grossmana; Proshanie* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990).

based on the Passion of the Christ where Judases of the Soviet era are interrogated at a fictional trial and a chapter on the nature of Russian history. In *Zhizn'* Grossman compares the Communist regime to the Nazi regime, suggesting that the two are equal, whilst *Vse techet* includes a chapter on the history of Russia as that of a nation developing in "non-freedom". As controversial as both these aspects are, what is of greater interest to this analysis is Grossman's depiction of individual suffering during the Stalinist era. In *ZPD*, *Zhizn'* and *Vse techet* Grossman shows the traumatic impact of famine, war and incarceration in the Gulag camps, and how the individuals depicted relate to their history. Grossman does not flinch at depicting the horrific consequences of war and terror, however, he also shows the ways in which people coped under these circumstances, allowing for a personal notion of freedom to survive. This seeming paradox of both trauma and the survival of freedom makes his novels a particularly significant subject for investigation, as it problematises the view of trauma as a singular negative experience. Grossman does not propose that trauma is in any way a positive experience, but his novels do suggest that there is a way to cope with trauma and to survive it undamaged.

Iurii Dombrovskii, like Grossman, was fascinated with history, both contemporary and ancient, and made it the subject of several of his novels. Dombrovskii was born in 1909 in Moscow, his father Iosif Vital'evich was a lawyer and his mother, Lidiia Alekseevna Kraineva, was a biology teacher.[154] He was a rebellious child defiant of authority, something that marked his adult life as well. His interest in literature started early in life and in 1926 he joined Vysshie gosudarstvennye literaturnye kursy (Higher State Literary Courses) in Moscow. Dombrovskii's experience of the Stalinist system of repression and terror started in 1932 when he was first arrested for hooliganism; from then on Dombrovskii became a recurrent target of the authorities. He was exiled to Alma-Ata, where he nevertheless managed

[154] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 6.

to get some articles published in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* in 1937 on Russian writers, such as Batiushkov, Goncharov and Kiukhel'beker. His first published novel *Derzhavin* (1938) (published under the title *Kruschenie Imperii* in *Literaturnyi Kazakhstan*), was a historical novel dealing with five months in the life of the poet Derzhavin. Although historical novels were popular at the time, and Dombrovskii's theme seems to fit perfectly within that trend, the style of the novel was archaic, and departed dramatically from Socialist Realist prescriptions. As Peter Doyle points out, in the novel Dombrovskii expounds his main ideas on history and the relationship between the artist and the oppressive state, all of which can be seen as a comment on the Soviet state and Dombrovskii's own position in it.[155] Only a year after the publication of *Derzhavin*, Dombrovskii was arrested for the third time and sentenced to eight years in a hard labour camp, charged with anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. Doyle suggests that "given the atmosphere in the country in the late 1930s, engendered by Stalin's Great Terror, with its purges, spy mania, and ideological campaigns against the intelligentsia, the only surprise is that Dombrovskii, a controversial and independently minded writer with enemies and a reputation for outspokenness, had managed to survive for so long."[156] The arrest is directly related to his work in the Central Kazakhstan Museum, where he came to clash with his colleagues, and the experience of which would become the plot of his novel *Khranitel' drevnostei*. Dombrovskii spent four years in camps, including Kolyma, where he nearly died, but was saved by the fact that the authorities released him early on the account of his invalidism.

Dombrovskii's second novel was not published until 1959, although he had started writing it in hospital in 1944 whilst recovering from his internment in Kolyma. Dombrovskii saw *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom* (*The Ape is Coming For Its Skull*) as his contribution to the war effort, in which he could not take part due to his arrests and ill health.

[155] Ibid., p. 55.
[156] Ibid., p. 14.

This novel, unlike his first one, engages in political issues, particularly the effects of ideology on the individual's perception of reality and historical events. As Doyle points out, the novel is more concerned with philosophical debate rather than an accurate representation of reality.[157] It depicts the invasion of an unidentifiable Western European town by the Nazis, and the way in which their ideology clashes with that of the anthropologist Leon Mezonier. Although there was a hope of publishing *Obeziana* in the late 1940s, nothing came out of Dombrovskii's efforts. Instead, the novel led to his next arrest in 1949, as it was deemed to be Fascist. The novel was archived by the KGB and in 1955 returned to Dombrovskii by one of its former workers who had saved the novel; it was then published in 1959. During this period Dombrovskii lived in Moscow and continued writing short fiction and articles on writers and artists, as well as translating Kazakh writers.

In 1961 Dombrovskii started writing *Khranitel'*, in which he depicts his experiences of working for the Central Kazakhstan Museum during the height of Stalinist Terror in 1937. It narrates the fear and terror that surrounds the Keeper at the museum who gets involved with an absurd story about a Boa Constrictor that has escaped from the circus. The fear and rigidity of life in a Socialist utopia is contrasted with numerous digressions about art and the freedom that is to be found within creativity and expression. The novel was published in 1964 in *Novyi mir* and although it was a success with the editors and readers, it was treated to a near-complete silence by the critics. Anna Berzer explains that this was an official stance, as the novel did not fit in with the move away from Khrushchev's Thaw policies towards a more constricted view of literature.[158] This was a terrible blow to Dombrovskii, yet it did not stop him from writing the sequel to the novel, which was surprisingly commissioned by Tvardovskii, and for which he got an advance.

[157] Ibid., p. 71.
[158] Anna Berzer, "Khranitel' ognia", in *Khranitel' drevnostei. Fkaul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei: roman v dvukh knigakh*,(Moscow: Knizhnaia palata, 1990), pp. 591-606.

Dombrovskii wrote *Fakul'tet* in secrecy for eleven years. The trial of Siniavskii and Daniel proved to Dombrovskii that there was little hope of publishing his novel in his homeland, but he managed to get it published by YMCA press in Paris 1978, a couple of months before he was brutally assaulted and died.[159] The plot of *Fakul'tet* follows that of *Khranitel'*; however, the novel is more fragmented in its structure and the third person narrative allows for a greater exploration of traumatic effects for terror on the characters. The novel depicts the arrest and interrogation of Zybin by the NKVD, showing the psychological effects of Soviet interrogations. Whilst exposing the traumatic impact of fear and terror in 1937, Dombrovskii also depicts the importance of art and creativity that allow for freedom to exist in the darkest periods of history. The themes of freedom as a necessity to mankind, and its stifling by totalitarianism, permeate both Dombrovskii's and Grossman's late fiction.

1.6 *Chapter Outline*

In the second chapter of this thesis I focus on the influence of ideology on creating testimony, as a conflict between two competing narratives. As Weine, Kali Tal and Alexander all have shown, testimony is produced within the context of official narratives about the event and thus the individual's testimony finds itself in competition with various perceptions of the same experience.[160] Focusing on the testimony of the major characters in *Obeziana* and *Vse techet*, I investigate the way in which (Soviet) testimonies about the past are influenced and narrated through the very ideology that is responsible for the trauma. In *Obeziana* the case is slightly different as the novel is set in a Western-European town. However, it depicts the influence of ideology not only on testimony, but on human actions in general. The structure of the novel is that of a testimony: the main action is framed by the explicit will to testify by Hans Mezonier.

[159] For more on this see Klara Turumova-Dombrovskaia, "Ubit za roman" http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/40145.html (Acessed on 24/07/2012); Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 49.
[160] Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*; Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*.

Hans finds that his present is a repetition of the past, which lead to his father's suicide, and believes that it is only through testimony that he can change this cyclical nature of history. Testimony in this case is a battle against forgetting, which in turn is a barrier against future violence. Ideology in this novel is depicted as a violent onslaught from without. Hans' testimony is a testimony *to* the power of ideology. He himself is not speaking through it, but is speaking about and against it. Grossman's *Vse techet*, on the other hand, tackles ideology from within itself, seeing the way in which it affects language and can become a barrier to communication. There are two contrasting testimonies in the novel, that of Nikolai and Anna: the former is unable to testify to the past by remaining within ideological language, whilst the latter is able to transcend and testify *to* ideology by becoming aware of the ideological nature of language. Both novels thus show the way in which ideology impacts on testimony of trauma, both as a subject about which it is difficult to speak and as a competing language that attempts to preclude testifying. Ideology has both enabled violence and at the same time precludes its narration.

In the third chapter I investigate the way in which time, temporality, trauma and identity are deeply entwined in Vasilii Grossman's *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. As discussed above, a traumatic encounter has a profound effect on a person's identity by affecting the way in which memory functions. Being intrusive, the memory of trauma fragments the experience of time as a linear progression. Using Paul Ricoeur's theory of identity as relying on time, I investigate the way in which the fragmentation of time affects the characters' perceptions of their own identity. Both trauma theory and Soviet ideology focus greatly on identity as the carrier of the event/ideology. Krymov, in *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*, is a particularly good example of this. In *ZPD* Krymov is depicted as the ideal Communist, but eventually ends up arrested and interrogated as a traitor at the Lubianka in *Zhizn'*. Krymov perceives this change in his fate through his relation to time and history: in *ZPD* Krymov feels

that he is moving forward with history, while in *Zhizn'* he starts to feel as if he is outside of time, that history is moving forward without him. Grossman further employs disrupted temporality to depict the final collapse of Krymov's identity during his interrogation. The other two characters studied in this chapter are Sofya Osipovna and Liudmila Nikolaevna. Sofya Osipovna is one of many people taken to the gas chamber by the occupying forces and sees how people's identities are destroyed by this dehumanising treatment. Time, in the form of memory, helps Sofya Osipovna piece her life together and create a coherent narrative of her own life and a framework through which to view her present. Grossman thus shows the battle between the dehumanising nature of the trauma that is done unto her and the freedom which stems from within her in which she is able to reclaim her identity. For Liudmila, it is the loss of her son Tolia that shatters her identity as a mother, and she finds it impossible to view her life outside of the trauma. She becomes stuck in the past and the trauma haunts her, as if she is possessed by the past, showing a disrupted temporality as she is faced with the loss of her son. Her trauma confuses and fragments time, indicating the impossibility of grasping the moment and understanding the self within that moment. However, with time, this trauma is healed. Grossman's conceptualisation of identity in its relation to time and memory exposes the workings of competing narratives about the self and history. Trauma brings to the fore the interrelationship between the event and the self, and the impact of the narrative that is created about this relationship. So, although trauma can shatter and sometimes define identity, Grossman shows how instead trauma can be transfigured through identity and how freedom can be achieved.

In the fourth chapter I move on to the study of Dombrovskii and his dilogy *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet.* Both novels depict the few months in Zybin's life during the height of Stalinist terror in 1937. However, despite depicting the traumatising effect of fear and terror and the final interrogation of Zybin, the novels also exhibit a vast amount of beauty and humour. This

contrast unsettles the reader as the horror and fear of terror seem misplaced in an environment of beauty. I connect this odd combination to Freud's concept of the uncanny, an unsettling emotion created partly through art, which suggests the commingling of the familiar and the strange and the new. In Dombrovskii's two novels the uncanny is made evident through the repetitive imagery used, which makes the novels both fantastic and terrifying, highlighting the fear created by the terror. On the one hand there is the repetitive imagery of dead bodies, and on the other hand, the characters die a symbolic death. However, it also through this imagery that Dombrovskii unsettles the seemingly stable meaning of death and dying. The dead bodies are unsettling in their aliveness, and the living are strange in their deathly existence. Terror is thus depicted indirectly, showing that it holds the space between being known and unknown. It is thus a trauma that was silenced despite its presence, which shows the difficulty in testifying to this past. However, by unsettling the very notion of death Dombrovskii also shows the ability of creativity to overcome silence and trauma through the freedom embedded within it.

In the final chapter I tackle the autobiographical aspects of both authors' writing. Focusing on their dilogies as examples of the re-writing of their personal traumas, I investigate the ways in which they both speak within the novels, and outside, about their traumas and their relationship to their writing. The notion of the witness and the idea of testimony yet again come to the fore here as both authors present themselves as witnesses and express a need to testify due to both moral and personal reasons. Jacques Derrida's conception of the survivor as someone who "has lived longer than what has come to pass"[161] is central here. Both authors are faced with their, or others', deaths and attempt to regain that moment and reconstruct it in fiction. The boundary between autobiography, testimony and fiction is central here. The fact that both authors chose to write fiction about their experiences, rather

[161] Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida, *The Instant of My Death* trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 45.

than memoir and the way in which literature affects testimony is of importance in understanding how trauma can be narrated. What becomes apparent in this chapter is that there is a seeming paradox in these novels, that on the one hand the novels appear to coincide with the belief that trauma is a "black hole", but on the other hand, they espouse a belief in freedom and an integration of trauma into one's identity, suggesting the importance of the meaning ascribed to trauma.[162] Both writers thus grapple with the darkness that is at the core of trauma and its unrepresentability, at the same time as they show that there is more to it, that there is a way to transcend the darkness.

Interrogating the works of Vasilii Grossman and Iurii Dombrovskii against trauma theory helps to uncover the ways in which the two authors responded to both their own and collective suffering. However, what also becomes apparent is that trauma theory on its own does not provide a coherent view of the Soviet experience, which is what has lead Merridale to proclaim it an ineffective approach. To truly understand the ways in which traumatic Soviet experiences can be narrated, one has to place trauma in Soviet context. As trauma struggles to find a language to express its unspeakable nature, it also struggles with Soviet discourse. Both authors under discussion here depict trauma as a Soviet experience but also look beyond both trauma and Soviet life towards the all encompassing notion of freedom. This hope of freedom coupled with the darkness of trauma is what makes the works of these writers stand out as both fascinating and important contributions to literature about the Soviet past.

[162] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. 64-65.

Chapter 2

Testimony and Ideology: remembering trauma in Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet* and Iurii Dombrovskii's *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom.*

Iurii Dombrovskii's *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom* (*The Ape is Coming for its Skull*, 1959; hereafter *Obeziana*) and Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet* (*Everything Flows*, 1974) are uncannily similar in the history of their writing and their subject, but differ greatly in their delivery. Using testimony as a form through which to examine ideology, the two novels engage with the trauma of history and its effects on individuals. Ideology in the two novels acts as the bridge between the individual and the collective, the public and the private, showing the effect of the state on the individual. Testimony holds a similar position as it represents a personal narrative about a collective experience, and that can often affect the way in which that experience is remembered or judged. Testifying to the impact of ideology is central to both novels. However, as they both show, this testimony does not always form a straight forward narrative, as it competes with ideological language to narrate the imperceptible influence of the state. The characters in *Obeziana* and *Vse techet* attempt to understand how their personal past fits with the greater collective history, and how they can testify to their experience of that history. Because of the different setting of the two novels – *Obeziana* depicts the Nazi ideology and *Vse techet* the Soviet era – the depiction of ideological influence is very different. However, this difference allows for a complementary analysis of ideology as the novels exhibit both the overt and the hidden nature of ideology. Furthermore, ideology and testimony are shown to rely greatly on language and therefore inevitably and paradoxically compete in gaining primacy within testimony.

Although the nature of the two novels is very different there are several reasons why they lend themselves well to a comparative analysis. Partly, as suggested above, they provide complementary views of ideology. One presents the story of a Western town that is invaded by Nazis who attempt to subjugate people to their new and hostile ideology, while the other depicts Soviet citizens who have engaged with and lived through ideology voluntarily, sometimes unknowingly taking part in the State's crimes. *Obeziana* thus provides a view of ideology as standing in opposition to people's true beliefs and as a violent intrusion, whilst *Vse techet* depicts ideology as an imperceptible force in society with which individuals engage willingly, rather than being assaulted by it. These different explorations of ideology allow for a fuller picture of the influence of ideology within society. In the study of totalitarian states, ideology is often connected to that state's form of violence; for example in relation to Nazi Germany the great focus has been on the connection of ideology to genocide.[163] In these novels ideology and violence are also deeply connected. As Slavoj Žižek suggests in his exploration of violence: "We're talking here of the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence."[164] Ideology can be seen as one of these forms of coercion or domination, although, as will be shown, it functions through an individual's engagement with it, not on its own. This view of ideology has been explored in the recent studies of Soviet subjectivity and the ways in which citizens partake in the functioning of ideology.[165] The two novels thus exhibit the relationship between violence and ideology and the ways in which individuals engage with these two aspects of life in Nazi and Soviet regimes. Perhaps it is the fact that the novels were written at different points in the authors' lives that has affected the way in which they represent ideology. For

[163] Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 11.
[164] Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile, 2009), p. 8.
[165] Ideology was prominent in early studies of the USSR but was later overlooked and has recently been taken up by scholars such as Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck. See Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity", p. 172.

Grossman it was his last novel, in which he denounced the Soviet state, and his conception of ideology had perhaps become more complex, whereas for Dombrovskii, it was one of his earliest novels, and he therefore saw ideology in more direct terms as an onslaught on the individuality and autonomy of mankind.

Although the two novels stand at the opposite ends of the authors' careers, they both stand out within their oeuvre. *Vse techet* is Grossman's most experimental work: the narrative is fragmented into episodes that, instead of moving the plot forward, dwell on personal tragedies and testimonies given by several characters. *Obeziana* is also an unusual novel for Dombrovskii. Although it includes much of the imagery that permeates Dombrovskii's other fiction, it follows the tradition of detective fiction and in this incorporation of techniques from genre fiction, lacks some of the ambiguity that characterises Dombrovskii's other writing. Both authors re-wrote their novels extensively after a long period of time. Dombrovskii first started writing the novel on a hospital bed in 1943, recovering from his internment in the Kolyma camps. Although the novel was accepted for publication in 1947, nothing came of this and Dombrovskii was again arrested. He believed his novel to be lost until it was returned to him by a stranger in 1955, after which he re-wrote the novel to include the testimonial structure, and finally published it in 1959.[166] Like Dombrovskii, Grossman wrote his manuscript on a hospital bed. He first wrote a draft of the novel in 1955 but abandoned it for his work on *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. However, after that novel's "arrest" in 1961[167] he returned to the manuscript of *Vse techet*, which he finished on his deathbed in 1963.[168] Both novels were thus written on hospital beds whilst the writers were reflecting on the impact and direction of history, and both are concerned with individual responsibility for and testimony to that history.

[166] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 69.
[167] See Chapter 3 for more details on the publication of the novel.
[168] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 260-262.

Memory is presented in the two novels as the antidote to forgetting and thus future oppression and violence. As Anisa Zaitseva points out in her analysis of *Obeziana*: "Безпамятство – путь к всеобщему сумашествию, память как средоточие культуры и гуманизма мыслится Ю. Домбровским как единственная защита и надежда на спасение цивилизации."[169] Memory finds its expression through testimony, which battles with narrating both personal and collective memories and experiences. In *Obeziana* the narrator Hans uses the story of his father's suicide as an example of the way in which history affects personal private lives; the two are intimately entwined. In order for Hans to respond to his own family trauma, he has to respond to the wider historical events. Similarly, in *Vse techet* Anna and Nikolai find that their personal lives are entangled with the collective history and the actions of the state, so that to separate the two only becomes possible through testimony. Both authors place their work in between making sense of and mourning the past: testimony becomes the most suitable approach as it places the narrative between painful recollection and an attempt to make sense of it, sometimes even an attempt to judge. However, as Tzvetan Todorov suggests: "Understanding evil is not to justify it, but the means of preventing it from occurring again."[170] The above two novels both depict traumatic and painful experiences, and attempt to testify to how and why these events occurred.

2.1 *Testimony*

Testimony in these novels serves two primary functions. On the one hand it takes the form of a personal retelling of a memory that is often tied in with the hope of healing from that memory, and on the other hand, it shapes a representation of a past historical event in order make sense of it and commemorate a collective experience.[171] It bears witness to the

[169] Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, p. 37.
[170] Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), p. 124.
[171] This division of testimony is further discussed in Chapter 5.

interconnected factors of ideology and violence. Giorgio Agamben suggests that the notion of witnessing has two core meanings:

> In Latin there are two words for "witness". The first word, *testis*, from which our word 'testimony' derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (**terstis*). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it.[172]

However, experiencing an event "from beginning to end" includes not only the personal but also the collective experience. Agamben's first definition of "witness" as *terstis* impacts on this private and public experience as it connects the personal to the collective through the judgement that it may pass on the past events. Personal testimony thus helps to judge the collective experience. Within the testimony however, the person may attempt to make sense of the event within their own life and the meaning that it has for them, whilst in a court of law their testimony may be used to judge the past. The testimony carries several stories within itself. It not only has a function within judgement, but it also carries the story of personal suffering and the collective narratives about that suffering, all of which complicate the representation of a traumatic past.

Dori Laub's exploration of testimony suggests that narrating traumatic memories challenges language to represent what the traumatised subject finds hard to understand, let alone to explain to another.[173] One of the problems of narrating traumatic and painful memories is that a narrative imposes a coherence on a fragmented memory, potentially rendering the representation false. Testimony to trauma has been seen in Freudian terms as a "talking cure,"[174] a way of purging of painful memories. Laub suggests that art can cure

[172] Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 17.
[173] Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing".
[174] Originally coined by Joseph Breuer's patient Anna O, and later appropriated by Freud.

through creating narrative that is simultaneously in dialogue with its own unspeakability.[175] This is something that Cathy Caruth explores as well, suggesting that testimony has to incorporate what seems like two contradictory experiences: both the event itself and its absence in memory, its impossibility.[176] Painful and in particular traumatic memories challenge not only language but understanding itself, as the event then returns to haunt the victim through repetitive and intrusive memories,[177] making the victim a "symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess", Caruth suggests.[178] Caruth's view of history suggests that it has dominance over the individual. In contrast Stevan Weine suggests that the individual is, through language, capable of possessing his/her past. He suggests that testimony could instead be seen as a multivalent story that responds to several aspects of the experience that it is narrating.[179]

> Within one point of historical experience, even within one person's narration of surviving political violence, there are many different ways of seeing many different things, and each connects interpersonally, culturally, historically, and spiritually with many other views. Moreover, speech itself is comprised of "utterances" and sometimes "double voiced words" which are shaped through "dialogic interaction", and which bear not only the speaker's words and meanings but also those of the listeners. Thus the survivors' storytelling contains words that carry points of view that belong to a larger distributed network of experiences and meanings.[180]

Seeing testimony as a multivalent narrative removes some of the coherence that a narrative can impose. Weine further suggests that testimony of violence can be seen in Bakhtinian terms as a metalinguistic problem, rather than merely as a cathartic and therapeutic narrative. That it is as much a problem of representation as it is of psychological distress. Seeing it thus

[175] Laub and Podell, "Art and Trauma", p. 993.
[175] Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. 95.
[176] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 9.
[177] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 2.
[178] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 5.
[179] Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. xviii.
[180] Ibid., p. 103.

helps in the interrogation novels against a theory that is largely based on the exploration of the human mind.

In Grossman's novel the notion of judgement is complicated further by the fact that the characters are both victims and perpetrators simultaneously, making testifying particularly difficult. It is the balance between the personal painful experience and the public collective judgement that challenges the testimony to embrace several perspectives at once. Both the complex nature of traumatic memory and the confrontation with the official narratives are present in testimony. In the Soviet context however, the pervasiveness of ideology and official narrative creates a tension between possessing and being possessed by history.

2.2 *Ideology*

Ideology is of particular interest because it influences both the relations between the individual and the state, and the language that the subjects use to relate to the state. This can also have an effect on testimony because ideology itself is partly a linguistic construct. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example, defines it as a systematic scheme of ideas relating to social politics, partly used to justify actions. Ideology in this study will mainly be considered in terms of its function, rather than engaging with specific Marxist-Leninist ideology (or National Socialist ideology as is the case in *Obeziana*). The prominent critic of the totalitarian state Hannah Arendt defines ideology and its relation to totalitarianism thus:

> An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history, to which the 'idea' is applied; the result of this application is not a body of statements about something that *is*, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change. The ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same 'law' as the logical exposition of its 'idea'. Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process – the secrets of the past, the

> intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future – because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.[181]

Some of the points raised by Arendt reflect Soviet socialist ideology, especially the idea that ideology claims to know the processes of history. Igal Halfin in particular points out the communist eschatology that was embedded even in autobiographical narratives, where writers tried to describe their lives in a historically progressive manner.[182] Arendt suggests that ideology dominates the meanings ascribed to events as they are depicted as following "the same logical exposition as of its 'idea'".

Because of the potential power of ideology it is easy to assume that it is a purely negative aspect of a regime, but as Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser's theories of ideology show, ideology is not necessarily imposed on the people by the state. Gramsci for example does not see ideology as either false or true, but as engendering cohesion between people and state.[183] Althusser further develops a theory of ideology in *general*, its structure and function. Firstly, he points out that ideology is not a false consciousness but an "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of experience."[184] Secondly, he suggests that ideology has a material existence: "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material."[185] So, rather than seeing ideology as something separate, Althusser suggests that it is entwined into the very fabric of life: one is always within an ideology. Althusser further suggests that ideology makes subjects out of individuals: "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects."[186] While Arendt suggests that "[w]hat totalitarian rule needs to guide the behavior of its subjects is a preparation to fit each of them equally well for the role of executioner and the role of victim.

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[181] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 469.
[182] Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*; Halfin, *Terror*, p. 11.
[183] Stuart Hall, Bob Lumley, and Gregor McLennan, "Politics and Ideology: Gramsci", in *On Ideology*, ed. by Bill Schwartz (London: Hutchinsons, 1978), pp. 45-77 (p. 48).
[184] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 693-703 (p. 694).
[185] Ibid., p. 695.
[186] Ibid., p. 697.

This two-sided preparation, the substitute for a principle of action, is the ideology,"[187] Althusser's ideas, together with research into Soviet subjectivity, show that the subjects themselves also took part in this "preparation."[188] As Althusser states "the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right 'by themselves'" as "[t]hey are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs [Ideological State Apparatuses]."[189] Furthermore, Althusser distinguishes between Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses, with the former imposing action on the subjects, and the latter functioning in unison with the subjects.

As several scholars have argued, Soviet citizens became subjects through whom the state functioned, as ideology was often internalised and formed the core of a person's value system. As both Jochen Hellbeck and Halfin[190] show, ideology functioned largely through language as subjects verbally created their identities in diaries and autobiographies. Hellbeck points out that: "Soviet Communists sought to impart consciousness in great measure by linguistic means: through practices of reading, writing, and oral and written self-presentation."[191] Therefore a linguistic definition of the self partly constituted the subject's identity. This is further exemplified by Halfin's analysis of "Communist hermeneutics of the soul": the presentation of autobiographies as proof of one's "Party-mindedness" and understanding of ideology.[192] As Althusser states above, this is a form of inscribing subjects in the state's practices and thus making them "work by themselves". Hellbeck further continues:

> The individual operates like a clearing house where ideology is unpacked and personalized, and in process the individual remakes himself into a subject with

[187] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 468.
[188] Jochen Hellbeck in particular focuses on the complicity of Soviet subjects.
[189] Althusser, "Ideology", p. 701.
[190] Halfin, *Terror*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*.
[191] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, p. 20.
[192] Halfin, *Terror*, p. 7.

> distinct and meaningful biographical features. And in activating the individual, ideology itself comes to life.[193]

This view of ideology is in line with Althusser's statement that ideology has a material existence: that it exists through subjects. What both Halfin and Hellbeck show is the way in which ideology was embedded in Soviet life itself, and the various practices through which it functioned. A vital aspect of their study is the fact that ideology was inscribed in the language that the subjects used; that it is not enough to understand ideology, one must also be able to speak ideologically.[194] Speaking ideologically unites one with the ideology, and prohibits one from realising that one is part of ideology and acting ideologically. As Althusser states: "one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denial* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says 'I am ideological.'"[195] However, the constant re-writing of autobiographies to fit ideology, as highlighted by Halfin, shows that subjects were aware at least to some extent that they were creating Communist selves. Furthermore, Alexei Yurchak's study of late Socialism shows that Soviet subjects learned to recreate ideological clichés without imbuing them with any particular meaning.[196] On the other hand, as my analysis of both Anna and Nikolai in *Vse techet* shows, inhabiting ideology prevented these characters seeing the meaning of their actions outside ideological constructs. Furthermore, it shows the difficulty of testifying to this experience of ideology, especially since the Soviet language itself was ideological.

Testimony is to a large extent a battle with either private or public silence, an attempt to expose some unspoken or unspeakable truth. Ideology may reinforce silence by monopolising language and not allowing for alternative representations of experience to occur. Trauma, in this context, becomes not only an event that was not assimilated as it occurred, but also an

[193] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, pp. 12-13.
[194] This is something that Stephen Kotkin also explores in *Magnetic Mountain*. See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, p. 199.
[195] Althusser, "Ideology", p. 700.
[196] Yurchak, *Everything was forever*, p. 27.

event that is accompanied by an official narrative that it is remembered through. Testimony has to engage in a dialogue with this official narrative as well as the personal experience of traumatic event itself.

Vse techet reflects on the impact of ideology, and in particular its violent aspects: that ideology can justify murder and revise the meaning of history. The strict implementation of ideology in a totalitarian state replaces individuals' understanding of morality and ethics with its own judgements, forbidding any alternative perceptions. Ultimately, through narrating reality and creating new concepts for judging actions and events, ideology may affect experience itself. Within this setting testimony has to respond to the language which attempts to preclude personal reflection; to break free of it at the same time as testify to it. Thus the narrative of the traumatic experience is entangled with cultural constructs that created it.

2.3 *Testimony as a challenge to ideology*

Dombrovskii's *Obeziana* investigates the violence through which ideology is imparted and attempts to challenge this influence through testimony. Hans' testimony about his father's death is concerned with exposing the influence of ideology in order to learn from the past. The testimony is presented in the prologue and epilogue of the novel, which Dombrovskii added when re-writing the novel in 1955. There are thus two different ideologies within the novel: the present ideology of 1955 when Hans decides to write a testimony, and that of the invading Nazi regime, which forms the basis of his testimony. He is using the story of the past ideological violation to highlight the present influence and danger of ideology. The hope of learning from the past is at the centre of his need to testify.

Peter Doyle rightfully suggests that: "[p]erhaps one of the least satisfactory aspects of *The Ape Is Coming for its Skull* is the contention that the events of 1940 can be plausibly reconstructed many years later and narrated by Hans Mezonier, who was a boy of twelve at

the time."[197] Although the notion that Hans is depicting the events of 1940s seems improbable, the reader is led to forget that the narrative is actually Hans' testimony and is only reminded of it in the epilogue. Thus, Doyle's suggestion that it is a novel within a novel is particularly apt. Considering the improbability and unreliability of Hans' testimony, Dombrovskii's choice of adding the prologue and epilogue, despite the fact that it makes the novel artistically uneven, is odd. It seems that Dombrovskii felt that by making it a testimony he could highlight the importance of remembrance of the past and thus add more weight and importance to the novel itself. Although the novel is set in an unknown Western European country during the occupation of the Nazis, Hans' statements about learning from the past suggest that the meaning of the narrative is equally applicable to the Soviet Union.[198]

The main action of the novel depicts a battle between two ideologies, with that of the anthropologist and palaeontologist Leon Mezonier, whose beliefs are rooted in the teachings of Seneca, standing in opposition to the invading ideology of National Socialism. The invaders impose their ideology on the country and Mezonier finds it impossible to abandon his beliefs to fit in with the new rule. In this sense Dombrovskii depicts what Althusser terms Repressive State Apparatuses as he is concerned with forcing people to follow an ideology, rather than an ideology being a part of society. This clash between two ideologies can be further conceptualised as a battle between the individual and the state: an imposition of ideology that prohibits all opposing thought. As Doyle points out: "[i]n this work, there is a direct clash between reason and creativity on the one hand, and the brute force and violence of the state on the other".[199] The imposition of new ideology is both physically and mentally violent. Mezonier's research is concerned with proving that all human races descended from the same ape, something which stands in stark opposition to the racial basis of Nazi ideology.

[197] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 82.
[198] Iurii Dombrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Terra, 1992), vol. (2), pp. 74,448. (Henceforth Dombrovskii)
[199] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 69.

This research is one of the books burned in Nazi Germany, demonstrating the opinion that the Nazi party have of Mezonier's research.[200] The image of the ape and its skull come to embody the intellectual and ideological battle that takes place. This battle is depicted as a violent attack by a pre-historic ape, an image that combines both physical and intellectual violence. The image of the ape's onslaught depicts both the violence with which the Nazis invade the country and the violence that their ideology brings upon Mezonier's research:

> Во-первых, этот синантроп, как вы остроумно выразились, уже давно перешагнул границу Германии и теперь спешно доглатывает остатки Европы – это раз. Во-вторых, он является к нам не с дубиной, как подобает синантропу, а во всеоружии техники уничтожения. У него в руках автоматы, радио, зенитные орудия, магнитные мины и удушливые газы. Он сметает с лица земли наши города, даже не дотрагиваясь до них. Он превращает в огонь, дым и пепел целые области, даже не видя их. И неужели вы, господа, до такой степени слепы, что можете говорить черт знает о чем и о ком, когда петля уже накинута на наше горло?![201]

The image of the ape suggests that Mezonier's research has turned on him, that his passion is in fact his death coming for him. At the same time, calling the Nazi invasion by that name undermines and degrades the very beliefs of their system. No matter how much they want to prove that man is not descended from the same ape, they are still seen as an ape and part of that same origin. Furthermore, uniting the Nazi onslaught with the image of the ape shows the intimate connection between history and ideology. As Arendt suggests, "ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process", and therefore it is particularly important for the Nazis to have power of the past. The ape is thus a union of violence and history that is united within the ideology propagated by the Nazis.

[200] Dombrovskii, vol. 2, p. 91.
[201] Ibid., p. 82.

The passage highlights the two important factors that follow from the invasion: the overt presence of violence and the ideology that is represented by the image of the ape. The Nazi assault is thus depicted as both visible and imperceptible at the same time. There is a constant tension between violence and ideology as a form of control (or power) over people, one being a visible and the other an imperceptible form of assault. Lahne, who is the speaker of the above passage, is more concerned with the physical violence of the Nazi regime, failing to see that "говорить черт знает о чем и о ком" is a form of resistance. As he explains to the professor: "Чем и как я приду воевать с этой обезьяной? У нее в руках дубина, а у меня что? Университетское свидетельство!"[202] However, what he does not realise is that the physical violence is only one aspect of this assault. The fact that the onslaught is depicted through the image of the ape and that it destroys cities without even touching them suggests that it is precisely the ideology of this attack that is of greater danger. The ape is both Mezonier's own research and the Nazis' attempt to dominate this research; it is thus as much an intellectual conflict as it is a physical one. Mezonier's lack of fear of violence results in his suicide and for Lahne this same fear leads to a submission of his ideology to the Nazis'.

The division and union of violence and ideology is also evident in the two main Nazi officers in the novel, Gardner and Kurtzer. Kurtzer is the brother of Mezonier's wife Bertha, and challenges Mezonier's ideas of race on an intellectual level. He has already disputed the professor's work through articles written under a false name. Through the written word and public attention Kurtzer hopes to disseminate Nazi ideas. Gardner on the other hand sees himself as a true soldier, who believes anybody can be won over through fear and violence. In a confrontation between the two officers not onlydo their differences become apparent, but it also becomes clear how close the two forms of domination are.

[202] Ibid., p. 139.

In an argument between the two it is revealed to the reader that both officers work within the concentration camp system, but they play different roles within it. Gardner oversees the running of the camps and is purely concerned with completing the orders. Kurtzer on the other hand, has a personal and "scientific" interest in the camps. He is not only concerned with establishing new ways of killing people, but also has developed a personal interest in collecting prisoner's tattoos. In a grotesque passage of the novel Kurtzer shows his superior albums of people's tattoos and a lampshade made of human skin. Kurtzer's "science" is violent and exposes the dangers of such ideology. While Gardner is a pure soldier, ("Я – солдат. Мое рабочее орудие – рука, а не мозг или язык, как бы они быстро у меня ни вертелись"[203]), and Kurtzer an intellectual who is disturbed by any need for physical violence, (after attacking a young girl he concludes: "Да, я не Гарднер, - подумал он с завистью. – Как все-таки легко живется этим болванам на свете!"[204]), the regime needs both actors. The superior of both Gardner and Kurtzer, who is depicted as a dwarfish figure, explains this to them:

> То, чем занимется доктор Курцер, – это не просто наука, нет, это наша специальная наука. Не было бы у нас в руках этой нашей науки, по образцу и подобию их науки, не было бы у нас в руках и автомата, чтобы добить их науку. Сначала слова, а потом меч, дорогой коллега. Идея покорения мира родилась не на поле сражений, не в громе пушек, не в огне и дыму, а в тихих кабинетах физических, медицинских, антропологических и химических лабораторий.[205]

The ideology of the Nazis is born within the intellectual arena and can be sustained through it; ideology is the weapon without which there can be no domination of the people. It is not only the political theories that are permeated by ideology but also the sciences, and therefore the

[203] Ibid., p. 256.
[204] Ibid., p. 286.
[205] Ibid., pp. 258-259.

whole intellectual sphere of society. Ideology is depicted as a form of science and therefore comes into conflict with the other sciences. The concentration camps become the epitome of this clash as the Nazis attempt to establish their right to extermination of peoples that are deemed inferior. It is also important to note science is far from ideologically free, as is seen not only in the importance of science in the Soviet Union but also in the works of Vasilii Grossman (Shtrum in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* is a scientist, as are many other characters in *Za pravoe delo*, *Gluck auf!* and *Stepan Kol'chugin*). Thus, Dombrovskii's choice of subjects as the roots of ideology (физических, медицинских, антропологических и химических[206]), also reflects the role of ideology in the Soviet Union. The dwarfish superior's statement about the importance of the intellectual battle directly contradicts Lahne's statement that he cannot fight against the Nazis with his degree. It is with the intellect that one can fight the onslaught of totalitarianism, which Hans Mezonier is a witness to.

Leon Mezonier, rather than succumbing to the new ideology and denouncing his life's work decides to commit suicide. This is not depicted as a desperate and cowardly act but as a brave sacrifice to knowledge and mankind, "a final free gesture of defiant allegiance to a truth which political authority resents"[207]. Mezonier lives his life by Seneca; he is always carrying his books with him or quoting him, and his suicide also follows in the steps of Seneca. Grossman was also influenced by Stoic philosophy, as is seen in his play *Esli verit' pifagoreitsam.*[208] The notion of a cyclical history proposed by the Stoics is thus something that concerned both authors. In *Obeziana,* not only does Mezonier repeat Seneca's act, but also, the stifling of freedom by a dominant ideology is later repeated in Hans' life. Hans' testimony is thus an attempt to stop this senseless repetition, and it is through recounting the story of his father that he hopes history will change. As Doyle suggests: "For both Hans and

[206] Ibid.
[207] James Woodward, "A Russian Stoic? A Note on the Religious Faith of Jurij Dombrovskij", *Scando Slavica,* 38 (1992), pp. 33-45 (p. 40).
[208] For an analysis of Stoic philosophy in Grossman see Ellis, pp. 101-114

Dombrovskii, the documentary record is the only starting point for an imaginative and speculative recreation of the past, by means of which the author attempts to reveal the 'truth' beyond the documents, a 'truth' which is inevitably fictionalized and subjective."[209] The "truth" in *Obeziana* is contextualised in the prologue and epilogue of the novel, through the genre of testimony.

The action of the prologue and epilogue is set in 1955, fifteen years after Hans' father's death and the main action of the novel. Hans has become a lawyer and a journalist, a profession which combines the two main themes of the novel: judgement and testimony. Hans admits that he has forgotten the past in the first sentence of the novel, as he suggests that he has been awoken to the need to write: "необходимо хотя бы в двух словах коснуться событий, побудивших меня взяться за перо".[210] The testimony is initiated by an external event: Hans meeting Gardner, the man responsible for his father's death, who Hans thought was in prison, but has in fact been freed due to health issues. However, the story is complicated further as Hans' friend Kruzhevich suggests that Gardner's release was sanctioned by authorities as his freedom is of use to them.[211] This suggests to Hans that society is repeating the past uncritically and even dangerously.

Hans' memory of his father's death is peculiar. When he meets Gardner for the first time in fifteen years, the memory comes back to him in an instant yet, his narration of it is very detailed.

> Что тут говорить?! Какими словами мог бы я передать, как чернело обгорелое здание с выбитыми окнами и дверью, болтающейся на одной петле, как мертво хрустели под ногами перегоревшие стекла с неуловимым радужным отливом, какая была черная, сухая, жаркая, обгорелая проклятая земля в нашем саду и как страшно выглядели два трупа в нашем доме: один –

[209] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 82.
[210] Dombrovskii, vol. 2, p. 7.
[211] Ibid., pp. 46-53.

> отцовский, закрытый простыней, на диване, и другой – прямо на полу, маленький, скорченный, с размозженным черепом и разбросанными руками, в одной из которых так и закостенел, так и прирос к ладони, пока его не выломали силой, крошечный лиловый браунинг. Все это только на секунду блеснуло перед глазами и ушло опять, оставляя только тупую боль и тяжесть в душе. Оцепенело я смотрел на бородатого и чувствовал, что слова у меня не идут из горла.[212]

The horror of the past takes physical control over Hans; he is paralysed by the memory. The imagery is that of an almost post-apocalyptic scene, and there is a sense of damnation: "проклятая земля". All the imagery relates to death and darkness and is highly visual. Although Hans is able to depict the scene of his father's death, he still cannot represent the quality of emotions attached to that event, as is seen in the repeated use of "как". Hans' memory is instant and rapid leaving only a dull ache in his soul. There thus seems to be a division between a memory that is in his mind and the effect of that memory, which resides in his soul. Hans is both conscious of the trauma of his childhood but also unable to truly represent the memory, which is fleeting. He is thus divided between mind and soul. This division can be extended to the novel as a whole: although Hans depicts the events that lead to his father's death in the main part of the novel, the depiction is devoid of Hans' personal feelings towards these events, which are more clearly present in the prologue and epilogue. This fleeting fragmented memory thus stands in contrast to the testimony that makes up the major part of the novel.

Hans' reason for writing his testimony is not only the accidental meeting with Gardner but also the events that follow the meeting and reveal the true nature of the state and society. Hans challenges the authorities by publishing an article criticising the justice system that has allowed Gardner to walk free. Although the act itself is dangerous, it is worsened by

[212] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

the fact that Gardner is murdered after the appearance of Hans' article, and thus, Hans is blamed for agitating the public to action. Simultaneously it is also suggested that Gardner in fact is murdered by one of his own men in order to frame Hans.[213] These events put Hans in a precarious position and he is close to being arrested at the end of the novel (in the epilogue). The attempt to stifle Hans' right to publish articles that are not in line with the official ideology is a repetition of Leon Mezonier's life. Hans is clearly aware of this:

> Как это бывало уже не один раз в течение последнего полугодия, я на одну секунду опять пережил тревожный рев сирены, кошачий визг флейт и грохот барабанов – всю страшную музыку триумфальных маршей захватчиков в окупированном городе. И в глубине этих годин я опять увидел зал, увешанный гипсовыми мордами обезьян, глубокое кресло, в котором сидел мой отец – худощавый, щупленький, с растерянной улыбкой и близоруко моргающими глазами, – а перед ним стройную, злую, сухую, подтянутую фигуру офицера оккупационной армии; увидел я и себя – растрепанного мальчишку, вплотную прижавшегося лицом к неплотно затворенной двери, пахнущей сосной и воском. Все это было страшно далеко и, конечно, совершенно не похоже на сегодняшний разговор, но и там ведь все начиналось каким-то документом, и там приводились доводы, и там далеко не сразу и совсем не свирепо звучали ласковые, осторожные угрозы, и даже не угрозы, а просто предупреждения.[214]

The parallel between the past and the present becomes apparent and the reason for Hans' testimony is also confirmed. The passage shows Hans' feelings toward his father who is starkly contrasted to the Nazi officer. The officer is a figure that has few human attributes, while professor Mezonier is depicted through emotional adjectives. Hans is also present

[213] Ibid., p. 67.
[214] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

himself, and remembers himself externally, which supports his ability to depict the events through a third person narrative. Just as he sees himself externally in his childhood so can he see his present situation from the outside and compare it to the past. He is present but also external to himself, rather like a character in his own narrative. The present, although it differs from the past, is only another version of that past. In his epilogue Hans concludes: "Мое сегодня так похоже на мое вчера, что, познав его, я уже не сомневаюсь в том, каким будет мой завтрашний день. Я уже пережил этот завтрашний день сопливым мальчишкой и сыт им по горло."[215] Hans is convinced that he knows the future based on what happened in the past. By exposing the function of ideology in the past he can highlight the ideological nature of the present. He has already lived the future in the past, and the only way to stop this repetition is through his testimony. In this cyclical history time becomes confused, as it does in a traumatic memory, through creating a coherent narrative the traumatic repetition can be stopped.

Hans is less concerned with depicting his childhood or particular emotions towards it, but more with using his past as a moral tale. He has already used the law journal to express indignation about the fact that Gardner is free. The murder of Gardner suggests the danger of unregulated speech and is used as a tale of warning by the authorities. For Hans the past of his father's life that was dominated by ideology is again present and ideology is yet again defining such notions as justice and the freedom of speech. Hans points out both at the end of the prologue and the epilogue the importance that he places on his testimony:

> Я хочу рассказать эту историю всем моим соотечественникам, всем людям земного шара – если они захотят меня слушать. Конечно, не все я видел сам, – кое-что мне стало известно от других, кое о чем я прочел в газетах и официальных документах, кое-что, наконец, я просто додумал, – но, так или

[215] Ibid., p. 447.

> иначе, история смерти моего отца – история страшная и поучительная, и над уроками ее стоит подумать.[216]

Hans makes it clear that his narrative is unreliable, but that the factual content is subordinate to the moral message of the story. He is writing in order to make people think about the present rather than the past and thereby change the future. It is also a testimony that relates not only to the family of Mezonier or the unknown city in which it is set, but also to any place and any people reading it. Extending the influence of his testimony to everyone makes the novel more ambiguous and suggests that it was directed at the Soviet readers and the Soviet state as well. For Hans it is immaterial whether he is a reliable narrator or not, his testimony is not purely a personal statement, on the contrary it is a universal statement that focuses on the meaning of events rather than their particular eventness, and similarly the effects of the ideology that he depicts are universal to all totalitarian ideologies.

Hans means and hopes for his testimony to be an eye-opener and an instigation to thought: "О, если бы вы, прочитав мою книжку, подумали над тем, что происходит перед вашими глазами! О, если бы вы только хорошенько подумали над всем этим!"[217] Directing his speech at "*vy*" and "*vashimi*" suggests that it is at the Soviet Union that Dombrovskii wanted his readers to direct their attention. Hans ends the novel with these exclamations, and thus leaves the reader to contemplate what has been read. It is in particular the effects of this blind acceptance that Hans hopes to awaken people to: "это даже не удушение вашей свободы, нет, это много страшнее: это новое покушение на вас самих, это тот топор, который завтра же опустится на вашу голову, револьвер, который убийцы тайком суют в руки вашего ребенка."[218] The evil that Hans describes is invisible, one is not always fully conscious of being within ideology, and through telling the story of his father Hans hopes to make a difference, to break the powerful cycle of ideology. This

[216] Ibid., p. 74.
[217] Ibid., p. 448.
[218] Ibid., pp. 447-448.

ideology is also such that it will inevitably destroy its followers, it will turn children against parents (again perhaps another reference to the Soviet Union and the story of Pavel Morozov[219]). Also, compared to the onslaught of Nazi ideology in the main action of the novel that was obvious and violent, the ideological strain that Hans feels is more subtle and perhaps resembles Soviet ideology. Only through testimony, through describing the meaning in events that are depicted as universal, can the cycle of oppression be broken. As Tal states, testimony is an aggressive act[220]. Although Hans is in grave danger of being annihilated by the state, he places the need to testify and expose a truth higher than his own life, as did his father.

2.4 *Testimony through ideology*

In *Vse techet* Ivan Grigor'evich returns from a thirty-year period in the camps and initially comes across as the protagonist of the novel. However, the narrative is soon overtaken by other characters, all of whom seem to gain equal importance. Ivan's testimony is not central as his presence instigates a need to testify in others: first his cousin Nikolai and then his lover Anna. Being in the camp for thirty years, Ivan can be identified as a victim of the Soviet state, whilst both Anna Sergeyevna and Nikolai Andreyevich have both been accomplices in the state's actions and could be seen as perpetrators. However, the matter is complicated by the fact that their involvement was involuntary and almost unconscious; they lived by an ideology that justified their actions. Realising the full impact of their actions retrospectively, after Stalin's death, the characters struggle to incorporate these dual interpretations into one coherent narrative and feel abused by the state that they thought was protecting them. The fact that the characters' actions were based on an ideology that justified them does not vindicate their actions. The question of moral judgement is constantly present but does not reach any

[219] Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta Books, 2005).
[220] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 7.

resolution, thus leaving the reader with an uneasy feeling towards the Soviet past. The dual identity of victim and perpetrator makes testifying a particularly complex issue, and places an even greater demand on language to represent this paradox. Both Anna and Nikolai's testimonies illuminate the difficulties of testifying with a dual identity that is largely dependent on ideological beliefs.

The first person that Ivan visits upon his return is his cousin Nikolai, who has had a very successful career and lived a very comfortable life whilst his cousin has been imprisoned. Ivan's return forces Nikolai to reassess the past thirty years in order to bridge the gap between the past and the present, in an attempt to integrate Ivan into his life. For Nikolai, the past thirty years are dominated by the Stalinist regime and the sudden death of Stalin that changed Nikolai's understanding of his past. Nikolai is thus attempting to remember two different pasts: that of his life during Stalin, and the revised version of that same past. Ivan's return gives rise to a terrible guilt within Nikolai, as he has committed the same crimes that the state is now guilty of: "Николай Андреевич, ожидая двоюродного брата, думал о своей жизни и готовился покаяться в ней Ивану. Он представлял себе как будет показывать Ивану дом. Вот в столовой текинский ковер, черт, посмотри, красиво ведь?"[221] It is vital to note that Nikolai, as Anna does later, sees his testimony here in terms of a confession, connoting a possibility of religious redemption through testimony. Also, a confession implies a revelation of a sin, thus underlining that both Anna and Nikolai identify themselves partly at least as perpetrators. Nikolai's remembrance of his life makes him consider his house first of all, suggesting that his autobiography can be represented by physical objects, such as the rug. On the one hand, his consideration of the rug at this odd instant highlights the fragmented and elusive nature of that particular memory. It suggests this memory is not voluntary and that it is not in Nikolai's possession, instead he is possessed by

[221] Vasilii Grossman, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Vagrius: Agraf, 1998), vol. (4), p. 262. (Henceforth Grossman)

the memory in Caruthian terms. On the other hand, the rug suggests his guilt over his affluent life that he earned through his obedience to the state. Nikolai's possessions in fact unwittingly testify to history and his own past. Subsequently in the narrative, he identifies his fear of the state not only in terms of possible starvation and arrest, but also of not having the right caviar. "Да, да, в преклонении, в великом послушании прошла его жизнь, в страхе перед голодом, пыткой, сибирской каторгой. Но был и особенно подлый страх - вместо зернистой икры получить кетовую."[222] The rug and caviar are thus external items sanctioned by the state for which Nikolai sacrifices his internal freedom by adhering to the State's ideology. The possibility of attaining these items is not only a reward granted by the state, but also is part of its practices through which individuals become subjects. Already this early in the text, Nikolai's consideration for the rug shows that he is unable to think outside of ideological practices.

These parallel and contrasting thoughts also expose the complicated nature of the testimonial narrative that attempts to integrate several perspectives. Using free indirect discourse Grossman is able to narrate the way ideology works both through subjects and through "totalitarian authorship," showing that these processes render Nikolai unable to make sense of his past. The narrative starts in the present, with Nikolai waiting for Ivan and initiating the memory process, and then moves backwards to the development of various purges and the Doctor's Plot. Stalin's death is the event that collapses the time structure, because after his death Nikolai is forced to reassess the past again, thus the narrative moves back in time with the gained retrospect, running the three time perspectives in parallel. This complex form of memory resembles traumatic memory. Nikolai however is depicted more as a tragic than a traumatised individual, which may suggest that trauma may be located in the memory itself; that the past can be traumatic in its nature without destroying the individual.

[222] Ibid., p. 273.

This relates to what Cathy Caruth means when she says that an individual carries an impossible history within him/herself.[223] Nikolai remembers the escalation in discrimination leading up to the Doctors' Plot: "В заметке 'Хроника' на четвертой газетной полосе было сказано, что все обвиняемые врачи признали на следствии свою вину, – значит, нет сомнения они преступники."[224] Nikolai judges truth in accordance with what is officially claimed. However, the use of the word *znachit* suggests that Nikolai had doubts: that he relies on the state, not himself, to define what is true and what is not. The ideology is seen to be both an official narrative and also an internalised process of thinking. The function of ideology is further enhanced by the fact that Nikolai is successful in his career, which involves him in state practices and distracts him from reflection. As soon as Stalin dies and Nikolai understands that the doctors were innocent all along, he feels a mixture of relief and guilt. His memory moves even further back in time to 1937 and the trial of Bukharin, presenting it as an equal situation to the Doctors' Plot. He exclaims: "Ведь не было сомнения в их вине, ни тени *сомнения*!"[italics mine][225] Echoing his earlier "значит, нет *сомнения*", he realises that: "Но вот теперь-то Николай Андреевич вспомнил, что *сомнение* было. Он лишь делал вид, что не было *сомнения*."[italics mine][226] Nikolai's testimony shows a paradox that is highlighted by the different time lines; the knowledge of being in ideology and the surrender to it. It also reveals the polyphonic nature of Nikolai's memory narrative, which attempts to integrate various time lines, and the different viewpoints that he had at these different times. There are different layers of belief in Nikolai's memory: firstly, the belief in the innocence of the persecuted, such as Bukharin, and his pretence to himself, which he is willing to admit; and secondly, the belief in the great cause of Communism, something that originally at least overrides the belief in Bukharin's innocence,

[223] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 5.
[224] Grossman, vol. 4, p. 266.
[225] Ibid., p. 272.
[226] Ibid.

and for which Nikolai is willing to pretend that Bukharin is guilty. However, even this great faith has not been unchallenged: "Но ведь и в этой святой вере, где-то в глубине души, жило сомнение.[…] Ведь бывало, что совсем другое лезло в тайную глубину сознания"[227] There is an interesting contrast here between the soul and consciousness. Consciousness is described as both secret but also something that Nikolai is aware of; he remembers the doubt. Consciousness thus seems to be situated in the soul, which embraces the whole being, and allows for an individual to be aware of his/her own repression. In this case, Nikolai is aware of his own repression, and is thus also aware of the fact that ideology never completely permeated his being. This connects to the greater theme of the novel: that people can remain unchangeable in essence and thereby able to retain some freedom and humanity. This concept however, raises ethical questions as to the choices that the characters, and Soviet citizens made when choosing to follow ideology and denounce innocent people. The question of moral judgement becomes apparent not only to the reader but also to the characters and is one of the main problems raised by the novel.

Another effect of ideology is that by narrating experience through propaganda, it distances the individual from empirical knowledge about reality. Nikolai's thoughts as he thinks about the past are never solid; there are always two thoughts running beside each other. For example, the depiction of the Doctors' plot is marked by the word "seemed" (*kazalos'*): "Казалось, в СССР одни лишь евреи воруют, берут взятки, преступно равнодушны к страданиям больных, пишут порочные и халтурные книги",[228] making the image of the physical world unstable. Meanwhile, his thoughts about it are marked by the word "but/yet" (*no*) showing his uncertainty as to his own role in it or his opinion of it. For example while noticing hostile articles about Jews, Nikolai concludes: "Его эти фельетоны возмущали, но в то же время он раздражался против своих друзей евреев, относившихся к этим

[227] Ibid., p. 273.
[228] Ibid., p. 264.

писулькам так, словно пришел конец света."[229] Both above statements have a mocking tone, on the one hand the public depiction of Jewish influence is exaggerated to show that Nikolai did not quite believe them, and on the other hand, he refers to these stories as "писульки" mocking the very thing he is unsure of. He is shown to be trapped between two perceptions, the ideological and the personal, neither of which completely gains primacy. What further complicates his memory is that Nikolai's knowledge about his surroundings is all linguistic, either through hearsay, through journals, or through propaganda at his work, rather than directly empirical. It is therefore not surprising that he cannot narrate it coherently as it can only be a narrative about a narrative; his personal experiences are almost non-existent. The inability of the narrative coherently to integrate these perspectives shows the traumatic nature of his experience of ideology. Traumatic memory moves between being known and unknown[230], as is evident of Nikolai's unclear memory. Through his failure to retrieve a coherent memory, Nikolai is shown as not owning his past. Being unable to confess suggests that he is trapped in the traumatic memory that changes depending on the ideology.

The major blow to Nikolai, his personal trauma, is Stalin's death, as a result of which all of Nikolai's actions and morals become distorted. His identity moves from being an honest citizen, to being a perpetrator and victim of the state. Worst of all, being faithful to ideology, he has to answer for the crimes that the state has committed.

> И окажется, что не всесильное, непогрешимое государство берет на себя все содеянное, а отвечать приходится Николаю Андреевичу, а он-то уж не сомневался, он за все голосовал, подо всем подписывался. Он научился так хорошо, ловко притворяться перед самим собой, что никто, никто и он сам не замечали этого притворства. Он искренне гордился своей верой и своей чистотой.[231]

[229] Ibid., p. 265.
[230] Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing".
[231] Grossman, vol. 4, p. 273.

The narrative voice again moves between Nikolai's thoughts and feelings and a broader narrative about the State, exposing the contradictions in Nikolai's behaviour. The fact that he did pretend, that pretension never became a fully integrated belief, exposes his crime – his collusion with the perpetrators. At any point Nikolai faced a choice between relying on himself or obeying the state, and he chose the latter in fear of greater evil. Nikolai's trauma is tied in with abandoning his freedom, in betraying himself through learning to lie to himself. His pride is turned into his greatest shame. Although he is complicit in bringing this about, he is equally a victim of the state's abuse of him and a victim of fear.

Another factor contributing to his inability to confess to Ivan is the fact that the State's confession leaves Nikolai with no narrative of his own through which to confess. The state has confessed solely to the crimes themselves, not their connection to the ideology, thus modifying and preserving ideology. Nikolai's crime, however, is his faith and purity, traits that do not constitute a crime either within the new or the old narrative. His own narrative would lead him to blame not only the state, but its ideology, placing him in a precarious situation as a dissident, something that he is unwilling to do. In the midst of this confusion is his own trauma, the fact that through obedience he has sacrificed his life to a state that has misused him. His identity and life are tied in with the state, making him a prisoner of it, a trauma to which he only has access retrospectively and tentatively. This point is reinforced later in the narrative by Ivan: "человек обрекал себя иногда на высшее арестантство, более совершенное и глубокое, чем то, к которому принуждала лагерная проволока."[232]

Nikolai's memories are fragmented and inconsistent it is as if he was not there, as if the moment of the events was missed and he is attempting to regain that moment through confession. Meeting Ivan, he finds that he cannot confess as he wanted to, that his guilt mixed with his victimhood is impossible to express. He simultaneously wants to ask for forgiveness

[232] Ibid., pp. 307-308.

and to be comforted as a victim. The inability to transmit this dichotomy leads him to assert and to justify his life to Ivan. The chapter is permeated with silence, there is little dialogue, and when anything is said it is followed by Nikolai's contradictory thoughts. Finally, when asked about the Doctor's Plot, Nikolai's guilt finds outlet not in confession but in assertiveness:

> Внутри у него все похолодело от тоски, и одновременно он чувствовал, что вспотел, покраснел, щеки его горели. Но он не упал на колени, он сказал:
> – Дружочек ты мой, дружочек ты мой, ведь и нам нелегко жилось, не только вам там, в лагерях.
> – Да боже избави, – поспешно сказал Иван Григорьевич, – я не судья тебе да и всем. Какой уж судья, что ты, что ты... Наоборот даже...
> – Нет, нет, я не об этом, – сказал Николай Андреевич, – я о том, как важно в противоречиях, в дыму, пыли, не быть слепым, видеть, видеть огромность дороги, ведь, став слепым, можно с ума сойти.
> Иван Григорьевич виновато произнес:
> – Да, понимаешь, беда моя, я, видно, путаю, зрение за слепоту принимаю.[233]

Nikolai is conditioned to acting in contradiction to his instincts. Thus, while he in fact wants to fall on his knees, he does not do so. Nikolai's identity crisis puts multiple demands on his testimony, in terms of its objectives: he both wants to repent and to escape the guilt, to be justified and forgiven. The reference to having a hard life is the only testimony that he gives to his actual trauma. Like Ivan who has lived in physical captivity, Nikolai has been imprisoned in ideology. Instead of developing that insight he moves straight to ideological language, using clichés and imagery. He reverts back to his willingness to convince himself of the truth of ideology, to "see the road". For him to abandon ideology is to go mad, while for Ivan it is precisely the opposite. This different world-view prevents the cousins from

[233] Ibid., p. 281.

communicating, as seen in the repeated full stops and acknowledgements that they are talking about different things. Testimony seems to imply some form of judgement, as Ivan suggests that he is not a judge and will accept Nikolai's testimony for what it is. Nikolai's tragedy is that he is fully able to expose contradictions and his own guilt and suffering within himself, but is unable to verbalise it and testify to another. Nikolai sees that Ivan is too separate from his experiences to be able to understand the impact that ideology has had on him. After Ivan leaves, Nikolai concludes: "если человек безумен, то это на всю жизнь."[234] Blaming Ivan and asserting himself as the sane one, Nikolai again chooses ideology over freedom, ideology over testimony, suggesting that they cannot co-exist.

2.5 *Testimony to ideology*

Anna Sergeyevna's testimony provides a clear contrast to that of Nikolai, as she has stepped outside of ideology and therefore can narrate its impact. Although her testimony is largely concerned with depicting the effects of the collectivization famine of the 1930s as opposed to the more subtle political terror of the Stalinist period, her awareness of the impact of ideology provides an apt comparison. Her confession to Ivan incorporates the trauma of witnessing famine, the trauma of famine itself, the present and the past point of view that she had of the events, making the testimony polyphonic. Because Anna has abandoned state ideology, she and Ivan can communicate their trauma to each other, in contrast to Nikolai who still internalises it. The ability to see is central to Ivan and Anna Sergeyevna's connection. While Nikolai and Ivan disagree about what vision entails in their arguments about seeing the road; for Ivan and Anna this forms the basis of their relationship. The description of their communication focuses on her eyes and the fact that she *sees* what kind of man Ivan is, and therefore does not interrogate him about his life. Their connection almost has an air of the

[234] Ibid.

divine about it, while he sees something extraordinary in her eyes: “он увидел в них нечто большее, чем слезы сочувствия, увидел то, чего он никогда не видел в глазах людей.”[235] Anna looks upon him as Christ: “А я смотрю на тебя, ты не сердись, как на Христа. Все хочется перед тобой, как перед богом, каяться. Хороший мой, желанный, я хочу тебе об этом рассказать, все вспомнить, что было.”[236] In contrast to Nikolai, who wants to create an almost religious connection with Ivan by repenting and falling at his feet but fails to do so, Anna verbalises this need and is able to transcend it and repent. She also has accepted her guilt and implication in the past and thus has overcome the inner struggle that Nikolai has. The religious imagery suggests the possibility of both testifying and raising questions about moral judgement. Testimony in this sense is as much a confession of sin, as it is a detailed narrative of an event. It seems that only through establishing human connections can some redemption be found.

Anna’s confession is chronologically clear, told in first person narrative. Compared to Nikolai, she is separate from ideology and sees its effect upon her. Structurally she recounts her thoughts in the past from her present perspective, repeatedly stating: “I see now”, again emphasising vision. Her eyes are described as her key to knowledge: “глазами, привыкшими понимать жизнь”.[237] Thus, compared to Nikolai to whom it “seems” that certain things are/were happening, even retrospectively, Anna sees them clearly – partly because she actually witnesses the famine, and her knowledge is not obtained through articles and hearsay. However, there is another dimension to vision as a reliable source of knowledge. In the midst of her testimony to Ivan, Anna suggests that vision can be transmitted through words:

> А я не забуду твоих слов. От них видно, они дневные. Я спросила, как немцы могли у евреев детей в камерах душить, как они после этого могут жить, неужели ни от людей, ни от бога так и нет им суда? А ты сказал: суд над

[235] Ibid., p. 320.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., p. 299.

> палачом один – он на жертву свою смотрит не как на человека и сам перестает быть человеком, в себе самом человека казнит, он самому себе палач, а загубленный остается человеком навеки, как его ни убивай.[238]

Anna suggests that the words in themselves have the ability to make one see and that they therefore carry a truth within them. Vision is elevated as a clear and true form of knowledge. Ivan's "daylight-words" transmit a universal and an eternal truth signified by the use of general nouns: *chelovek, palach, zhertva*. It also emphasises the time to which the words refer as eternal: *naveki.* Ivan's words stand as an antidote to the blindness that is created by life in the Soviet state and relate to his dispute with Nikolai. The lightness of his words also relate to judgement, something that clearly concerns Anna. Ivan suggests that judgement lies within and is beyond any outer influence or decision, as suggested above, it is a universal and eternal judgement. In the chapter on judgement the narrator suggests that it is human nature that is to blame as it consists of both good and evil, and that everyone is equally guilty.[239] This acceptance of guilt on the one hand, and the universal judgement on the other, is what allows Anna to see the past clearly and confess to Ivan. The contrast of the daylight-words ("От них видно, они дневные"), and the physical darkness (the conversation takes place at night) further highlights the power of words. This power extends to the novel itself as it brings to light a history that has been hidden under official narratives. As will be discussed below, Anna sees ideology and in particular its words as blinding, and continues to stress the importance of vision. His words also stand as a contrast to the temporary and fluctuating ideology; his words relate to the eternal belief in mankind and a morality that is beyond the state.

Anna's testimony does not only relate to her implication in the events, her role as an activist, but also to what she physically saw: the famine and death in the villages. She

[238] Ibid., p. 322.
[239] Ibid., p. 296.

therefore relates both her personal guilt and trauma, and also the collective, she speaks for the people who cannot speak of their own trauma. In her testimony she both states clear facts, such as dates when de-Kulakisation starts, and depicts the process through which ideology works. Unlike Nikolai who lives in ideology, Anna not only perceives it as ideology but also realises that it works through language. For her, de-Kulakisation and the violence that accompanies it is dependent on a language that justifies it. This language, to Anna, is like a spell under which people are capable of atrocities, even their eyes change and become like glass, again stressing the inability to see the truth.

> На меня тоже стали эти слова действовать, девчонка совсем – а тут и на собраниях, и специальный инструктаж, и по радио передают, и в кино показывают, и писатели пишут, и сам Сталин, и все в одну точку: кулаки, паразиты, хлеб жгут, детей убивают, и прямо объявили: поднимать ярость масс против них, уничтожать их всех, как класс, проклятых... И я стала околдовываться[240].

Here Anna shows the way in which ideology functioned: both in its practices, the perpetual use of certain words and phrases, and in its "totalitarian authorship" of transmitting ideology through radio, film, literature and speeches. Anna suggests that through the repetition of words and images the person becomes hypnotised, effectively transforming into the subject needed by the state, in this case adopting the identity of an activist. The overwhelming amount of propaganda is shown to be a violent assault on the person. Compared to Nikolai's narrative, which narrates his memories about the Doctor's Plot in separate time narratives (first he remembers articles in *Khronika* and then finds out they were untrue), Anna's narrative integrates the realisation that the statements about Kulaks are untrue. She is, in contrast to Nikolai, aware of the effects of ideology on her identity. Anna's testimony is therefore not only about the famine but is equally a testimony to ideology, while Nikolai

[240] Ibid., p. 322.

attempts to testify through it. Similar to the way in which Althusser states: "ideology never says 'I am ideological'"[241], Nikolai is unable to state that he is ideological whilst still succumbing to that ideology. A testimony would require him to be aware of his ideological nature, which is impossible as long as his life is embedded within that ideology.

Anna is equally guilty of being hypnotized by ideology. However, the vision granted by Ivan's day-light-words and the traumatic effect of witnessing famine, both awake her to the meaning behind violent ideology. Being a hypnotic spell, it can also dissolve and leave people wondering what happened to them, which is what happens to Nikolai, or make them testify to the events as they really were, which is what Anna does:

> И я вспоминаю теперь раскулачивание, и по-другому вижу все – расколдовалась, людей увидела. Почему я такая заледенелая была? Ведь как люди мучились, что с ними делали! А говорили: это не люди, это кулачье. А я вспоминаю, вспоминаю и думаю – кто слово такое придумал – кулачье, неужели Ленин? Какую муку приняли! Чтобы их убить, надо было объявить – кулаки не люди. Вот так же, как немцы говорили: жиды не люди. Так и Ленин, и Сталин: кулаки не люди. Неправда это! Люди! Люди они! Вот что я понимать стала. Все люди![242]

In contrast to Nikolai, who learns to pretend, Anna has moved outside ideology and is able to question who it was that created these ideas in the first place. She is clearly divorced from her identity at that time, questioning her own actions retrospectively. She compares Soviet ideology to Nazism, thus both creating a framework in which to understand the crimes committed by the Soviet state as well as creating an indictment of the state. The exclamations and repetition of "*liudi*" in Russian suggests the intensity with which she re-lives these memories, and also her attempt to reclaim the words "*kulaki*" and "*liudi*" from the state, implying the "double-voiced" nature of words. The final exclamation "*vse liudi*" also hints

[241] Althusser, "Ideology", p. 700.
[242] Grossman, vol. 4, p. 322.

that not only the victims, but also that the perpetrators are human, raising further questions about guilt and judgement. Like Nikolai she has understood her trauma and also others' trauma belatedly; at the time she was under a spell and the event escaped recognition in its full meaning. This realisation is a return of the trauma. Ideology and its alternative reality are shown to affect people's memories and understanding of trauma. Through asking questions Anna is trying to grasp the event in its full meaning and its relation to the present, attempting to reconcile past and present in a coherent narrative of memory.

Anna is clearly aware of language's potential for distortion and its effect on a person's perception of reality. However, she also suggests that although language may be able to construct an alternative universe, it at times fails to narrate the true horror of real life. Her testimony about the famine is highly visual; she describes the famine in clear detail, following the changes that take place in the human body as it starves. As she points out to Ivan: "Рассказать я все могу, только в рассказе слова, а это ведь жизнь, мука, смерть голодная."[243] Although, she creates a narrative that reflects what she saw, heard and even smelled, she is unable to transmit that horror completely. Anna suffers under the burden of memory that brings the trauma closer to her, and simultaneously further away as she realizes that words cannot transmit such horror, and that the trauma is at least partially forever unknown.

For Anna confession is both an act of repentance and an act of attaining freedom. Reaching the ultimate horror of famine – cannibalism – Anna concludes: "Их, людоедов, говорили, расстреливали всех поголовно. А они не виноваты, виноваты те, что довели мать до того, что она своих детей ест. Да разве найдешь виноватого, кого ни спроси. Это ради хорошего, ради всех людей матерей довели." [244] The horror of the statement is immense, the contradiction of "for the good of everyone" (*ради хорошего, ради всех*) and

[243] Ibid., p. 325.
[244] Ibid., pp. 330-331.

cannibalism, juxtaposes ideological language with her own personal vision highlighting the importance of repentance. "The guilty ones" is an indefinable group implying that all need to confess in the same manner that "all are human". While Nikolai decides that one has to see the road, instead of confessing, Anna sees the dust by literally depicting the dust in the villages as they were emptied of grain: "А когда еще из деревень везли зерно, кругом пыль поднялась, все в дыму"[245] and "А пыль - и ночью и днем пыль, пока хлеб везли."[246] The repetitions of imagery such as dust, noise and the smell of the starving village highlights the visual aspects of memory. Rather than narrating it in terms of de-Kulakisation and Collectivization, Anna proposes her visual memory of murder and famine. Dust paradoxically is vision; the road is the ideological construct and consequently blindness. This suggests that the obvious official narrative that is offered to all blinds people to reality, as is seen in Nikolai's inability to remember his past.

2.6 *Testimony or Ideology?*

Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet* and Iurii Dombrovskii's *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom* are both concerned with the ability to testify to ideology's destructive influence. Although the subject of both novels is similar, the authors frame their inquiries differently. The setting of the two novels allows for a different kind of exploration. Dombrovskii's novel is set in a Nazi occupied city and thus the onslaught of new ideology is more obvious, than the already present and internalised ideology in *Vse techet.* The combination of victim and perpetrator is not present in *Obeziana*, and the battle between the self and the state is overtly violent. Both novels consider the representation of the past in the present, in *Vse techet* it is the return of Ivan that creates a need for the past to be represented, while in *Obeziana* it is the meeting of Gardner that reminds Hans of the past. Dombrovskii and Grossman chose

[245] Ibid., p. 325.
[246] Ibid., p. 326.

testimony as the genre through which to depict the past. In *Obeziana* the events of the past take precedence over their traumatic nature. Only in the prologue and epilogue does Hans suggest the painful nature of the past and the effect of those memories on his psyche, or soul. Hans' decision to remain silent about the past until his meeting with Gardner may rely on the fact that Gardner was sentenced to prison and thus history had been put to rest. In contrast, in *Vse techet* Anna cries out for the need of some form of judgement, the past is too alive within her because it has not been acknowledged in society. Anna, Nikolai and even Hans all carry a history within them that has not been acknowledged by the public. In Hans' case, although the guilty had been charged, society has forgotten the past and yet again is repeating it by releasing Gardner. Testimony thus becomes for Hans a last resort against future forgetting, while for Anna and Nikolai, to differing degrees, it is the first step towards facing the past.

Both novels show that a testimony to the past is only possible through abandonment of ideology. However, none of the characters find any single coherent understanding of history or lay history to rest, as they all continue to struggle with the meaning of the past. The novels themselves do not reach any conclusion and are fragmented in their structure, showing an uneasiness with the past and the possibility of conveying it in one single coherent narrative. The novels suggest that testimony is the most appropriate form of representing the past, precisely because testimony does not force narrative into a false coherence. As Weine argues, testimony allows for multiple narratives, and indeed the two novels show that history is fragmented and can only be represented through a multivalent narrative. Testimony, with its uncertainties, gaps in memory, and personal reflections, shows how history cannot be easily laid to rest. At the same time, the "talking cure" of testimony allows for a form of commemoration and mourning for the traumatic past. Neither Nikolai's, Anna's, nor Hans' testimony leads to any single conclusion; all three testimonies end with silence, questions or encouragement for the readers to think. The only unifying point that they all make is the need

for testimony as a counterbalance to state ideology. Dombrovskii and Grossman do not provide any clear judgement of the past or a coherent story but leave the reader to ponder, not only the past, but how best to remember its traumatic nature.

Chapter 3

Between freedom and slavery: time, trauma and temporality in Vasilii Grossman's *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*

Vasilii Grossman's novels *Za pravoe delo* (*For A Just Cause*, henceforth *ZPD*)[247] and *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (*Life and Fate*, henceforth *Zhizn'*)[248] depict the events surrounding the Nazi invasion of USSR, focusing primarily on the battle of Stalingrad. Both novels present the events as a fight between freedom and slavery, both on the level of the plot and on a thematic philosophical level. It is not only a struggle against the oppressors, but also a battle against all oppression, whether physical or mental. In *ZPD* this subject is explored in the specific context of the Nazi invasion of the USSR, whereas in *Zhizn'* this is expanded to examine what it means to be free and to be enslaved. This difference is evident in the titles of the two novels. While *Za pravoe delo* is a phrase borrowed from Molotov and suggests the specific context of war, the title *Zhizn' i sud'ba* suggests a more universal exploration. Moreover, these two titles reflect the novels' concern with time. *ZPD* is clearly focused on a historical point and suggests a struggle for a specific cause, a closed and specific time. *Zhizn'* on the other hand proposes two seemingly opposing forces, that of the freedom of life and the enslavement of fate. War becomes a historical point of crisis that brings these questions to the fore. The great historical time of enslavement is contrasted against the private time of individual lives. Each novel engages with both personal and collective experiences of time in war, showing how characters reflect on their experiences through their relationship to time. Furthermore, temporality is employed to represents a character's, usually traumatised, state of mind. The

[247] There are two published versions of the novel: a first publication in 1952 and a re-written second publication in 1964.
[248] The novel was finished by 1960, and was published in Switzerland in 1980 and in the Soviet Union in 1988.

division between the personal and the public notions of time creates a space between freedom and slavery where the characters are able to remain human in inhuman circumstances.

ZPD and *Zhizn'* are two parts of the same novel and the publication of both novels is a complicated story that is unfortunately outside the scope of this chapter and will only be described briefly.[249] Grossman started writing *ZPD* in 1943, and submitted the manuscript to *Novyi Mir* in 1949, after which it went through an arduous process of editing and rewriting.[250] Grossman even wrote a diary outlining the various changes and criticisms directed towards the novel entitled "*Dnevnik prokhozhdenia rukopisi"* ("The Diary of a Manuscript's Progress"). One of the most telling changes was the title, which was changed from *Stalingrad* to *Za pravoe delo*, a quotation from Molotov's speech to the Soviet public on the first day of war.[251] This change was reputedly instigated by Sholokhov's comment to the editor of *Novyi mir*, Aleksandr Tvardovskii: "To whom have you entrusted to write about Stalingrad?"[252] This comment highlights several issues: on the one hand it shows a distrust of Grossman, something that may refer to the bad publicity following the publication of his play "Esli verit' pifagoreitsam" ("If You Believe the Pythagoreans") in 1946.[253] On the other hand, it shows the importance of the battle of Stalingrad in the national and literary arena. The title *Stalingrad* would have suggested that Grossman's narrative was the ultimate portrayal of the war, something with which neither Sholokhov nor anybody else was willing to entrust him. The novel was finally serialised in *Novyi mir* in 1952. Although at first *ZPD* was received positively and was deemed to be the long-awaited epic about the war, by 1953 the novel was judged to be anti-Soviet. There are several reasons for this. The campaign against Jewish Doctors contributed to the general attack on Jews in Russia, of whom Grossman was one.

[249] The clearest exploration of the publication of *ZPD* is to be found in Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, pp. 161-176. For an analysis of the publication of *Zhizn'* see Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, "Intriga i sud'ba".
[250] Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, pp. 161-176; Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 220-228; Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, pp. 92-100.
[251] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 8; Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 225; Semen Lipkin, *Stalingrad Vasiliia Grossmana* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1986), p. 31.
[252] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 8; Lipkin, *Stalingrad*, p. 31.
[253] For more on this dispute see Ellis, *Genesis*, pp. 101-110.

Furthermore, some of the main characters in his book were Jewish, such as Viktor Shtrum. Grossman was asked to remove the Jewish element from his book already after his first submission, but this was a point on which he would not compromise.[254] In 1953 the first attack on Grossman's novel appeared in an article by Bubennov, which depicted Grossman's ideas as weak and foreign in nature. Iurii Bit-Yunan and D. Fel'dman trace the reception of the novel and point to the rivalry felt by Bubennov towards Grossman.[255] Bubennov had written a novel in 1947 about the war called *Belaia bereza* (*White birch*) and was hoping to be crowned the narrator of the war and the new Tolstoi. So for him, Grossman's success was not welcomed, and his article about Grossman should be understood in this context. After Stalin's death, however, there was some relief for Grossman and he was able to re-write the novel for a new publication in 1964; this is the version that has been re-printed since, and is used in this analysis.

Despite the difficulty in publishing *ZPD* Grossman started writing *Zhizn'* while Stalin was still alive, and had a finished manuscript by 1960. Both Grossman's friend Semen Lipkin and subsequent scholars have been puzzled by Grossman's decision to submit such a controversial manuscript to *Znamia*.[256] First Grossman learned that the novel would not be published as it was seen as anti-Soviet, and then in 1961 the novel was "arrested". This was a personal catastrophe for Grossman, and he even wrote a letter to Khrushchev begging for the release of the manuscript.[257] The fact that the manuscript, rather than Grossman, was arrested can partly be explained by the status that Grossman held at the time, which made it difficult for the authorities to arrest him. This was further reinforced by the controversy caused by the publication of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* abroad, which directed attention towards Russia's relationship with its authors. Unfortunately, Grossman never saw the publication of his novel,

[254] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 224.
[255] Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, "Intriga i sud'ba", pp. 153-185.
[256] Lipkin and Berzer, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, p. 62.
[257] In Russian see ibid., pp. 64-67. In English see Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 354-357.

which he viewed as his most daring and honest work to date. The novel was later smuggled to the West and published in Switzerland in 1980. In Russia it was only published during the Gorbachev era, in 1988.

Both novels, therefore, went through a complicated path from conception through censorship to publication. Ellis suggests that there are twelve versions of *ZPD* in the state archives; this in itself complicates any analysis of the novel, as the original thoughts of the author cannot be known.[258] *Zhizn'*, on the other hand, went through very few alterations, aside from some minor changes suggested by Grossman's friends, and remained intact despite its difficult road to publication. Although *Zhizn'* is a sequel to *ZPD*, it is a profoundly different novel.

3.1 *History and Time in ZPD and Zhizn'*

Through their narration of history, both *ZPD* and *Zhizn'* inevitably engage with the idea of the passage of time and its influence. This focus on history, time and the individual follows the Russian novelistic tradition and is most obviously indebted to *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace*).[259] The comparison between the two authors and their works is common and relatively well explored. Grossman himself was consciously following in Tolstoi's steps and told his daughter that *Voina i mir* was the only novel he could read during the war.[260] Like Tolstoi, he narrated a crucial point in Russia's history and attempted to understand the meaning of history and its development. Grossman's novels cover two years between 1941 and 1943: the seizure and liberation of Stalingrad. Despite using the battle for Stalingrad as a temporal framework, the events in the two novels are not spatially restricted to Stalingrad. Grossman depicts the events and the effects of the Second World War in Moscow, Stalingrad, and unknown

[258] (This is a common problem when studying Soviet authors.) Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 8.
[259] Jochen Hellbeck, "War and Peace for the Twentieth Century", *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 26 (2007), pp. 26-48.
[260] Beevor, *A Writer at War*, p. xiii; Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 239.

locations of the Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet GULag camp. The novels focus primarily on one family: the Shaposhnikovs, and their close relatives and friends. Although the plot focuses on one family there is a vast array of characters, all of whom are in one way or another related to the Shaposhnikovs. Furthermore, the characters are connected through not only similar experiences, but also through recurrent motifs within the novels themselves, creating a sense of unity in collective suffering and sharing of war trauma. These reflections support and reinforce the main themes developed in the novels. John Garrard's analysis of *Zhizn'* emphasises this structure: "Motifs are not simply repeated unchanged as mnemonic devices, like Homeric epithets, but developed and integrated into the action of the novel."[261] By focusing on a specific time, but not a specific place and a specific family, Grossman is able to move on a scale from micro- to macro-history.[262] For Bocharov this is a sign of the epic nature of the novel. He also suggests that the dual aspect of time in the novel, the forceful progress of history and the slow personal time, reflects the experience of time during war where one year can seem as long as three years.[263]

Using specific examples of Soviet and Nazi crimes, the narrator questions the ability of people to stay morally and spiritually free under pressure. These diversions suggest that Grossman was interested in history both as a personal experience and as part of a quest for a greater meaning. This search for meaning is the essence of *Zhizn'*, which never delivers any clear answers, but never stops searching for them. Anisa Zaitseva suggests that it is the nature of repressed Russian/Soviet literature to search for meaning:

> По своему содержанию запрещенная литература летописна, эпична. Имея целью понять историю и человека во всей глубине их

[261] Johh Garrard, "Stepsons in the Motherland: The Architectonics of Vasily Grossman's Zhizn' i sud'ba", *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), pp. 336-346 (p. 337).
[262] The notion of "scale" is adapted from Paul Ricoeur's analysis of history; see "Variations In Scale" in Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 209.
[263] Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*, p. 205.

> противоречивых отношений, она обращается к поворотным, кризисным моментам истории.[264]

However, the choice of subject – the times of crisis – is not chosen to support this search; rather, historical events themselves prompted this literature to question the meaning of history. Although Zaitseva and many other critics such as Shklovskii and Bocharov[265] all point to the epic nature of Grossman's novels, these novels do not in fact fit comfortably with Gary Saul Morson's description of epic time.[266] For Morson, epic time is both quantitatively different i.e., all important events happened in the past, and qualitatively different i.e., it is a different kind of time.[267] Although the time in *ZPD* and *Zhizn'* is qualitatively different, as it depicts an important event on a grand scale, it does not suggest that all importance lies in the past; there is no such finality in the novels, as they look both back and forward. In Morson's view of time, which is based on Bakhtin, Grossman subscribes to novelistic time, where no event is predetermined. Certainty and uncertainty are in a tense relationship in the two novels both within the historical events and personal life, as exemplified by the titles of the two novels. On the one hand, events are predetermined by fate, while on the other hand, the individual retains the choice to succumb or to choose the freedom of life. Neither notion gains primacy. Although *ZPD* is a more "Soviet" novel due to the great amount of censorship, it also leaves time open in the narrative, both in terms of the view of time it subscribes to and the temporality employed. Both novels are highly aware of the importance of history, but neither depicts history as inevitable and unidirectional. The novels are epic in their scope and subject matter, narrating a historical moment in the life of a nation and its citizens. The meaning of history in the two novels is clearly tied with the meaning of individual life, but the relationship between the two is not a unidirectional one of cause and effect. Grossman depicts

[264] Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, pp. 11-12.
[265] Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*; Evgenii Shklovskii, *Litsom k cheloveku* (Moscow: Znanie, 1989).
[266] Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994).
[267] Ibid., p. 189.

his characters as consciously engaging with and negotiating their experiences through their relation to history and time. This movement between micro to macro is the essence of the two novels and could be connected to Morson's notion of "sideshadowing",[268] which provides an alternative to the deterministic and closed view of time. However, in the case of these novels, "sideshadowing" would not designate a possible alternative reality, but a moment that suspends time and allows for moments of freedom to exist. Focusing on specific characters and motifs it is possible to gain perspective on the larger themes of the novels, in particular that of freedom and slavery.

Time functions in the novels in three crucial ways. Firstly, time may be seen as the subject of the novels, in which Grossman is attempting to depict history and create a remembrance of the past. Secondly, time is an object of contemplation and a path to the self, where characters' identities are negotiated through their relation to time. And thirdly, Grossman employs a fragmented temporality to depict the characters' psychological states of mind, in particular in traumatic circumstances. Nikolai Krymov, Sofya Levinton and Liudmila Nikolaevna all experience a conflict with time, and attempt to renegotiate their identities through time. Although time is an unstoppable force, the characters above all show that there is freedom to be attained through an engagement with time. Time thus works in both ways: it is an external force and an internal perception.

3. 2 *Time and Trauma*

Time plays a significant role in the expression of trauma due to its connection to memory. The earliest forays into psychological trauma noted that the effects of traumatic experience were located in memory; as Freud famously stated, "hysterics suffer for the most part from

[268] Morson explains "sideshadowing" as a middle realm of possibilities that could have happened but did not. Ibid., p. 6.

reminiscences."[269] These memories are described as fragmented and intrusive.[270] A traumatic experience damages the psyche and is registered therein with its full force. This means that the traumatised individual is unable to retreat voluntarily from the memory and only experiences it in a literal form, that is, the individual re-experience, the event as if it was happening again. This pathological nature of traumatic memory interrupts the individual's perception of time, as the past becomes fully present. This approach leads Caruth to suggest that a traumatic memory is "a history that literally *has no place*, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present, in which its precise images and enactments are not fully understood."[271] It also disrupts the victim's perception of self and identity, as life is divided into pre-trauma, trauma and post-trauma: into a time when the self was whole and had coherent memories, and into the present where the self cannot even experience the present without an intrusion of the past. Time, trauma and the self are thus all connected.

Experience of trauma in fiction has been represented through a focus on the fragmentary and elusive nature of traumatic memory, employing disjointed temporality, or engaging with the impossibility of depicting the subject.[272] Inner experience of time is one of the narrative tools through which Grossman depicts events of violence and pain, as seen in his depiction of Tolia's wounding in *ZPD* or Krymov's interrogation in *Zhizn'*. Time, however, is also used as a way of recognizing and escaping the traumatic moment. What trauma shatters is the individual's wholeness, by breaking the personal experience of time: of one's own life span. The two novels directly engage with these problems. The characters explored here, Krymov, Sofya Levinton and Liudmila Nikolaevna, are all able to confront their identities through their experience of time. Time thus not only destroys their wholeness but also allows

[269] Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria* trans. Nicola Luckhurst (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 222.
[270] See Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing".
[271] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 153.
[272] For an examination of this question see Luckhurst, *Trauma Question*; Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

for a renegotiation of the self, and reinstatement of wholeness. Grossman explores not only the breakage but also the restitution of these instances of crisis. Shklovskii suggests that Grossman's love of life follows in the footsteps of the Great Russian writers starting with Pushkin,[273] and that although Grossman depicts people's suffering (*khozhdenie po mukam*) he is also able to maintain the "cult of life".[274] This combination of the love of life and the witnessing of death in the two novels creates a moment in time in which both coexist and in which freedom is able to survive.

The importance of time in identity has been explored by Paul Ricoeur, whose ideas will inform my reading of the three characters' experiences of trauma. For Ricoeur, it is through narrative, whether a personal or an artistic/fictional one, that the unity of identity is achieved. As Michael W. DeLashmutt explains: "Narration recognises (and articulates) that the self is placed within a temporal and physical context, and it is aimed at reconciling the tension between the objective-self (socially and physically embodied) and the subjective-self (psychologically and spiritually constituted)."[275] What Lashmutt refers to here is the dialectical relation that Ricoeur posits between two types of identity: *ipse* is identity as self, and *idem* is identity as sameness.[276] The former answers the question "who am I?", and the latter "how?"[277] *Idem* identity is social, objective and ethical, whereas *ipse* is the psycho-spiritual, subjective and temporal self.[278] These two notions make the whole of one's identity. However, the issue is complicated by the fact that they overlap in their use of time for stability, which is achieved through permanence through time. This "question of two meanings which overlap without being identical"[279] Ricoeur reconciles through the application of narrative. Using the "modern novel" with its focus on the loss of identity

[273] Shklovskii, *Litsom*, p. 8.
[274] Ibid., p. 33.
[275] Michael W. DeLashmutt, "Paul Ricoeur At The Foot Of The Cross: Narrative Identity and The Resurrection of The Body", *Modern Theology*, 25 (2009), pp. 589-616 (p. 592).
[276] Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity", p. 73.
[277] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 81.
[278] DeLashmutt, "Paul Ricoeur", p. 595.
[279] Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity", p. 75.

through the split of self and sameness as an example,[280] Ricoeur shows that it is precisely through narrative that one can probe these difficulties and gain self-knowledge. Narrative for Ricoeur not only reconciles the two version of identity, but also allows for *ipse* (self) identity to both remain constant and incorporate change, in the various stories that it tells about the self. Narrative thus enables the establishment of a continuity in the self through time, but also reflects on and incorporates changes within *ipse* that have been prompted by *idem*.

There is a similarity between Ricoeur's assertion that the "notion of narrative identity offers a solution to the aporias concerning personal identity", and trauma theory's use of narrative as a cure for trauma.[281] Indeed, Ricoeur takes up Freud's concept of "working through", which focuses on narrative as a restitution of memory.[282] Identity in Ricoeur and in trauma theory are connected to time and narrative. Ricoeur concludes: "Personal identity is a temporal identity."[283]

Although it is through the narrative of time, and more precisely through memory, that one is able to maintain this wholeness of identity, this relation is not unproblematic, as memory can be abused in various ways. As Ricoeur explains: "As the primary cause of the fragility of identity we must cite its difficult relation to time; this is a primary difficulty that, precisely, justifies the recourse to memory as the temporal component of identity, in conjunction with the evaluation of the present and the projection of the future."[284] Identity, relying on time, is simultaneously fragile and able to maintain wholeness through sameness in time. The relationship of identity to time is one of the issues explored in *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*. This may be due to two factors in particular; firstly, traumatic events (or any event of great historical significance) disrupt the normal flow of time, and secondly, time and history were

[280] Ibid., p. 78.
[281] Ibid., p. 73. Dori Laub in particular stresses the therapeutic nature of art and writing life narratives in Laub and Podell, "Art and Trauma".
[282] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 69-80; Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, p. 247.
[283] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 105.
[284] Ibid., p. 81.

both significant in the Soviet Union's conception of itself[285], and thus were at the forefront of literary influences.[286] Ricoeur's theory therefore provides a bridge between the impossibility of traumatic narration and the possibility of narrative through the "cult of life" exhibited in Grossman's novels.

3. 3 *Eschatological Time*

The story of Krymov in *ZPD* and *Zhizn'* conveys the destruction of identity caused by time. His complex relationship to time is a symptom of this trauma, non-linear temporality being used to depict his traumatic state of mind.

Krymov is a particularly significant character because of the discrepancy between his fate in *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*: his heroic achievement in the first novel leads to his arrest in the second. As both Bocharov and Hellbeck point out, Krymov and Shtrum are the two characters most closely based on Grossman.[287] Krymov's visit to Iasnaia Poliana for example, is identical to Grossman's notes in his diary.[288] Therefore it is even more puzzling why many critics, notably Ellis, show such dislike for Krymov, labelling him a "mere bureaucrat"[289]. Although in the early pages of *ZPD* Krymov is described as a ruthless Bolshevik, there is little evidence of this in either novel; instead he is bitter, lonely and even weak at times. His love for his wife Zhenia is a constant presence in his life; her leaving him is perhaps the foreshadowing of his slow disintegration. The dissolution of Krymov's Bolshevik identity is depicted as a journey through both time and space, from open spaces and "his time" in *ZPD* to narrow and confined spaces and the new Stalinist time in *Zhizn'*.[290] The ultimate destination is

[285] For the influence of the eschatological view of time on Soviet society see Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*.
[286] For the uses of history by Soviet literature see Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger, *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).
[287] Bocharov, *Zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba*; Hellbeck, "War and Peace for the Twentieth Century".
[288] Hellbeck, "War and Peace for the Twentieth Century".
[289] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 97.
[290] By Stalinist I am not suggesting that the time in *ZPD* is not Stalinist, but that Krymov becomes acutely aware of the Stalinist influence only in *Zhizn'*.

his cell in the Lubianka, the narrow, confined space and confused temporality of which are contrasted to Krymov's ultimate liberation from Communist eschatological view of time.

For Krymov it is the constancy of his character that leads to his crisis of identity. The disruption of sameness, which he wants to sustain, is represented by the reversal of his fate between the two novels.[291] In order to understand both the contrast between the two novels, and the structure of Krymov's identity, we must start at the beginning. We are first introduced to Krymov as Zhenia's husband in *ZPD.* We are told that Zhenia married Krymov when she was twenty-two years old and finishing her degree; he, being thirteen years older than her, impressed her with his revolutionary past and his indifference to material possessions. Krymov's job is evidently of some importance; when he is introduced we are told that "[Женя] вышла замуж за работника Коминтерна Крымова"[292], showing that his status and his job define him better than his name. Other information that we have about him comes from Viktor Shtrum's memory, which provides an image of Krymov as a severe and politically correct individual. The first direct depiction of Krymov is at the front, where he has become a commissar of an anti-tank brigade. Krymov is depicted as burning for the cause, more so perhaps than other commissars. When a lieutenant approaches Krymov with a letter, he is asleep; however, he instantly jumps up with no signs of fatigue to read the message.[293] The lieutenant does not expect this from a commissar; in fact he already has an idea of someone moving slowly with no enthusiasm.[294] Krymov thus seems to be above all other commissars concerned with the Communist cause and the freedom of the nation. However, as Semen Lipkin notes: "И как не ортодоксален Крымов, нас, читателей, что-то в нем тревожит, и на протяжении всего большого романа нас не покидает тяжелое

[291] By reversal, I mean that Krymov is a respected communist in *ZPD* and should be heading toward fame rather than infamy. This is at least what Krymov believes and what society suggests. However, the novel itself is more ambiguous about his fate.
[292] Vasilii Grossman, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Agraf, 1998), vol. (1), p. 24.
[293] Ibid., p. 154.
[294] Ibid.

предчувствие."[295] Furthermore, one of the most vicious criticisms directed towards the novel, written by Bubennov in 1953, notes: "Ему [Гроссману] не удалось создать ни одного крупного, яркого, типичного образа героя в серой шинели, с оружием в руках".[296] So although Krymov is seen as orthodox by Lipkin and is depicted as such, he does not fit the prescriptions of a Soviet hero of the time. This incompatibility and the unsettling feeling surrounding him may also be a hint that the fate that Krymov meets in *Zhizn'* is something that Grossman already had in mind when writing *ZPD*.

Despite his being one of the central characters of *ZPD*, the reader finds out surprisingly little about Krymov. In fact, it is not until *Zhizn'* that Krymov's thoughts and feeling become apparent. As mentioned above, the reason for this may have been Grossman's plans for the sequel. On the other hand it could be a narrative strategy, whereby the more Krymov's identity disintegrates, the more human he becomes, and the more the reader knows about his inner life. Either way, in *ZPD* Krymov functions as a silent observer and as the reader's eyes on the front. Krymov spends a large part of the novel travelling silently through landscapes of war and suffering, and it is through these poetic and sensitive descriptions that the reader experiences the war. Often these are panoramic views of battlefields and peasants abandoning their homes. These scenes affect Krymov deeply and reinforce his will to fight for the motherland. Through the vast space traversed, the narrator is able to depict the movement of war and history, an approach that is similar to Tolstoi's in *Voina i mir*. These images of war and landscape highlight Krymov's connection to history and thus his awareness of time:

> Казалось, эта степь уже никогда не узнает покоя...
>
> «Но ведь придёт день, — подумал Крымов, — и пыль, поднятая
>
> войной, вновь ляжет на землю, вновь настанет тишина, погаснут

[295] Lipkin, *Stalingrad*, p. 30.
[296] Ibid., p. 36.

> пожары, осядет пепел, рассеется дым, и весь мир войны, в дыму, в пламени, в грохоте, в слезах, станет прошлым — историей...»[297]

The notion of history here offers comfort; it is the hope that time passes and that the horror that both nature and people are experiencing will end. Time here is both future and future perfect, "станет прошлым", suggesting a closure of time and situating the present in a historical context. Krymov's thinking resembles that of other Socialist novels: Katerina Clark notes that an event of present had to be identified with a moment of the official Heroic Age or from the Great and Glorious Future, making fiction eschatological as well.[298] She also shows that the prototypical positive hero of a Socialist Realist novel is conscious of the movements of history and is thus united with the state. Although Krymov is constantly aware of existing in a historical time, and is a true Marxist, his focus is on an indefinite future and history, rather than a specific Glorious Future. This could be another reason for Bubennov's criticism and Lipkin's uncertainty. The discrepancy between Krymov as a Socialist Realist character and the negative reception of the critics suggests that Krymov is acting as a Soviet positive hero, but he is not one.

In *Zhizn'* Krymov finds that he belongs to a past Revolutionary time and no longer fits the new Stalinist time, whilst in *ZPD* his relation to his present is more unified. This discrepancy is shown in his inability to communicate with soldiers in Stalingrad in *Zhizn'*. However, this is exactly opposite to Krymov's good relations with the soldiers in *ZPD*. Here the soldiers look up to him and he loves them in a true spirit of brotherhood:

> …было в жизни нечто самое простое и необходимое, и все понимали и чувствовали, что в борьбе за самое дорогое и необходимое человеку, в сохранении его в страшную пору, когда человек мог потерять не только жизнь, но и совесть и честь, — комиссар Крымов не ошибался.[299]

[297] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 157.
[298] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 40.
[299] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 174.

And,

> Когда Крымов поглядел на своё шатающееся от слабости, но грозное войско, чувство гордости и счастья овладело им. Сотни вёрст шли эти люди с ним, он любил их с такой нежностью, какую не выразить на языке человека.[300]

The connection between the soldiers and Krymov is a special one; they are united by more than their situation but by a same set of principles and Krymov embodies these principles. The war reminds him of his early revolutionary days and rejuvenates the revolutionary fire within him; at one point Krymov makes a speech to his soldiers holding his party card above him and swearing by it.[301] Later, he is depicted as being at one with the Communist cause: "Редко в жизни он ощущал с такой простой силой самое сердце идеи советского единства, как в эти месяцы. […] Жизнь Крымова сложилась в мире коммунистических представлений, да, собственно, в них и была его жизнь."[302] Despite his Communist fervour, however, the above quotations show that the connection between the soldiers and Krymov is not purely based on communism but stands outside it. It is in these moments that Grossman shows that there were other motivations for the soldiers than just Communism. As Ellis suggests: "Spontaneous, unsolicited courage implied a deeper, more complex psychological explanation for heroism than Soviet critics were prepared to countenance."[303] There are thus a number of inconsistencies and contradictions surrounding Krymov, all of which contribute to his fate in *Zhizn'*.

In *Zhizn'* Krymov is demoted to political commissar: his task is to spread the ideology rather than take part in the battles. The fact that he is demoted to do what seems to be his forte as a writer and editor for a social-economic publisher,[304] is an anomaly in itself. As soon as he

[300] Ibid., p. 176.
[301] Ibid., p. 175.
[302] Ibid., p. 182.
[303] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 87.
[304] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 167.

is defined as an ideologist, rather than personally defining himself as one, Krymov feels uncomfortable. His relationship to his new position suggests that in fact there is more to Krymov than being a Communist, and that his life exceeds the world of Communist ideas mentioned above.

Although it is mentioned in *ZPD* that Krymov has good conversations with his soldiers, there is little evidence within the narrative itself, in which dialogue is almost non-existent.[305] This further alienates the reader from him and creates the sense of uncertainty that Lipkin mentions. In *Zhizn'* however, Krymov engages in several dialogues, all of which highlight his alienation from the soldiers. Within the first few paragraphs we read: "Люди, прислушивающиеся к их разговору, посмеивались, и Крымов вновь ощутил раздражавший его тон снисходительной насмешливости."[306] This observation is inconsistent with *ZPD*, where Krymov at no point feels looked-down upon, so the use of *vnov'* is striking and creates uncertainty. Towards the end of *ZPD* Krymov is indeed outside his normal comfort zone, but he is still excited about taking part in the battles of Stalingrad. So, the *vnov'* is a sign of an attempt to rewrite Krymov's status in *ZPD*. Through *vnov'* Grossman sets the scene for all future discomfort that Krymov experiences.

It is in the surrounded and confined space of Stalingrad that Krymov experiences his disconnection from the time in which he lives. Upon hearing a simple tune played by a barber, Krymov feels that he can see deep into his own soul. Music's role in the novel is to elucidate the meaning and impact of time. Grossman himself witnessed the impact of music on soldiers when he was at the front. He wrote to his wife Ol'ga Mikhailovna Guber:

> Сидел позавчера в глубоком подвале разрушенного завода, шел бой за знаменитый здесь курган и слушал красноармейцы заводили патефон, сквозь треск и гул сражения печальную величавую песню, которую

[305] Even Solzhenitsyn points this out, in possibly his only fair criticism. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Dilogiia Vasiliia Grossmana", *Novyi mir*, 8 (2003).
[306] Vasilii Grossman, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Agraf, 1998), vol. (2), p. 25.

> люблю очень. […] И меня это взволновало и тронуло, вот где пришлось послушать бетховенскую песню. И тронуло меня, что красноармейцам она очень нравится. Раз десять они повторяли ее. Тут много музыки - почти в каждом подвале, блиндаже патефон. Но ты наверное понимаешь, что тут не одна лишь музыка.[307]

Grossman's personal experiences are similar to those of Krymov's; he clearly felt an affinity with his character, which suggests that he conceived of Krymov as much more than a Party bureaucrat.

The importance of music is shown both in Krymov's experience, and in Sofya Osipovna Levinton's. By making the characters painfully aware of time's passage, music raises questions within them about their identities. Music, time and identity are all interconnected. The effect that music has on the characters is dual: it both makes them aware of time, but also seems to create a moment that is outside time, which allows for instantaneous moments of clarity. These moments are whole in themselves and have their own temporality that stands outside that of the narrative. These moments are, in Sofya Osipovna's case in particular, a space for freedom in slave-like circumstances. This sense of freedom is depicted through the relationship of time to identity; a personal notion of self stands in contrast to the identity as victims that the circumstances (the times) have bestowed on them.

Already in *ZPD* Krymov uses the imagery of a gramophone record to describe his identity. Meeting his old friend Priakhin, the two discuss the changes that have occurred over the past years. Priakhin notes that Krymov has not changed at all throughout the years. Krymov's response is that he is not like a gramophone and cannot change his tune. The notion

[307] Vasilii Grossman, "Pamiat' trudnoi godiny. K 60-letiu pobedy. 'Stal slovno drugim chelovekom'. Pis'ma fronta.", *Voprosy Literatury*, 30 (2005), pp. 50-59 (p. 57).

of stability and sameness of character is highly valued by Krymov. His friend on the other hand is more ambiguous about the virtues of change.

> — Люди растут, меняются, чему же удивляться? А знаешь, тебя я сразу узнал, вот вижу тебя таким же, каким знал. Вот такой ты был двадцать пять лет назад, когда на фронт ездил царскую армию взрывать.
>
> — Ну что ж! Такой был, таким и остался. Времена меняются, а я нет. Не умею я меняться. Меня ругали за это. Ты скажи, это хорошо или плохо? Как это мне, приплюсовать нужно или, наоборот, вычесть?
>
> — Всё ты на философию сводишь. И в этом ты не изменился.
>
> — Ты не шути. Времена меняются, но человек ведь не патефон – то одну пластинку играет, то другую. Не получится у меня.
>
> — Большевик должен делать то, что нужно партии, а значит – народу. Раз он по партийному понял время, следовательно, линия его правильная.[308]

The two standpoints are representative of the two currents in Soviet notions of identity. As Fitzpatrick, Hellbeck and Halfin all have shown, at different times in Soviet society difference and sameness would replace each other as the chief quality. Halfin shows that in writing autobiographies people moved from speaking of themselves as becoming Communists, to insisting in the mid to late 1930s that they have always been so.[309] The change in the representation of the self in itself suggests that people had to adapt to changing ways of self-representation. Priakhin's admission of a malleable self, and in particular that it is malleable in accordance with the Party and not inner convictions, can be seen as a criticism of Soviet society. It exposes the workings of "impersonation" and "imposture" examined by Fitzpatrick. She shows that on the one hand people had to create "a self for the times", impersonating the ideals that the Party expounded, and on the other hand, "when an impersonation was

[308] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 304.
[309] Halfin, *Terror*, p. 263; see also Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*.

successfully unmasked, it became ipso facto imposture."[310] Krymov's open questioning of the self shows the connection between impersonation and imposture; he knows that he needs to impersonate but is aware that it can lead to imposture and being classed an enemy.

Thus, change was a necessary, albeit a dangerous, form through which to adapt to society and to be *in* the times. Krymov is not capable of such change; his ideas stem from the Revolutionary period. As Priakhin further questions: "Ты ведь разрушитель старого, а вот строитель ли ты?"[311] Krymov's questioning of his static identity betrays his worries about the change in the Party line. Although this change is not spoken of, it is evident in the use of the future tense: "Не получится у меня." This suggests that changes are imminent and that Krymov will fall outside this new movement of Party and State precisely because his identity does not fit the times. Time needs to be understood in terms of Party's needs, and because Krymov fails to follow the changes in the Party, his conception of time is wrong. His friend's answer to his worries is only an ideological cliché and does not deal with the question of difference and sameness. However, it shows how it is the Party that defines the times and actions of individuals stifling any autonomy. This is the true mark of slavery to time and Party State that becomes apparent to Krymov, and his only opportunity to become free is to abandon this view of time for a quotidian perspective.

Changing the tune is essential, but Krymov suggests to Priakhin that the soldiers whom he led out of encirclement would not have followed a person who had a gramophone on the inside: "За человеком, у которого патефон внутри заведен, в страшный час не пойдут".[312] Krymov's assertion can be linked with one of the main criticisms of the novel by Bubennov, which asserts that the novel ascribes heroic deeds to untypical and uninspiring

[310] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Making a Self for the Times: Impersonation and Imposture in 20th Century Russia", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2 (2001), pp. 469-487 (p. 477).
[311] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 305.
[312] Ibid.

characters.[313] If Krymov was portrayed as having a gramophone on the inside, if his disassociation from the times was not exposed, it is more likely that he would have come across as a typical and fitting hero. Krymov, on the contrary, shows that he is a fitting hero from a different point of view: that heroes do not have to follow the party line, but an inner belief. In this sense, Krymov is a bad Communist; he comes from a different time and continues to believe the ideology of a different age.

Although Krymov's perception of himself is stable, outer circumstances make him aware of the instability of his situation. This instability is created by a change in the Party's perception of the historical present. As Halfin suggests, Marxist notion of time is eschatological, which erases the present for the sake of a salvational future and an end of time.[314] At the point of Krymov's crisis, the New Soviet man and Communism have been achieved, and Krymov's Revolutionary ideals have become irrelevant. Halfin further explains that the individual had to construct his identity in the shape of the future: "The creation of a New Man, equipped with a brand-new identity, was the key to the Communist emancipatory project."[315] The primary quality of this New Man was consciousness: "consciousness as the ability to see the laws of history and comprehend one's own potential as a subject of historical action who would help chart the road toward a better future."[316] The self was not only subordinate to eschatological history, but was also the vehicle through which salvation and end of time was to be achieved. The same point is highlighted by Plekhanov who sees man as useful to history in a particular moment, if that man possesses the necessary attributes. "A great man is great not because his personal qualities give individual features to great historical events, but because he possesses qualities which make him most capable of serving the great

[313] Bubennov's criticism cited in Lipkin, *Stalingrad*, p. 36.
[314] See Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*.
[315] Halfin, *Terror*, p. 8.
[316] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, p. 18.

social needs of his time, needs which arose as a result of general and particular causes."[317] For the Communists, the great need lay in the abolishment of evil from society and thus the self. In the years after the Revolution this meant class struggle; later, however, evil was to be found within the person's constitution.[318] However, as Krymov's case shows (and many purge victims' as well), evil would not always have to be present – it could be invented. Krymov's conception of time is stuck in the Revolutionary period and therefore is no longer promoting the eschatological movement of history, which is the "evil" of his character.

Just as it is through music that Krymov understands his identity in *ZPD*, in *Zhizn'* it is music again that consolidates his thoughts on the static nature of his identity and the change in time. It is a simple tune played on a fiddle in Stalingrad that opens up a space in time where Krymov can see the whole trajectory of his life. The first thing that Krymov realises when moved by the music is that Zhenia leaving him is the key to his failure: "он остался, но его не стало. И она ушла."[319] Zhenia is a constant theme in Krymov's life, and although war makes him forget about the pain that she has caused him, it turns out that his love for her is the only stable thing in his life after his identity has disintegrated. Hearing the music, Krymov realises that he is moving toward a time in which he is no longer needed.

> Музыка, казалось, вызвала в нем понимание времени.
>
> Время – прозрачная среда, в которой возникают, движутся, бесследно исчезают люди... Во времени возникают и исчезают массивы городов. Время приносит их и уносит.
>
> Но в нем возникло совсем особое, другое понимание времени. То понимание, которое говорит: "Мое время... не наше время".
>
> […]

[317] G.V. Plekhanov, "On The Role of The Individual in History" (1898). http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1898/xx/individual.html (accessed on 23/12/2010)
[318] Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*, p. 51.
[319] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 30.

> Самое трудное – быть пасынком времени. […] Время любит лишь тех, кого оно породило, – своих детей, своих героев, своих тружеников. Никогда, никогда не полюбит оно детей ушедшего времени, и женщины не любят героев ушедшего времени, и мачехи не любят чужих детей.
>
> Вот таково время, – все уходит, а оно остается. Все остается, одно время уходит. Как легко, бесшумно уходит время. Вчера еще ты был так уверен, весел, силен: сын времени. А сегодня пришло другое время, но ты еще не понял этого.[320]

Time here is shown to be both a powerful force and a personal perception; it is a fluid mass and a specific influence on people's lives. A person can be alive but at the same time not be part of the time. What Krymov experiences is the change between Revolutionary time and Stalinist time, when the party is purged of its old members. Krymov is clearly an old Bolshevik and a fervent believer in Marx and Lenin, while his feelings towards Stalin are more ambiguous. Ellis explains some of the reasons why Krymov was no longer acceptable to the party:

> For its part, the Party members, particularly those who made their careers in the 1930s, found Krymov's zeal and loyalty to Marx and Lenin threatening. Krymov typified for them the Old Guard, many of whom they had denounced to get ahead. Moreover, Krymov lacked the supreme pragmatism which characterised the new careerists.[321]

Indeed, it is precisely this pragmatism that Krymov lacks, as he himself points out in *ZPD*, being unable to change his tune. He is like a shard of the past reminding the careerists of their possible future fate.

[320] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[321] Ellis, *Genesis*, p. 97.

Krymov's identity belongs to another era, and he has moved from being a son of the times to being a stepson. John Garrard analyses this in relation to real and constructed families in *Zhizn',* and aptly points out that although Krymov suggests that a stepmother does not love another's child, this is a wrong assumption "for women *can* find the courage to love the children of others. Indeed, that decision marks true spiritual freedom in the novel."[322] Garrard connects this to the opposition in the novel between natural human families and artificial "family-states".[323] It is within the natural family that love, compassion and freedom is to be found, while family-states stand for slavery.[324] Krymov's expulsion from the family-state and its time is thus not necessarily negative. His wrong assertion about mothers and children is further reinforced by his mistaken belief that women do not love heroes of the past. Zhenia may not be fully in love with him but she does return to him. Krymov, by only seeing the time that belongs to the state, has overlooked private time, in which freedom and salvation are to be found. In a similar manner, Morson discussing the various "diseases of time" points out in reference to Turgenev's *Otsy i deti* that only the characters who "ignore the 'times' and locate their present in private, quotidian life manage to live in a present of meaningful activity. [...] Those characters, major and minor, who try to occupy the public present either die before they have lived or live when they are already dead."[325] This disease of time is what Krymov is experiencing; he may be alive but he cannot live in this new time. Meanwhile Sofya Osipovna's and Zhenia's actions both show how, by ascribing to private time rather than public, "spiritual freedom" can be achieved, as is discussed below.

Although Krymov is a stepson of Stalin's USSR, he is also the product of his time; his fate is a logical progression of his Bolshevik actions. This becomes apparent during his interrogation when he realises that he has denounced friends in the past. His ruthless actions

[322] Garrard, "Stepsons", p. 340.
[323] Ibid., p. 338.
[324] Katerina Clark also examines this dichotomy in Clark, *The Soviet Novel.*
[325] Morson, *Narrative and Freedom*, pp. 196-197.

have led to the ruthless way in which he is treated by the Party. Krymov is an example of what happens when the Party turns on itself and punishes the ones that have obeyed it. It seems that two time lines are in conflict. One is a past Revolutionary time, which is supposed to lead to Communism, and is Krymov's time. The other timeline is that of the new party that breaks all ties with Old Bolsheviks, which is essentially a Stalinist time. Krymov is trapped in between the two; he can move neither forward nor backward. He is excluded from the bright Communist future that he has helped build and his past is also against him, as it has lost its previous meaning. As the interrogation scene shows, Krymov's past is not a refuge but a torture.

Time in the chapter depicting Krymov's interrogation is not a subject, as it is in Krymov's earlier ponderings, but is a narrative tool. It is through time that Grossman shows the psychological trauma of torture and its effects. Grossman moves between the past and the present; one being the interrogation and its confusing time, and the other Krymov's past. Neither of these are straight linear narratives, emphasising the disintegration of identity that is caused by trauma inflicted by the Soviet state.

Since the moment of his arrest, Krymov senses that he is losing himself. "Но он уже не был Крымовым, он ощутил это, хотя и не понимал этого."[326] All the things that used to define him are no longer available, and the ones that are – his Revolutionary past, his articles, his various intonations when talking to fellow communists, friends and workers[327] – all make him an enemy of the Party to which he has given his life. His point of reference for his identity has shifted.

The interrogation starts with the obligatory questionnaire and, unlike Shtrum, who struggles to complete a personal questionnaire earlier in the novel, Krymov finds the first questions easy to answer. He is still certain of his identity, not only as a good Communist, but

[326] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 464.
[327] Ibid.

also as a good individual. The interrogation pulls his life apart into miniscule details. All that seemed unimportant gains new weight and changes his perception of his own identity:

> Пустяковые словечки, мелочи сплетались с его верой, его любовь к Евгении Николаевне ничего не значила, а значили случайные, пустые связи, и он уже не мог отличить главного от пустяков.[328]

The new interpretation of his past facilitates Krymov's disintegration further. He is not able to use the past as a source of identity. In Ricoeur's terms, he is not able to stabilise his identity in sameness through time. This sameness lies in the *idem* identity, which is united with the outside world. The meaning of his actions is not the same and therefore disrupts the unity of his identity. He himself questions: "Чьи пальцы соединили несоединимое?"[329] Krymov's question shows that there is a duality within him: there is a stable part of his identity, his love and faith, and a fluctuating one. These two cannot be united under the same meaning. Again this can be connected to Ricoeur, and the fact that *ipse* and *idem* overlap but are not the same. This perception stands in stark contrast to the Soviet notion of identity as shown in the novel, and in particular to Krymov's. He has mistakenly believed himself to be one thing, being proud "что умеет подчинять свою жизнь логике"[330], but through the interrogation discovers other aspects of himself. He has to reassess his whole life.

There is a double trial in the chapter, consisting on the one hand of the absurd offences that the officials attribute to Krymov and, on the other, of Krymov's personal trial within himself. His main discovery is that he denounced his friend Fritz Hacken, an event he had forgotten until now. This memory reveals to Krymov the dynamic of his past life: "Нет, самым подлым было не желание нравиться. Самым подлым было желание искренности! О, теперь-то он вспомнил! Здесь нужна одна лишь искренность!"[331] What

[328] Ibid., p. 579.
[329] Ibid., p. 584.
[330] Ibid., p. 630.
[331] Ibid., p. 585.

he realises is that the meaning of "*iskrennost'*" is different from his new perspective, since honesty should have meant not denunciation but affirmation of his friend. This reappraisal of the past suggests that an individual always has freedom to make a choice.[332] This memory and reassessment also stands in contrast to the official line. Although memory helps Krymov escape the present, seen in this new light, his past is now equally traumatic.

The multiple strands of time represent the chaos within Krymov himself, which is contained through the circular composition of the chapter. The chapter starts and ends with Krymov's observation that he and the interrogator are essentially the same, making it structurally circular:

> Учрежденческий стол, стоявший между ними, не разъединял их. Оба они платили партийные членские взносы, смотрели "Чапаева", слушали в МК инструктаж, их посылали в предмайские дни с докладами на предприятия.[333]

And,

> Сейчас у Николая Григорьевича вновь возникло ощущение близости с ним. Стол уж не разделял их, сидели два товарища, два горестных человека.[334]

The circularity of the chapter relates to the union and commonality of identity. Firstly the union of the two characters through the common ideological practices and finally, through their shared humanity. At several points during the interrogation Krymov physically attacks his interrogator, only to conclude that they are both human and alike. The similarity here is based on the fact that Krymov has realised that he could easily have been on the other side of the table, that in fact he has committed similar crimes to the interrogator. The party unites them, not only through the various ideological and cultural practices, but also through making

[332] The same theme is discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to Nikolai.
[333] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 577.
[334] Ibid., p. 589.

them simultaneously victims of the State and perpetrators of its crimes. Krymov realises: "Не надо было быть ни идиотом, ни мерзавцем, чтобы подозревать в измене жалкое, грязное существо. И Крымов на месте следователя не стал бы доверять подобному существу."[335] This obedience to the state has also united their fates and made them "*gorestnye*". Both have subordinated their lives to the movement of history as dictated by the Party, and both have brought about this unhappy result.

The interrogator provides a mirror for Krymov. Throughout the interrogation both move between being human and abstract creatures. This movement is represented through repeated imagery of disintegration and fragmentation. The interrogator embodies this process: at several points Krymov sees the interrogator's face as dividing into separate pieces: "Весь он, показалось Крымову, как бы состоял из отдельных кубиков, но эти кубики не были соединены в единстве – человеке."[336] These pieces float about randomly and ominously, suggesting Krymov's state of mind. The episode is almost cinematic: as Krymov sees his personal file and all his life on separate pieces of paper, reality fragments, and as soon as the document file is shut all returns to normal. Krymov remarks: "Как развязанный ботинок."[337] This imagery of "unravelledness", or looseness, characterizes Krymov's mind, his physical state, and his past. Krymov is described as a creature wearing a creased shirt and trousers with buttons cut off.[338] His clothes falling off him show him as physically falling apart, making him no longer a man but a creature. The reference to clothes also punctuates the chapter, as his mind constantly returns to his physical discomfort, and the pain that his shoes are causing him. In a way, this pain is what keeps reuniting him with the present, while his mind is attempting to make sense of the past.

[335] Ibid., p. 581.
[336] Ibid., p. 578.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid., p. 581.

Confusing temporality is Grossman's main tool for depicting the traumatic state of Krymov's mind. The torture that he endures, through sleep deprivation, swollen feet and dehumanising treatment, all affect the way in which he experiences time. It is as hard for the reader to tell how long Krymov has been in the interrogator's office as it is for Krymov himself. There are references to daylight that he sees through the window, a light that seems to emanate from the concrete building itself, and the change in interrogators suggests a difference between day and night.[339] It is this continuous interrogation, a conveyer belt interrogation,[340] which not only shatters the present but confuses all time. "Но время смешалось: бесконечно давно вошел он в этот кабинет, так недавно был он в Сталинграде."[341] The two perceptions of time are incompatible, if indeed he was in Stalingrad recently, according to his perception of time, it would have been in the office. This confusion of time shows how the present traumatic state is taking over the past, both bringing it closer but also making it irrelevant compared to the present. As mentioned above, the torture that Krymov endures overshadows all else in his mind, and time has stopped: all Krymov can hope is that it moves forward to a time when he is no longer in pain: "Снова шло, работало время. […] Не стало прошлого и будущего, не стало папки с вьющимися шнурками. Лишь одно - снять сапоги, чесаться, уснуть."[342] The hope of taking his boots off and sleeping is almost outside of time itself as neither past nor future exists; the verbs themselves are in the infinitive form. The present is not a viable time either as it is the time of interrogation. Taking his boots off is an action that works only by excluding all other action; it is outside of time.

The physical beatings alongside sleep deprivation speed up the tempo of the chapter. This is partly because all action is repetition and partly because Krymov becomes less and

[339] Ibid., p. 584.
[340] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Arhipelag Gulag: Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2008), vol. (1), p. 122.
[341] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 584.
[342] Ibid., p. 586.

less aware of his surroundings, as his mind is growing numb. Grossman uses "потом" and "снова" to emphasise the repetitive and cyclical experience of time. This depiction of time reflects Krymov's absent state of mind: he is both physically and mentally destroyed. He subsequently concludes that:

> Тех, которые продолжали упорствовать в своем праве быть людьми, начинали расшатывать и разрушать, раскалывать, обламывать, размывать и расклеивать, чтобы довести их до той степени рассыпчатости, рыхлости, пластичности и слабости, когда люди не хотят уже ни справедливости, ни свободы, ни даже покоя, а хотят лишь, чтобы их избавили от ставшей ненавистной жизни.[343]

The imagery in the above passage, while referring to the human mind, is firmly situated in the physical realm. The verbs used are all taken from Soviet discourse. This discourse is then turned on to people (*liudi*) to show that the language intended to destroy "enemies" in fact destroys humans. A human being is almost imagined as a building that is torn apart, the unity of the body and soul shown to be the key to the destruction.

As the final chapter about Krymov shows, the interrogators have managed to damage Krymov's mind to the point where he no longer knows where he is; reality and memory have become blurred and replace a clear sense of the present:

> Крымов услышал негромкие слова:
>
> – Передали недавно, – наши войска завершили разгром сталинградской группировки немцев, вроде Паулюса захватили, я, по правде, плохо разобрал.
>
> Крымов закричал, стал биться, возить ногами по полу, захотелось вмешаться в толпу людей в ватниках, валенках... шум их милых голосов заглушал негромкий, шедший рядом разговор; по грудам

[343] Ibid., pp. 629-630.

сталинградского кирпича с перевалочкой шел в сторону Крымова Греков.

Врач держал Крымова за руку, говорил:

– Надо бы сделать перерывчик... повторно камфару, выпадение пульса через каждые четыре удара.

[…]

Через трое суток кончился второй допрос, и Крымов вернулся в камеру. Дежурный положил около него завернутый в белую тряпицу пакет.

– Распишитесь, гражданин заключенный, в получении передачи, – сказал он.

Николай Григорьевич прочел перечень предметов, написанный знакомым почерком, – лук, чеснок, сахар, белые сухари. Под перечнем было написано: "Твоя Женя".

Боже, Боже, он плакал...[344]

Krymov is no longer psychologically present. Although the chapter starts by suggesting that he is conscious, his reaction to the message about Stalingrad is sudden and alienating. It is hard for the reader to quite understand where Krymov is, as he seems to have mentally transported himself to Stalingrad. Even Grekov is brought back to life, after dying earlier in one of the battles. The doctor's comment brings the narrative back into the present moment and explains where Krymov is: still in the interrogation office, still being tortured. This time we are told that the interrogation lasts three days, the brief glimpse of Krymov's state of mind suggesting the repetitive and destructive nature of all interrogations that he has, and is yet to endure. The parcel from Zhenia, however, seems to bring something out of him that no interrogation can reach. He is even referred to as Nikolai Grigor'evich, rather than Krymov, signalling the change in identity and a move to private time. The kindness of Zhenia, her recognition of Krymov as human, breaks him out of the inhumanity in which he has found

[344] Ibid., p. 633.

himself. His tears over the parcel are an indication of his humanity and a return to the self. The importance that he ascribes to Zhenia is shown to be greater than his faith in Communism. Being united with the private quotidian time described by Morson, Krymov is able to regain himself and abandon the eschatological time of the state. This abandonment marks the true attainment of freedom.

The reference to God in the above passage is ambiguous. The narrator and character seem to merge here; although it seems that Krymov is the one saying "Oh God", the reference to him in third person, and the absence of a dash to signal the dialogue, suggests the presence of the narrator. Grossman urges the reader to join in lamenting Krymov's life and destruction. As Ricoeur suggests, identity is fragile precisely because it relies on memory to remain whole. By confusing Krymov's memory and its meaning, the interrogators destroy his identity and are thus able to mould him into anything. He cannot create a coherent narrative of his past and thus stabilise the source of his identity. Krymov is a slave to the state spiritually and physically, but his tears over Zhenia's parcel bring him a moment of freedom. Because she is a constant theme in his life, her presence reconnects him to a stable part of his identity and restores him to life. Even the reference to God is a sign of Krymov moving outside of Party time to a notion of time that is universal.

This is the last chapter and last words devoted to Krymov, and the reader does not find out whether he is shot or imprisoned. However, it is at this point that the most humble and human part of Krymov is shown, and although he is a broken man, he has become more human through his love for Zhenia. The contrast between the evil that is done to him and the good and pure love that still survives in him adds poignancy to the whole story of his life.

3.4 *The end of time*

The passages devoted to Sofya Osipovna Levinton are the most traumatic and painful chapters of *Zhizn'*. Grossman narrates her journey from Stalingrad to a German concentration camp, and ultimately her death in the gas chamber. Here Grossman depicts what has been designated in the scholarship on the Holocaust as the "unknowable" and the "unimaginable" – what Laub calls the "black hole";[345] the Holocaust is such an affront to human understanding that it remains forever unknowable, in the sense that we cannot integrate this form of knowledge. Furthermore, Grossman depicts the literally unknowable experience of death in a gas chamber, something that left no survivors and therefore defies representation. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi depicts an episode where a young girl survives the gas chamber but is soon murdered; surviving and telling the truth about the gas chamber is an impossibility.[346] Agamben argues with reference to Laub's and Felman's study on testimony: "The Shoah is an event without witnesses in the double sense – no one can bear witness from the inside of death, and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice – and from the outside – since the 'outsider' is by definition excluded from the event."[347] Grossman is indeed one such "outsider" depicting the event through an impossible witness. Having only witnessed the camps as an outsider arriving with the Red Army at the end of the war, it is fair to question whether Grossman is the ideal narrator of such horror, but such ethical questions are unfortunately outside the range of this study. However, we can concur with Thomas Trezise's assertion that:

> For the effort to comprehend, conceive, imagine, or think of the Holocaust often – if not always – entails a tangible taboo. [...] Yet on the other hand, to respond to such prohibitions by merely reaffirming them can amount to little more than the act of self-protection capable of paralysing the attempt to

[345] Laub, "Truth and Testimony".
[346] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 2008), p. 39.
[347] Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 35.

> conceive, imagine, think, or understand how the very species to which one belongs could have produced the perpetrators, and how it may have felt to be their victim.[348]

Here, the focus is on a fictional character and her emotional life, which can neither be verified nor refuted. It is an attempt by Grossman to overcome unrepresentability by looking at the way in which the horrors of the Holocaust can be explored within literature.

Sofya Levinton is a minor character in *ZPD*; she is a close friend of the Shaposhnikov family. She comes across as stern, funny, and as a hard worker. As a doctor, the war provides a lot of work for her and she refuses to waste time on sleeping. Her dedication to work coupled with the descriptions of her as "hard", "stern" and "strong", depict her as more masculine than feminine. At one point Sofya Osipovna is even described as "мужеподобная".[349] As Lilya Kaganovsky suggests, male and female gender boundaries were fluid in Soviet Russia and Sofya Osipovna fits with Kaganovsky's assertion that women were frequently depicted in male terms in Soviet Culture. [350] Discussing Zhenia's infatuation with Novikov, Sofya Osipovna says:

> — Ах, женщины, женщины, — проговорила Софья Осиповна, точно сама не была женщиной и женские слабости её не касались, — в чём разгадка его успеха? Он герой своего времени. А женщины любят героев времени.[351]

Sofya Osipovna's comment suggests that she is above "female weaknesses". She is shown to almost actively seek danger, only to overcome it. She is able to engage actively in the war by helping wounded soldiers, and is therefore not a victim of circumstances but an actor in them. However, there is also a hint of her suffering in the war. She is clearly aware of that people

[348] Trezise, "Unspeakable", p. 43.
[349] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 67.
[350] Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 154.
[351] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 195.

perceive her differently from how she is, when she explains: "Тяжело мне. Все почему-то думают, что я железная баба."[352] Sofya Osipovna's reference to "*tiazhelo mne*" is ambiguous. On the one hand it refers to the fact that people misunderstand her, and on the other hand it is a reference to the impact of war as she follows this exclamation by a story describing her tears over the death of a young boy in hospital. Thus, she is shown to battle within two different perceptions of the self; one that is bestowed on her from the outside, which she also lives up to, and the other of her sensitivity to the suffering at war. Her love for children is not only displayed here but also at the start of the novel when she gives a little girl a cube of sugar as a present.[353] This division of the self can be connected to Ricoeur's *ipse* and *idem* identity. People's perception of her as "hard" and her actual bravery are her *idem* identity, whereas her hidden sensitivity is *ipse*. Her final connection with David in *Zhizn'* is therefore neither surprising nor out of character.

As shown above (p. 124), Sofya Osipovna sees time in the same manner as Krymov, as she states that women love the heroes of their time. This connection between the two characters and novels is unlikely to be accidental; Zhenia is the focus of both of these assertions. In some sense, both characters are proven wrong, as despite her love for Novikov, Zhenia returns to Krymov. Krymov may not be the hero of his time, but he certainly is typical of his time, which Zhenia notices when standing in the prison queue.[354]

Sofya Osipovna's presence in *ZPD* is brief. In a typical act of defiance, after fighting through the hospital fire, she decides to stay up all night and travel with Mostovskoi to StalGRES, rather than escaping with the other citizens. It is on this trip that she and Mostovskoi are arrested by a German soldier: "Мгновение длилась ужасная, каменная тишина, та тишина, во время которой задержавшие дыхание люди осознали, что малые случайности, определившие эту поездку, вдруг превратились в непоправимый и

[352] Ibid., p. 193.
[353] Ibid., p. 36.
[354] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 511.

ужасный рок, решивший всю их жизнь."[355] The time of crisis is represented by the contrast between the short moment and the expanse of a whole life within the moment. Furthermore, silence helps the characters and the reader to penetrate the meaning of the above event, the catastrophe that it signifies. Both the temporality of this moment and the role of silence are carried through to the sequel, *Zhizn'*, where time and silence are the tools through which Sofya's experience can be spoken of. The contrast between the brevity of time and the impact of that moment is reversed in *Zhizn'* as the moment becomes central to a union of self and the vast expanse of a life, whilst the great movement of history becomes secondary. The characters move their understanding of self away from the great historical catastrophe into the small space of the moment. These moments, like the one above, encompass a whole range of experiences and a whole life within them.

In *Zhizn'* we follow Sofya Osipovna's journey from the place of arrest to the gas chamber. Entering the world of the arrested Jews, Sofya Osipovna seems to instinctively know that she is travelling towards her death. This new temporal space in which she has found herself can be related to the notion of the "apocalypse".[356] As Friedlander suggests: "When the 'Final Solution' was implemented, metaphorically speaking, an apocalyptic dimension entered history […] But for those who were not the victims, life went on […] the apocalypse had passed by unnoticed."[357] It is this apocalypse within normality that escapes our understanding, according to Friedlander. While Krymov is enslaved by Communist eschatological time, Sofya Osipovna is engulfed by the apocalyptic time of the Holocaust. Both characters stand outside the projected future of the Nazi State and the Soviet Union and therefore both are expelled. However, by focusing their vision on their personal time, a time that belongs to their specific lives, they are able to remain free under slavery.

[355] Ibid., p. 397.
[356] On trauma and the Holocaust as a Post-Apocalyptic space see James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
[357] Saul Friedlander, "The Shoah in Present Historical Consciousness", in *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination,* ed. by Michael L. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 276-290 (p. 282).

Hearing other people suggest that they will be working in the camps, Sofya Osipovna knows that people are only fooling themselves and that all that awaits them is death. Her time in the wagon is punctuated with glimpses of other people's experiences. People's life stories are inserted as short chapters, focusing primarily on their experiences prior to arrest. These digressions in the narrative suggest how many more similar and simple lives have been destroyed and show the small moments of life that stand against the grand historical time. The inexorable movement of the railway carriage towards the camp and death is contrasted with the long and meaningful lives that each of them carries within themselves. The amount of time spent in the carriage is not only unknown and uncertain, but it is also leading to an end of time.

Like the other characters in the carriage Sofya Osipovna ponders the past: "что было прежде".[358] It is as if they all live two lives simultaneously, one in the past and one in the present. There is no future. The treatment of the people as less than human, coupled with the contrast between a rich past and a non-existent future, destroys their humanity. The destabilisation of character that Sofya Osipovna experiences is reflected throughout the carriage: "Главное изменение в людях состояло в том, что у них ослабевало чувство своей особой натуры, личности и силилось, росло чувство судьбы."[359] Identity seems to be the opposite of fate. Here fate designates an end of time and therefore an end to self. The only way in which the characters combat that is by remembering life and through that, their identities. In a chapter placed within Sofya Osipovna's story, the narrator asserts that the true nature of man is a yearning for freedom and the totalitarian state wins when this is lost.[360] This freedom can be attained by remaining human rather than appropriating the identity of "enemy" or "victim" that the state ascribes to the individual. People's remembrance of their lives and identities thus becomes a small act of defiance and freedom in slave-like

[358] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 138.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Ibid., p. 152.

circumstances. Whether Grossman believed this truly happened or not is impossible to assert, yet, he believed that it was a possibility.

Sofya Osipovna battles with this lack of human identity and attempts to regain it through referring to herself as "*Sonechka, Son'ka, Sofa, Sofya Osipovna Levinton*".[361] The multiple diminutives of her name show the multiple aspects of her identity and the tenuous connection of her name to herself. All these names do not get to the core of who Sofya really is; they are all different aspects of her, but they also invoke all the different people in her life who have called her by these names, expanding this moment out to her whole life. It is the *idem* identity that she is considering. This aspect of her is separated from her *ipse* identity, which remains whole. The two aspects of her identity, according to Ricoeur, have separated and she sees her identity from both within herself and without. The trauma that she is experiencing has damaged her sense of self and she now sees her past in fragments that compete for primacy. "Кто же действительно, по-настоящему – я, я, я? – думала Софья Осиповна. – Та куцая, сопливая, которая боялась папы и бабушки, или та толстая, вспыльчивая, со шпалами на вороте, или вот эта, пархатая, вшивая?"[362] This search for the real self is an attempt by Sofya Osipovna to find a way of relating to the trauma that she is experiencing, whether she is what her circumstances make her, or something beyond. In finding a coherent narrative about her past, Sofya Osipovna hopes to find wholeness.

The little boy David, whom Sofya Osipovna takes care of, also ponders his past in order to relate to the present. While his memories before the war are clear, he barely remembers his life after the start of the war. He is only once disturbed by a recent memory of his aunt strangling her daughter. It is clear that like the other passengers in the carriage, he has repressed the memories of the war, but sometimes they intrude with instant clarity. The memory of hiding in the ghetto with his aunt is fragmented and depicted in the present tense,

[361] Ibid., p. 138.
[362] Ibid.

which suggests that David is unable to reflect on this past; rather, he experiences it as present. The only sentence in the past tense narrates him looking at his aunt and seeing the girl being strangled. His aunt's eyes are not a memory but are visually embedded within his memory: "ему представились эти глаза"[363], rather than "вспомнились". His pre-war memories however, are his safe place: "что было до войны, помнилось подробно, вспоминалось часто. В вагоне он, словно старик, жил прошлым, лелеял и любил его."[364] The contrast between his traumatic memory, which is represented as a fragmented visual experience, and the pre-war memory, which is remembered and cherished shows the break in the experience of time and identity that trauma causes. The characterisation of David as an old man stands in stark contrast to the fact that David is actually a young boy. As is suggested below, David understands death as only a child or philosopher can. This combination of youth and old age challenges linear perception of time as it embraces both the beginning and the end of time. The unity of David's life in one moment is similar to the moments that Sofya Osipovna experiences. The moments are depicted as having beginnings and ends in themselves, and are not necessarily in a progressive relation to each other.

In his discussion of a world without a beginning or an end, Frank Kermode explores a "third duration of time" invented by St.Thomas Aquinas, called *aevum*. *Aevum* is "neither temporal nor eternal": it is "participating in both the temporal and eternal. It does not abolish time or spatialize it; it co-exists with time, and is a mode in which things can be perpetuated without being eternal."[365] This third notion of time is what allows characters in *Zhizn'* to remove themselves from the traumatic circumstances and experience the "heart-breaking miracle of life itself."[366] Kermode links this time to Spenser's poetry and suggests that this time is needed by literature: "delight of change, fear of change; the death of the individual and

[363] Ibid., p. 145.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of An Ending* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 72.
[366] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 403.

the survival of the species; the pains and pleasures of love, the knowledge of light and dark [...] could not be treated without this third thing, a kind of time between time and eternity."[367] It is precisely these contrasting and significant experiences of life that Grossman depicts through the use of a time that is both momentary and eternal. Grossman not only creates a sense of freedom through this time, but also allows his characters to feel free through these moments. They are perfectly aware of stepping outside time into a moment of clarity, and they see these moments as highly personal.

These moments are particularly present in both Krymov's and Sofya Osipovna's experience of time through music. As the narrator remarks: "Никто так не чувствует музыку, как те, кто изведал лагерь и тюрьму, кто идет на смерть. Музыка, коснувшись гибнущего, вдруг возрождает в душе его не мысли, не надежды, а лишь одно слепое, пронзительное чудо жизни."[368] Music unites all time into one moment, an experience that is outside of time. There is a clear contrast, and almost a contradiction, in the fact that music heard by a person close to death actually gives birth to a sense of wonder about life. The power of wonder over life when faced with death is not necessarily positive, but it does direct the attention away from destruction and towards an appreciation of life. This dual emphasis on death and life embraced in one moment also paradoxically creates a silence in the text. While music gives birth to this moment, the moment itself is silent as one is overwhelmed with the gravity and wonder of this perception. There is a further contrast between sound and time, reflected in the duration of time that music needs/takes and the brief moment of epiphany to which it gives birth.

The realisation of the wonder of life is stripped of its positive connotations by being surrounded by words such as *slepoe* and *pronzitel'noe*. The feeling itself lies outside representation, as it is neither a hope nor a thought. The narrator suggests that there is

[367] Kermode, *The Sense of An Ending*, p. 80.
[368] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 403.

something inherently unrepresentable about not only a traumatic moment, but also the experience of life itself. The union of opposite emotions is a motif that runs throughout *Zhizn'*. The narrator does not exclude one emotion to the detriment of others; both the positive and the negative coexist. This stands in direct contrast to trauma theory, where the shattering event of trauma gains primacy over all other experiences.

Using free indirect discourse, the narrator's and Sofya Osipovna's voices merge. Her reflections about her life fuse with the narrator's wonder about life. Music reminds Sofya Osipovna of her youth when she used to listen to this music and feel excitement over her future, in this case music has deceived her as she has no future, only a past. Instead of admitting to being a doctor and joining the prisoners who are saved from death, she decides to stay with David. Having made a choice to die restores a sense of self to Sofya Osipovna. She and David are both clearly aware of the fact that they are moving towards death. Although Sofya Osipovna suggests that the feeling that music instils in her cannot be shared with anyone, she and David experience a similar reaction. Both experience a union of all aspects of their past:

> Чудо отдельного, особого человека, того, в чьем сознании, в чьем подсознании собрано все хорошее и все плохое, смешное, милое, стыдное, жалкое, застенчивое, ласковое, робкое, удивленное, что было от детства до старости, – слитое, соединенное в немом и тайном одиноком чувстве одной своей жизни.[369]

And,

> И страх перед картинкой, где козленок не замечает волчьей тени между стволами елей, и синеглазые головы убитых телят на базаре, и мертвая

[369] Ibid., pp. 405-406.

> бабушка, и задушенная девочка Ревекки Бухман, и первый безотчетный ночной страх, заставлявший его отчаянно кричать и звать мать. [370]

Both experiences are narrated in a quick tempo to show the overwhelming impact of these emotions. While Sofya Osipovna's experience consists of emotions towards experiences, David's perception relates to specific memories. David focuses on all the events that have instilled fear in him throughout his life, some of which are silly, and some horrific. It is interesting that the traumatic experience of the strangling and his childish memories all blend into one. The trauma does not create a break here, but is part of a whole past. The past depiction of David's memory of the strangled girl shows it in traumatic terms. However, it has the potential to be integrated into a memory of the past.

The moments of clarity that mark Sofya Osipovna's experience of the end of time create a sense of freedom in slave-like circumstances. Through these moments Sofya Osipovna is able to unite with herself, the *ipse* identity that stays the same throughout time. Although she is ascribed a new identity, that of a Jew and an enemy, she escapes this attempt at slavery by connecting to time. The third dimension of time that Kermode describes functions in *Zhizn'* both as a narrative strategy and a sense of time perceived by characters themselves. By experiencing these moments of time, through music in particular, Sofya Osipovna escapes the trauma of the present. This *aevum* time also allows the narrator to unite opposite emotions. However, this union leads ultimately to a traumatic silence.

Sofya Osipovna's experiences of time and music unite a variety of opposite emotions.

> Все, казалось, преобразилось, все соединилось в единстве, все рассыпанное, – дом , мир, детство, дорога, стук колес, жажда, страх и этот вставший в тумане город, эта тусклая красная заря, все вдруг

[370] Ibid., p. 406.

соединилось – не в памяти, не в картине, а в слепом, горячем, томящем чувстве прожитой жизни.[371]

The combination of all the various and contradictory emotions seem to cancel each other out. These realisations are perceived as neither memory nor image, therefore they are absent to representation. The only thing remaining is a heart-breaking feeling, which leads to silence.

Although music allows the characters an access to their specific selves, and reminds them of whom they are or once were, it is also a form of torture. It can neither save the characters, nor numb them to their present experiences: "Вокруг была одна лишь музыка, за которую нельзя было спрятаться, за которую нельзя было схватиться, об которую нельзя было разбить себе голову."[372] There is an escalation in David's desperation, as it moves from the natural need to hide, to the extreme desire to bash his head. This variety of emotions shows the space that he has traversed as a little boy, from a scared child to a suicidal being. This trauma is highlighted by music, which brings to the fore the contrast of the long and varied lives of people to the end of time, and the lack of future.

The chapter itself, like the progress of the people into a gas chamber, is very slow, as the narrator focuses on the surroundings rather than movement. As people enter the gas chamber their movements slow down completely and sound becomes muffled. As the narrator explains: "действие было бессмысленно – оно направлено к будущему, а в газовой камере будущего не было".[373] Sofya Osipovna's final thought is that she has finally become a mother: she has wilfully changed her identity from a doctor to a mother. She does not die as a victim, but as a mother. In this way Grossman suggests that it is possible to remain human in inhuman conditions. In her final moments of life, her thoughts go out to the reader: "в ее сердце еще была жизнь: оно сжималось, болело, жалело вас, живых и мертвых

[371] Ibid., p. 403.
[372] Ibid., p. 406.
[373] Ibid., p. 413.

людей".[374] The use of *vas* breaks with the fictional narrative. Suddenly, the reader is implied in the text. Furthermore, *vas* includes both the dead and the living, which extends her thoughts beyond the reader and moves to a metaphysical level. All time converges. By breaking the fictional barrier and bringing together fiction and reality Grossman highlights fiction's limits in representing this catastrophe. Fiction seems to fail here; it cannot contain the awful reality and the many implications of the Holocaust. Only by bringing the reader into the text and into the gas chamber can the Holocaust begin to be witnessed.

3.5 *Present Past*

Like Sofia Osipovna and Krymov, great historical events come to define Liudmila's identity as a mother. This identity crisis, or trauma, is depicted by a fragmented temporality as Liudmila attempts to reconcile the past and the present. Whilst Sofya Osipovna and Krymov are confronted by a death and an end of time, Liudmila lives in a present that lacks any future and is possessed by the past. Her life is in the past, whilst the present is death. Time thus only moves backward to where life is, and the present lacks any time. After her son Tolia dies, Liudmila is no longer interested in life as her life only has a meaning in relation to Tolia. This close relationship of mother and son is already present in *Za pravoe delo*. Liudmila is introduced as a rather stern woman, and she is not perceived by other characters as one of Aleksandra Vladimirovna Shaposhnikova's daughters, but rather as her sister, suggesting an early disruption to her familial identity. This division between her and her sisters indicates that her identity is constructed outside her family ties and perhaps against them, something that affects her after Tolia's death, as shown below. After a brief and unhappy marriage to Abarchuk, Liudmila meets Viktor Shtrum and has her second child Nadia with him. However, she always feels that her connection to Tolia is special and that no one understands this

[374] Ibid., p. 414.

relationship. This connection between her and her son is echoed in Shtrum's relation to his mother. Although this should bring the couple closer together, Liudmila feels that Shtrum is unkind to Tolia, and Shtrum in turn resents Liudmila for not liking his mother.

The Shtrum family household is at the centre of both *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*, arguably more so in the latter. Liudmila and Tolia's close relationship is established early on in the narrative. In *ZPD* she loves her son for all his faults, rather than his merits, showing the all-encompassing nature of a mother's love. We meet Tolia in *ZPD* as he is on his way to the front. Liudmila is depicted as the self-sacrificing mother concerned for her son's fate:

> Ночью Людмила Николаевна часто просыпалась и лежала охваченная мыслями о детях, страстным желанием быть с сыном рядом, прикрыть его от опасности своим телом, копать для него день и ночь глубокие окопы в камне, в глине, но она знала — это невозможно.[375]

Liudmila has a strong need to be physically close to Tolia. Her body provides shelter and relief to him as she imagines protecting him and digging trenches for him day and night, erasing both time and self. Even her sleep is given up to thoughts of Tolia. The night-time becomes the space and time within which Liudmila thinks and imagines herself to be with Tolia. His absence demands its own time – a time in which it can be erased and afford Liudmila an alternative to reality. This becomes particularly apparent after his death.

Whilst Liudmila is worrying about Tolia, only the reader finds out that he is in fact injured in battle. This is the final episode of *ZPD* relating to the Shtrum family and Tolia, so by the end of part one of Grossman's novels the reader anticipates the grief that Tolia's injury is going to bring Liudmila. *Zhizn'* introduces the narrative of Liudmila and Viktor Shtrum through a reference to Tolia: "Писем от Толи не было..."[376] The chapter has a circular composition where the absence of his letters opens and ends the chapter, like the circularity of

[375] Ibid., p. 111.
[376] Ibid., p. 43.

the chapter on Krymov's interrogation. Here however, the circularity contains Liudmila's feelings towards Tolia and highlights the constant return of thoughts about him, rather than containing disintegration. Everything in Liudmila's life only matters in its relation to Tolia: "Для нее мир был в Толе, для них Толя был лишь частью мира."[377] The chapter's circularity reinstates this as it represents Liudmila's world, which is encompassed by thoughts of Tolia, yet, the chapter is part of the grand narrative of the novel and is thus "only a part" of the whole. In a way, the above statement recalls Krymov's relationship to Communism in *ZPD* where his life is defined by Communism. This emphasis on the relationship of the self to the other is what makes both characters' identities fragile. If the thing to which they cling to is removed, their identities become endangered. Even Liudmila's friendship with Maria Ivanovna depends on the fact that Maria Ivanovna understands her love for Tolia, and with her she can talk more openly about him. This obsessive motherly love gains a negative undertone as it stands in contrast with Liudmila's bad relationships with almost all other characters, including her own mother. However, her harsh nature does not detract from the suffering caused by her son's death.

While Aleksandra Vladimirovna loses her daughter Marusia in *ZPD*, Shtrum notes: "гибель дочери, потрясшая все ее существо, не вызывала в ней душевной подавленности и слабости"[378], Liudmila on the other hand is completely destroyed by her son's death. The arrival of a letter notifying her of Tolia's injury is placed directly after a chapter devoted to Anna Semenovna's letter to Shtrum. This highlights the connection between the two mothers, and shows the impact of the great epic time of war onto the personal time of the people. Both letters bring the past into the present and define it. Anna Semenovna's letter reminds Shtrum of his identity as a Jew. For Liudmila however, the letter and her son's death redefine her identity as Tolia's mother and protector.

[377] Ibid., p. 47.
[378] Ibid., p. 417.

Upon receiving the letter Liudmila travels to Saratov to the hospital where her son is, but finds she has arrived too late. After visiting the hospital and shocking the staff with her calmness, she is taken to Tolia's grave where she spends the night. Again, night becomes the time when she can live with Tolia. It is during this night that her grief finds outlet in madness. Reality and fantasy become confused, and she is unable to tell her location both within time and space. The chapter is fragmented and even the reader is disoriented as Liudmila's grief is interspersed with her memories of Tolia, mixing the past and the present, creating a fragmented temporality. "Она забылась, в полусне продолжала говорить с сыном, упрекала его за то, что письма его такие короткие."[379] Liudmila's grief and its effects upon her fit the definition of trauma as something that is simultaneously known and unknown. She is shown to be unable to understand the trauma that she is experiencing, as she escapes it through fantasy and dreams. Liudmila battles with time to regain a moment of the past and bring Tolia back to life. This sense of time can be connected to "traumatic time" where the present is constantly haunted by the past. In Liudmila's case however, the present becomes the traumatic moment that is haunted by a past life. Liudmila refuses to incorporate a traumatic present by escaping into the past.

Upon finding her son's grave, Liudmila, rather than acknowledging his death, feels as if she has finally found Tolia and is reunited with him: "Так кошка, найдя своего мертвого котёнка, радуется, облизывает его."[380] The world surrounding Liudmila is instantly emptied of life and she feels surrounded by silence.

> Казалось, небо стало какое-то безвоздушное, словно откачали из него воздух, и над головой стояла наполненная сухой пылью пустота. А беззвучный могучий насос, откачавший из неба воздух, все работал, работал, и уже не стало для Людмилы не только неба, но и не стало

[379] Ibid., p. 107.
[380] Ibid.

> веры и надежды, – в огромной безвоздушной пустоте остался лишь маленький, в серых смерзшихся комьях, холм земли.[381]

These surroundings reflect her inner state and create a sense of the unreal, as if a shift is occurring: reality disappears and is replaced simultaneously by both deathly silence and the warm memories of Tolia. Liudmila's life itself has moved into the realm of the dead and of fantasy: "Живое стало неживым. Живым во всем мире был лишь Толя."[382] In her battle with time she not only conjures up vivid images of the past, but also brings Tolia back to life in the present. "Его слезы, огорчения, его хорошие и плохие поступки, оживленные ее отчаянием, существовали, выпуклые, осязаемые. Не воспоминания об ушедшем, а волнения действительной жизни охватили ее."[383] Her relation to the past is not constructed through memory; rather the past repeats itself as present. The small personal memories of the past stand in stark contrast to the vast and deadly movement of history. Life exists in those memories, whilst the traumatic present is an inaccessible moment. Liudmila's need to be physically close, as discussed above, is further exemplified by her sudden nosebleed. The mixture of mud and blood on her clothes and face as she sits by her son's grave make her physically appear more like a wounded soldier and therefore like Tolia during battle.

Every time Liudmila comes close to accepting Tolia's death, such considering informing people about it, a stronger force brings him back to life and her out of life: "И когда чувство тоски стало так невыносимо, что сердце не могло выдержать ее, снова растворилась грань между действительностью и миром, жившим в душе Людмилы, и вечность отступила перед ее любовью."[384] The eternity that represents Tolia's absence and Liudmila's future is moved by her grief so that she can enter and live in the past. This past becomes another eternity in which Tolia is always alive. The blurring of the line between past

[381] Ibid., p. 105.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid., p. 106.
[384] Ibid., p. 107.

and present is on the one hand madness and trauma, but on the other is represented as a natural reaction. "Долгие муки проходит душа, пока годами, иногда десятилетиями, камень за камнем, медленно воздвигает свой могильный холмик, сама в себе приходит к чувству вечной потери, смиряется перед силой произошедшего."[385] The soul itself is seen here to be the locus of the trauma, rather than consciousness, which creates an image of a whole being experiencing trauma, rather than relegating trauma to a specific psychical location. The overcoming of grief and trauma is represented in visual terms and is allowed a long space of time; the narrator does not expect this to be an easy event to deal with. As Ricoeur suggests: "Memory does not only bear on time: it also requires time – a time of mourning."[386]

Liudmila's conception of her own identity as Tolia's mother and protector is ruptured by his eternal absence. By bringing the past back to life can she regain not only him, but also herself. Life itself loses meaning because Tolia is the embodiment of all value. This is akin to Freud's description of the nature of mourning:

> reality testing has revealed that the beloved object no longer exists, and demands that the libido as a whole sever its bonds with that object. An understandable tendency arises to counter this [...] This tendency can become so intense that it leads to a person turning away from reality and holding on to the object through a hallucinatory wish-psychosis.[387]

This "wish-psychosis" colours the rest of Liudmila's life in *Zhizn'*, where all life is drained of value apart from the moments when she thinks of Tolia. This focus on the night as a space in which Tolia is alive suggests that her "wish-psychosis" takes place in a qualitatively different time. In a similar way, Krymov feels the imminence of his arrest because he has been separated from a particularly valuable time. As long as both characters' lives are entwined

[385] Ibid.
[386] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 74.
[387] Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 204.

with what is important, the Revolution or Tolia, they are within time, whereas as soon as this is taken from them they are shown to be battling with time. After Tolia's death Grossman depicts the battle with time in which Liudmila engages. This is a battle for life: to reverse time into the past and bring Tolia back to life.

Liudmila is trapped between two eternities: one that is within her where Tolia is alive, and the other is the reality of eternal loss. It is the act of mourning that allows her to move from the eternity of Tolia's life to the eternity of his loss, building an inner tomb for him. It is between these two "eternities" that Liudmila is trapped for the rest of the novel, in a space that is defined by emptiness. She continues her life as usual, mechanically, but takes no part in it; she has no emotional energy to expend. When Viktor Shtrum points out that he thinks she is ill, her mother Aleksandra points out that "Все мы переживаем горе. Все одинаково и каждый по-своему."[388] This statement echoes the first sentence of *Anna Karenina* that "все счастливые семьи похожи друг на друга, каждая несчастливая семья несчастлива по-своему."[389] Aleksandra Vladimirovna's statement however, is also an example of one of the principal motifs of the novel, that of bringing together opposites. Her statement both unites people and allows for individualism. Both Tolstoi and Grossman engage with the idea of unity, whether it is humanity, nation or family, and both allow a sense of individuality within collective notions. Through this union of opposites Liudmila is able to escape her mourning: "Людмила Николаевна словно соединила в своем сердце все, что казалось несоединимым. [...] И чувство жизни, бывшей единственной радостью человека и страшным горем его, наполнило ее душу."[390] Life returns to Liudmila as sorrow and joy are integrated, because although they seem separate, in fact, they are one and depend on one another. Again, it is the heart and the soul that are the locus of all emotion and thus also traumatic experience. Grossman appears to not think in psychoanalytical terms, which allows

[388] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 109.
[389] Lev Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1978), p. 5.
[390] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 442.

him to explore the "pathos of lived life" and in this life to find freedom.[391] The union of the happiness and sorrow of life resemble the moments experienced by Sofya Osipovna, where these contradictory terms cancel each other out creating a commemorative silence. Liudmila's soul is filled with this ache of life, which both allows her to leave her trauma behind but also to revere it through this silence. Her trauma has moved from interrupting the present with the past, to being integrated as a memory. The overcoming of trauma is not a betrayal of it but a silent commemoration.

3.6 *Time as space between freedom and slavery*

While *Za pravoe delo* is largely concerned with a specific event and the specific consequences of that event, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* explores universal concepts and lessons to be learned from the traumatic events of the twentieth century. The two novels thus have different focus, which is seen in the structure of the works: while *ZPD* is interspersed with chapters on the meetings at StalGRES, *Zhizn'* includes numerous chapters on the nature of good and evil, freedom and slavery. The censorship issues that Grossman faced doubtless affected this. Both novels were a commemoration of the battles of the Second World War and the people that lost their loved ones and their own lives in this war. Grossman focuses on the impact that these events had on the people, putting the individual at the centre of historical development. Making the individual the centre of his investigation allows Grossman to question the nature of mankind and search for an understanding of the past.

Freedom and slavery are depicted as the two forces that affect the way an individual acts and perceives himself/herself. Freedom is associated with life, and slavery with death, one with time and the other with the end of time. Krymov, Sofya Osipovna and Liudmila all find themselves battling with time to remain free and alive. However, although the narrator

[391] Shklovskii, *Litsom*, p. 9.

states in *Zhizn'*: "человек умирает и переходит из мира свободы в царство рабства"[392], Sofya Osipovna's case challenges this statement as she is able to remain free in her soul, despite being a slave in her body. Contradictions such as this are characteristic of Grossman. In his article focusing on "V gorode Berdicheve", Bit-Yunan highlights the contradictions in this story that made it hard for critics to define it.[393] These contradictions on the one hand allow Grossman to explore various subjects without defining them, and on the other hand allow the reader a freedom of thought, a space in which to think for him- or herself. Freedom thus exists not only as a subject in the novel but is also a philosophy that permeates its structure. For the characters, freedom exists in an ability to remain free by moving outside the official time and identity attributed to them. Time, and the meaning ascribed to it, places characters between freedom and slavery and allows a choice between the two.

Grossman draws no clear conclusions at the end of the two novels. Although he presents theoretical chapters, he does not present these as final, as perhaps Tolstoi does in his epilogue to *Voina i mir*. This choice to leave *Zhizn'* open-ended encourages the reader to question the past rather than be provided with answers. By contrasting the characters' fates with the theoretical chapters he suggests that these are only a beginning for an exploration of the past. The lack of clear answers is represented in the novel by the union of opposites, a motif that runs through the entire novel. This is particularly evident in some of the last passages of the novel, where Aleksandra Vladimirovna surveys the damage done to Stalingrad. The city is a physical representation of the characters' lives and fates, and is a springboard for Aleksandra to draw some final, but open-ended, conclusions.

> Вот и она, старуха, живет и все ждет хорошего, и верит, и боится зла, и полна тревоги за жизнь живущих, и не отличает от них тех, что умерли, стоит и смотрит на развалины своего дома, и любуется весенним

[392] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 414.
[393] Bit-Yunan, "O predelakh dopustimogo".

> небом, и даже не знает того, что любуется им, стоит и спрашивает себя, почему смутно будущее любимых ею людей, почему столько ошибок в их жизни, и не замечает, что в этой неясности, в этом тумане, горе и путанице и есть ответ, и ясность, и надежда, и что она знает, понимает всей своей душой смысл жизни, выпавшей ей и ее близким, и что хотя ни она и никто из них не скажет, что ждет их, и хотя они знают, что в страшное время человек уж не кузнец своего счастья и мировой судьбе дано право миловать и казнить, возносить к славе и погружать в нужду, и обращать в лагерную пыль, но не дано мировой судьбе, и року истории, и року государственного гнева, и славе, и бесславию битв изменить тех, кто называется людьми, и ждет ли их слава за труд или одиночество, отчаяние и нужда, лагерь и казнь, они проживут людьми и умрут людьми, а те, что погибли, сумели умереть людьми, – и в том их вечная горькая людская победа над всем величественным и нечеловеческим, что было и будет в мире, что приходит и уходит.[394]

The impressions that Aleksandra Vladimirovna relates are an attempt not only to unite all the fragments that war has created, but also to unite the contradictory and fragmentary nature of human beings. Stylistically it is also a union of various ideas and clauses within one long sentence. It is a representation of the novel as a whole, which consists of various characters, strands and themes all united into one. Aleksandra sees no difference between the dead and the living, and like Sofia Osipovna she unites them, granting immortality to all that have lived. It is not the pathological clinging onto life but an immortality bestowed upon the dead through memory. Garrard comments on this passage by linking it to passages in the Old Testament, and concludes: "indeed, 'time and chance' could well have suggested the title of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*."[395] What Aleksandra Vladimirovna's thoughts further highlight is the

[394] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 644.
[395] Garrard, "Stepsons", p. 345.

relationship between the great historical time that can be connected to fate and violence, and the small private time that is able to survive under this repression. Through remaining human through time, the individual can remain free under the pressures of history.

Chapter 4

The Living and the Dead: Uncanny Terror in Iurii Dombrovskii's *Khranitel' drevnostei* and *Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei*

Iurii Dombrovskii's novels *Khranitel' drevnostei* (*The Keeper of Antiquities,* 1964) and *Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei* (*The Faculty of Useless Things*, 1988) depict daily life during the height of the Stalinist terror in 1937. Both works are set in Alma-Ata and follow the imminent arrest and interrogation of the hero, Zybin. However, the narrative extends beyond the hero to include several other characters and digressions about art, archaeology and history. While the first novel *Khranitel'* was published in 1964, the sequel was never published in the Soviet Union during Dombrovskii's lifetime, and was only published under Gorbachev in 1988. *Fakul'tet* is the sequel to *Khranitel',* and the novels are often treated as parts of the same book. Peter Doyle points out however, that there are "several reasons why it seems preferable to regard the works as a 'dilogy', that is as two separate and independent, although closely related, novels."[396] The reasons for this, Doyle suggests, include their different publishing and writing circumstances. He also suggests that the narrative style and tone of the novels are different. Despite the differences between the two novels, however, there are also textual echoes between the two texts that make a comparative analysis appropriate. The repetition of imagery in the two novels contributes to a sense of unity of two novels that are otherwise multilayered and fragmented. Dombrovskii often uses recurring imagery to create an unsettling atmosphere in his novels; this is not only evident in the two works under consideration, but also in *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom*, where the images of snakes

[396] Doyle, *Dombrovskii,* p. 107.

and skulls permeate the text.[397] In *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* he adopts similar imagery: snakes, apples, skulls, dead bodies, and death permeate the novels and create a sense of dread. Although the imagery is unsettling in itself, it is its repetition that heightens its disturbing nature.

In *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* Dombrovskii creates a literary universe that reflects the terror of 1937, where language became almost hyper-literal, as it defined the identity, reality and fate of many people.[398] There is a battle in the novels between the monological language of the state and the double-voiced and slippery images and metaphors of the novels.[399] The novels thus both represent and defy the "linguistic terror" of 1937. In many ways, the novel depicts the terror indirectly, by adapting images that seem to have little to do with the terror itself. The central theme of archaeology seems to be of little relevance to the Stalinist purges, but it becomes a central concern for NKVD agents and therefore acts as an expression of the terror. The images related to archaeology, such as dead bodies, are repetitive and often ambiguous as they suggest death on several levels, both in the past and in the present under the hands of NKVD. The images discussed here all refer to the concepts of death and dying; however, they are also "made strange" and dissociated from their single meaning allowing for creative freedom to exist. Viktor Shklovskii suggests that this form of "estrangement" is prevalent in literature – a technique that makes a common image seem both new and unfamiliar allowing the reader to perceive something in a new and unexpected way. This approach may also create an uncomfortable feeling in the reader.[400] This estrangement of imagery is also connected to the feeling of the uncanny, where something that is familiar becomes strange. This technique relates not only to the language of the novel, and therefore

[397] As discussed in Chapter 2.3.
[398] On the importance of language and Soviet discourse under Stalin, see: Fitzpatrick, "Making a Self"; Halfin, *Language and Revolution*; Halfin, *Terror*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.
[399] The terms "monologic" and "double-voiced" are used as Mikhail Bakhtin interprets them. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984).
[400] Viktor Shklovskii, *Theory of Prose* (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), pp. 1-15.

the experience for the reader, but to the experience for the characters, as their reality is defined by an ideological view of reality. Estrangement and the uncanny thus both challenge the characters' and the reader's experience of "reality", showing how the terror under Stalin unsettled experience itself.

Death pervades the novels. It is present on the one hand in the fear of dying that haunts the characters and, on the other hand, in the recurring imagery of dead bodies. The ambiguous status of death in the novels overthrows the stable language of the Soviet authorities and opens up a space where language and meaning become open to new interpretations. Reality itself becomes fictional. This heightening of the fictional mode within the novel in turn highlights the unreal nature of life during the Great Terror.

4.1 *Uncanny Disruptions*

Khranitel' was published in 1964 and was instantly popular with both critics and readers; as Dombrovskii received many letters admiring his work.[401] However, his success was quickly muted and, as Anna Berzer suggests, he was sentenced to a public silence by the critics; and in the end only one review appeared in a provincial newspaper.[402] Although there was a lenient atmosphere towards literature in the 1960s under Khrushchev's rule, which allowed for the publication of both Dombrovskii's novel and Solzhenitsyn's *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*), this did not last long enough to secure Dombrovskii any great public success. Conversely, the novel gained popularity in the West, where it was translated into several languages and where critics were eager to meet Dombrovskii himself. Unsurprisingly, Dombrovskii did not receive a visa to travel abroad and thus never had the chance to earn the money and fame that were offered to him there. Although he did not believe there was any real possibility of publishing the sequel *Fakul'tet*

[401] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 41.
[402] Anna Berzer, "Khranitel' ognia", in *Gontsy*, ed. by I. Dombrovskii (Moscow: MIK, 2005), pp. 274-298.

in the Soviet Union, he continued writing it for eleven years, seeing it as his most important work. Following his success with readers, Tvardovskii even provided Dombrovskii with a contract and an advance for this sequel. However, like the suggested 250 year ban on Grossman's *Zhizn' i sud'ba*[403], Dombrovskii thought that the sequel – *Fakul'tet* – would only be publishable by the year 2000. Many of his friends witnessed him reading chapters of it, so his writing was not completely secret; however, he was very aware that he was writing for the future. The novel was finally published in 1978 in France and in *Novyi mir* in 1988. The conditions under which Dombrovskii was writing meant that the first novel was heavily censored, while the sequel remained largely intact and in its original form, as in the case of Grossman's dilogy. Doyle has examined the changes that Dombrovskii made to *Khranitel'* and concludes that: "The end result of the changes made and of the editorial advice Dombrovskii received was generally beneficial" and the changes made the novel "more subtle, consistent, and effective."[404] In contrast, *Fakul'tet* is less subtle and more explicit, in for example its depictions of the methods used by NKVD during interrogations. However, the novel is subtle on another level. Although it depicts the fear that led people to commit morally reprehensible acts, it does not provide the reader with any judgement of these actions. As Leona Toker suggests: "His novels probe the combination of humanness and brutality not only in the NKVD interrogators but also, albeit in a different proportion, in most of the characters – none can cast the first stone. Treacherousness is endemic: this is, perhaps, the main unsolved mystery in the novel."[405] Toker highlights the mysteriousness of Dombrovskii's novel, the messages being hidden within the narrative itself. As Dombrovskii

[403] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 268.
[404] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 129.
[405] Toker, *Return From the Archipelago*, p. 218.

himself explains: “не надо никогда ничему учить читателя, что-то ему там растолковывать. Он умный, он сам поймет.”[406].

Curiously, Dombrovskii did not focus on his experiences in the camps in his novels, despite having nearly died in Kolyma. One of the great changes made to *Khranitel’* by the censors was the removal of two sections describing the Keeper’s experiences in the camps: “Iz zapisok Zybina” and “Istoriia nemetskogo konsula”. From these excerpts it is evident that Dombrovskii wanted to include the camps, even if marginally. Evgenii Tsvetkov describes the duality of Dombrovskii’s feelings towards the camps: that on the one hand, he could not get used to Soviet life and often seemed to prefer the “freedom” of the camp, and on the other hand, he hated the camps and was aware of having been close to death.[407] In his fictional writing, Dombrovskii decided to focus on the period preceding the arrest. It is in fact life in apparent freedom that is depicted as terrifying, perhaps for the reason suggested by Tzvetkov; the fear that Dombrovskii depicts in his novels is of arrest, the camps and possible death there, so although they are not depicted, they are still present through this pervasive fear.

In *Khranitel’* and *Fakul’tet* Dombrovskii depicts the terror that permeated Soviet society in the 1930s as both palpable and hidden. This complex nature of the terror can be linked to the narrative technique of the uncanny, which has similar qualities. The uncanny figures in the novel both on the level of plot and as a narrative tool affecting the reader. A division can be established between the way in which language creates a sense of the uncanny in the reader, and the sense of the uncanny that resides within the characters themselves. This division is not a simple one. An example is the uncanniness that is achieved through a recurrence of an image: on the one hand, a character can experience déjà vu and have a sense of the uncanny, and on the other hand, there may be repetitions of images in the text that seem like a déjà vu to the reader but are hidden from the characters. In some ways, the uncanny

[406] Dombrovskii, “Pis’mo Sergeiu Antonovu”, in Iurii Dombrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Terra, 1992), vol. (6), p. 328.
[407] Evgenii Tsvetkov, "Khranitel' drevnostei", *Vremia i my*, 30 (1978), pp. 114-124.

brings the reader and the characters closer together, as they attempt to understand what it is about a situation that makes it uncanny and what the uncanny may be a symptom of.

The peculiarity of the concept of the uncanny is that it relates to both psychology and language (or even art). This is evident in Freud's analysis, where he suggests that his investigation moves in the realm of aesthetics, and at the same time explains that this aesthetic relates to "the qualities of our feelings".[408] Nicholas Royle further qualifies this statement by suggesting that the uncanny is connected to both psychoanalysis and deconstruction, and these "can be described as uncanny modes of thinking, uncanny discourses". [409] The concept of the "uncanny" thus represents the very thing it attempts to define, it is many things at once, and cannot be explained in one phrase. The "quality of feeling" that is engendered by the uncanny is a sense of fear and dread: "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar."[410] The uncanny in its semantic content is already a commingling of the homely and the familiar (the "canny"), and the new and unfamiliar. In Shklovskii's terms it is an estrangement of the familiar, and can be connected to the notion of dissociation that occurs within traumatised individuals.[411] The notion of traumatic dissociation, for example, may lead to a sense of the uncanny as the person starts acting in contradiction to what is expected, at the same time as seemingly being the same. Similarly, dissociation can be applied to the images in the novel that are dissociated or estranged from their meaning, as when a snake in the grass becomes a portent of arrest and possible death. Zybin, compared to Tamara Dolidze and Kornilov, shows signs of traumatic dissociation whilst in prison. However, towards the end of the novel he manages to regain his sanity and wholeness and remains unbroken by traumatic experience.

[408] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 123.
[409] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 24.
[410] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 124.
[411] Bessel A. Van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth, *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (New York; London: Guilford Press, 1996), p. 53.

Freud also points out that the word *heimlich* in German also connotes the notion of "secrecy", of something hidden that comes to light.[412] Both of these aspects of the uncanny can be connected to the terror as depicted by Dombrovskii. The terror is relatively common to life in 1930s, but is also something that is secret and not overtly exposed to society, and comes to light indirectly.

Freud points out several aspects that make something uncanny. Through his analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Sand Man", a truly uncanny story according to Freud, he isolates the literary devices that make a narrative uncanny. One of these is the inability to tell whether "something is animate or inanimate, and whether the lifeless bears an excessive likeness to the living".[413] This creates an intellectual uncertainty as to what is experienced within either the reader or the characters, or indeed both, and thus creates an uncanny feeling. Royle defines this as a crisis of the proper and natural.[414] Freud further states that the uncanny is often connected to death and dead bodies, which in turn may suggest the commingling of the animate and inanimate. As Freud concludes: "To many people the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts."[415] These aspects of the uncanny relate to the notion of haunting, of a return of something that has been repressed: "among those things that are felt to be frightening there must be one group in which it can be shown that that the frightening element is something that has been repressed and now returns."[416] For the characters in Dombrovskii's novels, however, the dead are not always uncanny, but are a habitual part of their archaeological work. For the reader, on the other hand, the constant repetition of the imagery of dead bodies and its habitual status in the novels creates an uncanny feeling. The repetitions within the text heighten the feeling of uncanniness: "the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial

[412] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 148.
[413] Ibid., p. 141.
[414] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.
[415] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 148.
[416] Ibid., p. 147.

features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations."[417] This recurrence of imagery is described by Freud as being both a return of the repressed and a *compulsion to repeat*, which is connected to instinctual impulses. The recurrence of imagery is prevalent in Dombrovskii's novels and is connected to imagery of death – creating a sense of a death drive within the texts. This death drive can in turn be connected to the dangerous nature of life under the Stalinist terror, a life that was constantly in the shadow of death. However, as will be shown below, this seemingly frightening and deadly aspect of the novels, is also something connected to the beautiful and the good. As Royle points out, the uncanny can involve "a feeling of something beautiful and at the same time frightening," while "the uncanny is never far from something comic".[418] Both aspects are to be found in abundance in the works under consideration here.

The notions of the return of the repressed and the compulsion to repeat are not only to be found in their relation to the uncanny but also in trauma theory. Of course, this is due to the heavy influence of Freud; Caruth's theory of trauma in particular is based on Freud's works.[419] However, these theories have been confirmed in studies based on work with traumatised patients in among others Laub's and van der Kolk's work.[420] As an event that evades recognition as it happens, it overwhelms the psyche, and returns to haunt the victim. The repetition of the past may take its expression as a haunting of the repressed memory, or as a compulsion to repeat the circumstances that are associated with that memory. Several scholars of trauma have pointed out its uncanny aspect, but few have explored this in depth.[421] Recently two studies have used the uncanny as a tool in analysing trauma literature. Robert Hemmings' analysis of nostalgia in Siegfried Sassoon's war poetry focuses on two aspects of

[417] Ibid., p. 142.
[418] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.
[419] Caruth, *Unclaimed*.
[420] Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing"; Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, *Traumatic Stress*.
[421] See Caruth, *Unclaimed*; LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*.

the uncanny, the doubling of the self and the repetition of past events, memories and spaces.[422] Eric Kligerman's analysis focuses on aporias in the representation of Holocaust trauma, in particular in the translation of Paul Celan's poetry into visual arts that creates "spaces of the uncanny".[423] Kligerman explains the space of the uncanny thus:

> While the spectator may desire to see the scene of terror and identify with the victim, those artists that utilize the technique of the Holocaustal uncanny subvert any empathic identification through visceral shocks. Such shocks are induced by the techniques reminiscent of Kant's concept of negative representation, but the artist withholds the trauma from the spectator's gaze. Instead, the negative representation functions as the place where the frame of the work opens up and the spectator is led into the shock itself: spectatorial disruption, the loss of sight and orientation, is the moment of anxiety. At the place where the spectator expects to see something, she is taken to the scene of an erasure.[424]

Although Dombrovskii's work depicts the possibility of freedom in inhuman circumstances, he also adapts the "negative representation" outlined above. The terror in *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* is presented precisely as this kind of oblique experience; Dombrovskii leads his readers directly "into the shock itself" by withholding "the trauma [of Stalinist terror] from the spectator's gaze". The main difference is, of course, that Dombrovskii is depicting another trauma that has other connotations and historical implications. In his narrative, Dombrovskii wants the reader to identify with his characters as a way of showing the pervasive nature of Stalinist terror and oppression.

[422] Robert Hemmings, *Modern Nostalgia: Siegfried Sassoon, Trauma and the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
[423] Eric Kligerman, *Sites of the Uncanny: Paul Celan, Specularity and the Visual Arts* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).
[424] Ibid., p. 33.

4.2 *Uncanny freedom*

Although Dombrovskii's novels are steeped in the imagery of death and depict a traumatic era of Russian history, it is not a purely negative depiction. The uncanny itself allows for creative freedom and ambiguity, thereby making the novel as much about freedom as it is about death. As Freud suggests: "This is the fact that an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes, and so forth."[425] In *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* it is this boundary between fantasy and reality that is blurred, for both the reader and the characters. Although this creates a sense of instability and insecurity, it also allows for the images to be estranged from their meaning, creating new interpretations. Death thus becomes not a finality but an ambiguous and "double-voiced" image. By incorporating the uncanny into the very structure and style of the novels, Dombrovskii not only depicts the horrors of 1937 but also shows the possibility of regeneration that creativity affords. As in Bakhtin's carnival, death and regeneration exist side by side.[426]

Both novels are set in the year 1937, as the narrator points out at the end of *Fakul'tet*: "случилась вся эта невеселая история […] в тысяча девятьсот тридцать седьмой недобрый, жаркий и чреватый страшным будущим год."[427] The novels depict daily life under terror, how it is experienced, rather than the political decisions that lead to it. The terror is depicted through the increasing sense of dread, felt both by the characters and the reader. The imagery is both frightening in itself as it relates to death, but also, its recurrence and repetition throughout the text make it uncanny and haunting. There are for example several dead bodies of young women that keep turning up as if by some compulsion. While the

[425] Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 150-151.
[426] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 26.
[427] Iurii Dombrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Terra, 1992), vol. (5), p. 628.

structure of the first novel seems straight-forward, *Fakul'tet* is fragmented in its delivery. Both novels however, are rich in various digressions, allusions and intertextual references – about the historian Castagnier, the architect Zenkov, the artists Khludov and Kalmykov, as well as general reflections on the history of Kazakhstan and Ancient Rome – making both their meaning and structure more complex to decipher. James Woodward in his article on the influence of Stoicism in Dombrovskii's work explains that "we enter a fictional realm which is repeatedly invaded by references and allusions to the ancient poets, tragedians, philosophers and historians."[428] Anisa Zaitseva further explains the archaic structure of *Fakul'tet*:

> В композиции романа просматриваютсся три пространственно-временных и повествовательных пласта: конкретные события в Алма-Ате 1937 года в их естественном движении составляют его реальный сюжет, он раздвинут и углублен разветвленной системой историко-культурных аллюзий и реминисценций, евангельских аналогий, в свете которых схватка Зыбина с государственной машиной получает историко-философское обоснование. Наконец, в романе существует некий общий свод, высота Вселенной, вневременное пространство-время, скрепляющее воедино частную историческую ситуацию с вечностью, человека с человечеством и космосом, оценивающее все шкалой абсолютных величин. Движение романного действия создется одновременным течением всех пластов – историко-культурных, религиозно-мифологических, космических, социально-бытовых, стянутых воедино проблемой свободы и права.[429]

It is this multi-layered effect that allows for the greater themes of the novels to emerge without having to make them explicit. The connection between the various images and

[428] Woodward, "Stoic?", p. 37.
[429] Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, p. 5.

intertextual references create a sense of the uncanny on a thematic level; things remain unsaid but are clearly present. The story of the snake, for example, suggests not only arrest and death but is also connected to biblical imagery and apples, both of which occur throughout the novel connecting the story of the snake to Zybin's future interrogation.

The polyphonic and multi-layered structure of the narrative allows a freedom to emerge under restricted circumstances. The novel thus defies the official narratives not only through its controversial and dangerous subject matter, but through its delivery as well. Ann Komaromi's analysis of the "Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture" discusses the difference in the dissidence of Solzhenitsyn and Siniavskii. "Unlike his coeval Solzhenitsyn, Siniavskii defined his dissidence as aesthetic – his independent action was to write differently. 'In the internal conflict between politics and art, I opted for art and rejected politics,' Siniavskii said."[430] In a similar manner, Dombrovskii challenges the Soviet regime by highlighting the importance of the things that are "useless" through the structure of the novel itself. His narrative shows that polyphony and creativity are necessary parts of human understanding. His novels are thus enacting freedom on both the aesthetic and theoretical level.

This freedom is also evident in the peripheral narration of the subject. As several scholars of the Stalinist era have noted, control over language was essential to the rule of the Soviet empire.[431] Language was both essential to a construction of the self within the public autobiographies and private diaries, as well as within the public depiction of reality. In Dombrovskii's novels this is often expressed as a clash between the official and the personal, the collective and the individual. In his study of the function of official rhetoric, Alexei Yurchak shows that there was a gap between the performative and the constative aspect of

[430] Ann Komaromi, "The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture", *Slavic Review*, 66 (2007), pp. 605-629 (p. 611).
[431] See Fitzpatrick, "Making a Self"; Halfin, *Language and Revolution*; Halfin, *Terror*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

Soviet language, between the form and the meaning.[432] This gap became apparent after Stalin's death, as he was the "master" that defined discourse from outside of itself, "by being presented as standing *outside* ideological discourse and processing *external* knowledge of objective truth, [he] temporarily conceals the contradiction by allowing it 'to appear through himself'."[433] Stalin thus defined the meaning that was attributed to language as he represented true knowledge of history and ideology. Yurchak shows that the gap that appeared after Stalin's death allowed for individuals to act out ideology while at the same time retaining personal freedom to act in contradiction to that ideology. Ideological language became devoid of meaning and allowed freedom. In Dombrovskii's novel, it is precisely the lack of this gap between the performative and the constative that is the problem for many of its characters, Zybin in particular. In one of the famous monologues of *Khranitel'*, Zybin asserts that he wants to be left alone with his historical artefacts and not take part in society.[434] He thus does not want to perform the ideology that is forced upon him, even in the archaeology department. A collective voice replies to Zybin that he cannot hide in history, that history belongs to the state and that the Keeper/Zybin cannot stay in his attic researching the past: "'Чем вздумали отгородиться, пятьдесят пять метров, подумаешь!' Да тебя и десять тысяч не спасут."[435] The narrative is not clear about who is answering Zybin, or what the actual threat is. What it emphasises is that Zybin cannot hide. The terror thus becomes uncanny, something not only unavoidable but also invisible, and hidden within language itself. Zybin has to understand that he can avoid neither performing the rituals of Soviet discourse by hiding, nor the constative aspect of it. To be able to exist autonomously, one has to be aware of this division of discourse, and yet add to it the ability to exist outside it. So, although the gap between the performative and the constative levels of discourse, which Yurchak suggests allowed people

[432] Yurchak, *Everything was forever*, p. 14.
[433] Ibid., p. 10.
[434] Iurii Dombrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Terra, 1992), vol. (4), pp. 175-176. (Henceforth Dombrovskii)
[435] Ibid., p. 176.

to live "*vnye*", did not exist during the Great Terror, Dombrovskii still creates a space where creativity and freedom can exist, by employing a language that stands outside any system.

Freedom and creativity are closely connected in the novel. At the end of *Fakul'tet* the narrator points out that there is such a miracle in the universe as creativity, and it is at the darkest points in human history that this creativity is crucial, as it creates freedom.[436] This becomes explicit in the narrator's focus on the artist Kalmykov and his unorthodox ways. He is depicted as a slightly insane character dressed in a colourful fashion, who presents himself as "Гений 1 ранга Земли и Галактики".[437] Zybin first comes across him at the "Zelenyi bazar" market in Alma-Ata where he is surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, all ready to criticise his art and appearance. The episode is rich in colour and imagery and is reminiscent of Bakhtin's description of the importance of the market for the carnival.[438] Kalmykov's paintings in many ways represent the structure of Dombrovskii's novels. Just as Zybin finds Kalmykov's paintings strange, so is Dombrovskii's novel strange: both bring all the disparate and dissociated elements together into one creative whole. As Woodward points out: "the unity of conception in the work is underpinned by a system of textual 'echoes' which parallel and reinforce the 'echoes' across time."[439] This unity is depicted by Kalmykov as a centre that holds everything in place:

> Точка есть нулевое состояние бесконечного количества концентрических кругов, из которой одни под одним знаком распространяются вокруг круга, а другие под противоположным знаком распространяются от нулевого круга внутрь. Точка может быть и с космос.[440]

[436] Ibid., p. 628.
[437] Ibid., p. 64.
[438] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 2-17, 145-195.
[439]James Woodward, "The "Cosmic" Vision of Iurii Dombrovskii: His Novel "Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei"", *The Modern Language Review*, 87 (1992), pp. 896-908 (p. 905).
[440]Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 35.

Dombrovskii's novel is a representation of this point; it moves both outward and inward. It both shows the inner fragmentation of Zybin's mind (and other characters' as well), but also expands outward to the unity and freedom that history and art affords. Woodward explains this connection thus:

> The novel develops under the same two 'signs', extending outwards from the 'zero circle' of the hero's ordeal while at the same time extending from the same 'circle' inward, and the result is at once a penetrating analysis of the evil experienced by the Soviet people and the representation of this evil, which Dombrovskii regarded as unprecedented in scale, as reflecting a conflict which is timeless and 'cosmic'.[441]

This same principle may be applied to the novel as a whole; while it is permeated with various digressions, it is also held together by one point, its freedom. By making his novel that point which expands inward and outward, Dombrovskii suggests how multiple or even polyphonic narratives create freedom. Furthermore, the cross-references and Kalmykov's paintings both highlight the aspect of timelessness, something Dombrovskii explores through the boundary between life and death in the novels.

4.3 *The Legend of the Boa Constrictor*

The main plot line in *Khranitel'* is the legend of a giant boa constrictor that has escaped a circus and is now crawling along the hills of Alma-Ata. Although the story sounds ridiculous, to the Keeper in particular, it is taken seriously by the newspapers and authorities. The inconsistency between the absurd nature of the story and the serious reaction to it exemplifies the unpredictability of the Great Terror. Seemingly unimportant events can have dire consequences. This dichotomy between the absurd nature of the story and the seriousness attributed to it disturbs not only the Keeper, but also the reader; there are sinister undertones

[441] Woodward, "'Cosmic' Vision", p. 899.

to this story. The uncanny is thus present through the unclear boundary between fact and fiction surrounding the snake, and through the deadly connotations attributed to the snake.

The Keeper explains that things started going wrong around the time he met Rodionov, a peasant demanding that the Keeper uses his finds in the museum, and when he heard the snake legend. As the Keeper notes: "Как-то само собой получилось так, что с приходом его в музей все в моей жизни пошло кувырком."[442] Already here the narrative suggests a shift, and there is a sense that this shift is external and has little to do with anyone's actions: "как-то само собой получилось".[443] So, although it is the authorities' response to the story that cause his life to turn upside down, he suggests that the shift occurred imperceptibly by some unknown force. Suggesting that things happened by themselves adds a ghostly undertone to this seemingly simple event. The Keeper is shown to not be in control of his life.

The Keeper instantly changes his mind, suggesting that it all started at a different point: when he first read the article about the snake called "Индийский гость". At the same time as implying that things happened by themselves, he also draws the reader's attention to the role that the authorities played in the unfolding events. The article, through creating an official version of the story, shows the importance that the authorities place on this story. This article has a profound effect on the Keeper: "только пробежав три странички четкого машинописного текста, я обалдел, онемел и вдруг шагнул прямо за стеклянную дверь, в кабинет редактора."[444] The Keeper's reaction suggests something out of the ordinary; "онемел" and "вдруг шагнул" imply somebody in shock and fear. This reaction unsettles the reader as much as the article unsettles the Keeper, as it suggests that the article means much more than just another narrative. The Keeper concludes that the story is "бред", in itself a "double voiced" word that can both mean delirium and gibberish. However, the Keeper and the editor of the paper seem to speak about the story being "gibberish" however, the Keeper's

[442] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 35.
[443] Ibid.
[444] Ibid.

initial reaction to the article suggests a more sinister connotation. It is as if society has become delirious. The seriousness with which the paper editor approaches something that both he and the Keeper see as gibberish is disturbing. The editor asks the Keeper to investigate whether it is possible for a boa constrictor to survive a winter in Alma-Ata and give him a conclusive answer: "Сами знаете, какое сейчас время, как смотрят на паникеров."[445] The Keeper is thus initiated into a story that seems unbelievable, but is of grave importance. His future answer to the editor's question becomes important because of the time in which he lives; he can either expose people as "panic-raisers," or confirm the unbelievable. Already here, we can see indications that the Keeper's reason and rationality will be challenged throughout the novel. The seriousness of the paper editor and the absurd nature of this myth – the lack of a boundary between fiction and fact – create an uncanny atmosphere that envelops the novel.

The article that the Keeper reads about the snake describes the snake as "молчаливый, таинственный и древний" and "легендарный, библейский зверь поселился в яблочных садах Алатау."[446] The mixture of the unreal, the ancient and the present, suggests that the snake is as if from a different time. The article further comically describes the snake as a cunning animal that hypnotised its keeper and escaped,[447] creating a sense of the fairytale about the snake: its ability to plan an escape makes it half-human and sinister. The reference to the snake as biblical adds another layer of meaning, suggesting that it may lead to someone's downfall, or expulsion, especially since the snake is to be found in an apple orchard. Apples are another recurrent image that is carried throughout both novels. As in the Book of Genesis, apples represent knowledge in both novels; however, knowledge in this case does not necessarily result in a negative expulsion, as in the story of Adam and Eve, as will be discussed below. While the fantastic nature of the story scares the Keeper, it also fascinates

[445] Ibid., p. 38.
[446] Ibid., p. 39.
[447] Ibid.

him and he decides to investigate it by contacting the man who has most recently seen the snake, Potapov.

Arriving at the mountains, the Keeper engages in one of his digressions, this time about the apples, and the fact that Alma-Ata is the "father of apples". He states that these apples are different from any other apple in the world, and if the trees are separated from their land they die.[448] The Keeper shows great sensitivity towards nature in speaking about the apples, and underlines their importance for not only the region, but also for himself. As Woodward suggests, the apples and the snake remind the reader of the role that women play in the Keeper's downfall.[449] He is denounced by Aiupova (the librarian), has an argument with the museum Massovichka and the museum exhibition guide.

> Thus the snake, the apple, and the treacherous female are eventually connected on the basis of the story which functions as another embedded text, adding a new layer of meaning to the hero's "descent".[450]

So, Woodward concludes that like Adam, the Keeper has to abandon his loft at the museum and come down to face the destruction that is happening below. However, apples have a greater importance than just expelling the Keeper from his attic. The connection of apples, the snake and their Biblical implications do not end in *Khranitel'* but are taken up again in *Fakul'tet* (as will be shown in section 4.5), adding unity to a fragmented narrative.

Apples are clearly connected to the snake. Potapov describes the snake as munching on apples and ruining the harvest, and he also points out to the Keeper that snakes do eat apples, as it says so in the Bible.[451] Potapov uses the Bible as the source of "scientific fact", and sees the snake as something real and dangerous because of its animalistic attributes, rather than the importance ascribed to it by Soviet authorities. The snake becomes a construction of fact and

[448] Ibid., p. 126.
[449] Woodward, "'Cosmic' Vision", p. 904.
[450] Ibid., p. 905.
[451] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 133.

fiction: it is seen as a dangerous animal, but also as dangerous because of its biblical connotations. Also, the fact that Potapov confuses its name by calling it "Bova Konstruktor", comically undermines the dangers that the snake represents, and underlines the absurdity of the snake legend.[452] As mentioned above, Royle points out that the uncanny is never far from something comical.[453] It is precisely the mixture of these two contradictory elements, fear and laughter, that create a sense of unease within the reader and make this story of terror uncanny.

The village where Potapov lives is called "Gornyi gigant", a name that suggests something fantastic and also reflects the image of the snake as giant.[454] There are several versions of the snake story, both the official version and the rumours circulating in villages and Alma-Ata. The notion of truth in relation to the snake is highly complicated, as it becomes apparent that it is surrounded by so much fiction that the actual snake loses all importance. The unclear nature of the snake's meaning, and the implications this story has for the people involved, unsettles the environment of the novel. It is only when Potapov mentions the snake ruining the apple harvest and his fear of being bitten by it that an actual fear of the animal itself is manifested. Aptly, the Keeper points out to him that the snake kills by suffocating its victims through constricting them with several circles.[455] Similarly, the fear that surrounds the snake moves closer to the individuals in circles until it nearly strangles them.

The fear that the snake legend breeds primarily has to do with the stories that are told about it, rather than the actual snake. The snake legend represents the terror of 1937, where "truth" loses its meaning and fear is based on an interpretation of reality. As the museum director explains to the Keeper after an argument about truth: "В чем ты прав? В существе

[452] Ibid., p. 132.
[453] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.
[454] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 124.
[455] Ibid., p. 133.

дела? Да, безусловно прав. Но именно в существе, а не в форме."[456] This point represents the problem at the centre of the characters' lives – that what is real and truthful needs to be subordinated to new forms of knowledge and expression. Equally, the snake and its animalistic properties are subordinated to the great legend and myth that has been created about it. Even the director admits that there is probably no snake but "дело по нашим временам совсем не смешное, раз органы заинтересовались...Это ты запомни."[457] The museum director, the editor and the Keeper all realise that the story is absurd and even funny, however, this realisation, this truth, is subordinate to the time in which they live. The external reality imposed by the authorities defines the meaning that can be attributed to the snake. Asking the Keeper to remember this suggests it is a new knowledge and one that is divorced from reason; it is to be learned and not to be found within. Interestingly, the director does not end his train of thought, as shown by the ellipsis; the meaning is implied but not spoken. It is "un" speakable and "un" believable, and the truth is hidden behind the "un".[458] As Freud explains in reference to the uncanny: "The negative prefix *un-* is the indicator of repression."[459] The inability to act, the paralysis that the fear causes is at the core of the terror. This terror is uncanny, as it is something that cannot be spoken of or defined.

The importance of the snake legend gains an even greater significance when Potapov himself is the subject of an article about the snake. Suddenly the focus moves from the snake to the individual; the first ring is tightening. The article focuses on a testimony by Potapov about the existence and size of the snake, most of which he claims are the journalist's exaggerations. Again, the museum director provides the sober voice in this instance as it becomes more and more apparent that Potapov is becoming more scared of the media's focus

[456] Ibid., p. 204.
[457] Ibid., p. 206.
[458] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 24.
[459] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 151.

on the snake and thus, on him.[460] The museum director, in both novels, is depicted as an individual who can move between the two worlds. Toker describes him as "a gifted and kind person, who would rather protect than victimize his associates" and as "one of the most fascinating portrayals of a Stalinist official who interprets the logic of the state terror and identifies with it".[461] In this instance he understands both what the article means for Potapov's future and what it means on an ideological level. He calms Potapov by confirming with him that he actually saw the snake and then advises him to keep to this truth: "И не бойся тогда ничего. Раз есть, так есть. Так всем и говори! А газетчика этого поймай где-нибудь да и..."[462] Again the director does not finish his sentence, the reasoning is left silent; it remains unspoken. The need to tell everyone about the existence of the snake shows the need for truth to be monological in the official realm, but in the private it is more fluid and this is why the journalist should be "approached". It is also clear that the director is aware of the fear that this article instils in Potapov, and it is transferred to the director himself who cannot express the ending of his sentence.

It becomes clear that it is the newspapers that are able to decide what is real and what is not. Potapov's testimony is made into a fiction, and now he is responsible for the fiction that has been created. The boundary between the fiction that surrounds the snake and the reality of Potapov's assertions has been blurred; reality becomes fictional. This lack of boundaries is uncanny and in turn makes it hard for the characters to navigate in this world and to speak confidently about their own experiences. This is further emphasised by the start of the next chapter: "Шли дни, и что-то очень странное начало происходить в музее. Я не сразу даже уловил, что же именно."[463] While the previous chapter ends with an unfinished sentence (director's comment to Potapov), the next begins with this unsettling atmosphere,

[460] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, pp. 222-223.
[461] Toker, *Return From the Archipelago*, p. 220.
[462] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 223.
[463] Ibid.

suggesting that the two must be connected. What happens in the Keeper's life is not only the snake legend of course, but a whole host of events that stifle his freedom by creating fear. The fictional and absurd nature of the snake legend, however, is truly strange as the Keeper cannot explain what they are, and more importantly, they are happening of their own accord. This dissociation of the human faculty to think about reality and the empirical evidence unsettles the whole text.

The impact of the various stories results in the Keeper being kidnapped by the authorities who want to find out the truth about the snake. The focus now moves completely off the snake and onto Potapov. The authorities have decided that there is no snake: "Фантастика все это".[464] Interestingly, this is the same conclusion that both the Keeper and the paper editor came to at the start of the novel. However, this shows that it is the authorities that decide on the fate of this story. Furthermore, the story has reversed now as Potapov, and the Keeper to a certain extent, both believe in the existence of the snake. The views of the authorities and the individuals cannot meet. Although the newspapers created the myth, the authorities decide that it is Potapov who is the villain; Potapov "вводит, как говорится, в заблуждение общественное мнение и советскую печать."[465] While the newspapers, rather than Potapov, have created the initial story, it is he who is singled out and accused of not only confusing the papers, but also maliciously confusing society as a whole. In a similar way Nikolai in Grossman's *Vse techet* realises that he is made responsible for the crimes that the state has committed.[466] Mikhail Stepanovich's use of the phrase "как говорится" suggests that the accusation is a linguistic construct, something that is *said* rather than something that *is*.[467] This admission not only implies he is following an incentive from above, but he also includes the collective consciousness in his statement. Through using collectivity as his point

[464] Ibid., p. 248.
[465] Ibid., p. 249.
[466] See Chapter 2.4.
[467] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 249.

of reference, he moves closer to the collective, and separates his statement from himself. The accusation is not his but society's. By accusing Potapov of betraying the public, suggesting that in fact he is a spy for Germany, the authorities have moved the abstract story of a snake into a real possibility of arrest.[468]

For the Keeper this new turn of the story is highly confusing. "Во всем этом было что-то и от настоящей тайны, и от чего-то совсем иного, раздутого, надуманого и несерьезного."[469] He is aware that this is yet another story that is divided into something that is real and something that is fictional. From firstly being a story about a boa constrictor in Alma-Ata, it becomes, secondly, a story about Potapov having seen it, and thirdly, a story about Potapov being a spy for Germany. It is a story that is largely created by the newspapers and the authorities. The Keeper's statement can be applied to all three. The real secret is, perhaps, the truth of the authorities' actions; their creation of fictive accusations and the snake legend is clearly tied in with that truth as it reveals the functioning of Stalin's terror. It is the snake's connection to biblical imagery, and apples from the tree of knowledge that emphasises the revelation of truth to the Keeper, Potapov and the reader.

The legend of the snake ends with the Keeper finally finding Potapov, who has disappeared a few days previously, in a cave with the dead snake. Although Potapov has caught the snake and can now prove its existence, none of the characters feel relieved; they are still convinced that Potapov will be arrested. Having caught the snake Potapov realises that it is a common grass snake and that its length is a fifth of what the papers claimed. Both the Keeper and Potapov realise that a snake crawling through the grass creates an illusion of something much bigger, suggesting its greater implications for the narrative.[470] The discovery of the snake makes two realities clash, the one in which the snake actually exists and the one in which Potapov will be arrested for creating a myth about a boa constrictor. He is very

[468] Ibid., pp. 251-253.
[469] Ibid., p. 254.
[470] Ibid., p. 257.

aware of this: “Вот, дорогой товарищ, и все что было. Признаешь теперь, какие у страха глаза? В газету попал, себе на шею петлю надел, здесь уже пять суток сижу, а из-за чего?”[471] The suggestion that he has a noose around his throat refers back to the image of the snake as a constrictor, and Potapov continues calling the snake his death, as he carries it in a bag with him.[472] Although it turns out that the snake cannot physically suffocate him, it can still cause his death and even suffocate him with the fear of authorities. As Freud suggests, the uncanny happens when a symbol takes on the full force of what it represents; by this analogy the legend of the snake and the Soviet terror is truly uncanny in its functioning.[473]

As the Keeper suggests in a quotation cited above (pp.24-25); there is something exaggerated about the snake story. This exaggeration involves both what Potapov sees, the size of the snake, and what the papers create. For Potapov it is fear that exaggerates – not only a physical fear of the snake, but also the fear for his own life. His question above is very potent, as it is impossible to answer why did all this happen? Although the reader has followed the story from beginning to end, no answers are given as to why, only how. The answer seems to lie within the individuals. Potapov instantly remembers his brother who was arrested and finally reveals his guilt over the fact that he did not stand up for him and protect him.[474] Because of his brother, Potapov is now a suspect as well, and he understands that there is a chain reaction, if one does not question the law one is equally at its mercy. This is the terrible truth that the snake teaches him; as with Adam and Eve, he now knows the good and the evil within himself.

While the snake suggests possible death through either biting, or more accurately through strangling (and metaphorically through arrest), there are also dead bodies scattered throughout the novel. The dead bodies buried in the ground are described as sleeping beauties

[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid., p. 280.
[473] Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 150-151.
[474] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 258.

in both *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet*, and like the snake are something hidden that comes to light. The imagery of death that is so prevalent in the novel is another way in which the sense of the fear-inducing uncanny is sustained throughout the two novels. Like the snake legend, the bodies change from being isolated events and personal experiences, to become the focus of state authorities.

4.4 *"Sleeping Beauties" – Return of the Dead*

As Freud and Royle suggest, the uncanny is often something that is frightening and, in its relation to death or dead bodies, disturbs the boundary between life and death.[475] Maguire also points out that the myth of immortality that was so prevalent in Soviet society was also present in its opposite, a myth of mortality, in the fiction of the time.[476] Death in Dombrovskii is a mixture of the beautiful and the frightening. Several dead bodies appear throughout the two novels. The imagery in itself is frightening and unsettling, but as the case is with the uncanny, the imagery also becomes strangely habitual. Using Stanley Cavell's phrase, Royle describes this mixture as "surrealism of the habitual", a phrase that can easily be applied to the Stalinist Terror.[477] As Harriet Murav points out in reference to the GULag: "all of its instantiations, its laws, crimes, arrests, imprisonments, transports, and camps, is a history of the unreal and the fantastical made terrifyingly real."[478] Dombrovskii uses the unreal and the fantastical to represent daily life during the terror. Here, the familiar and the unfamiliar are reversed; the unfamiliar and unsettling imagery of death and skeletons is in fact something familiar and precious to both the Keeper and Kornilov. Rather than being something frightening, the main "sleeping beauty" opens up a world of wonders to the Keeper.

[475] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.
[476] I am indebted to Muireann Maguire for her generosity in sharing her work on this topic.See "Gothic Death" in Muireann Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts: Gothic Themes in Early Soviet Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, Forthcoming).
[477] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 24.
[478] Harriet Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 163.

(Although it turns out that it may in fact lead to his own death.) However, it has the reverse effect on the reader, for whom the bodies are described in sometimes gruesome detail. This disjunction between the effect upon the characters and the reader is what creates the uncanniness in the novel. Another contributing factor is the fact that this imagery is repeated, as different characters (Zybin, Rodionov, Neiman) all experience a frightening death of a young maiden in one way or another.

Dealing with death is part of Zybin's work. The first chapter of *Khranitel'* describes his first days of work in the attic of the museum, a room that is filled with skulls.[479] These skulls belong to various animals and Zybin is fascinated by their history and what they represent; the description is full of wonder and passion for these items. Later on, his main occupation becomes looking through the endless heaps of old pottery fragments, however, the word for that is "*cherepki*", which has the root "*cherep*", and thus the image of the skulls stays within the text through the double voicing of words. The image of the skull is also something that predominates in Dombrovskii's novel *Obeziana prikhodit za svoim cherepom*, where the main character professor Mezonier is concerned with preserving the truth of the origins of human races in the face of the Nazi onslaught.[480] In both novels, ancient history becomes a space of dispute and of great importance for the authoritarian regimes. The play on words in *Khranitel'* creates a sense of the uncanny as the text is haunted by death without actually speaking about it, thus adding dread to the novel as a whole. The first description of actual death on the other hand, is neither familiar nor common to daily life; on the contrary, it is fantastic and dreadful.

Like many of the most open and honest moments of the novel, where the characters speak freely, the revelation about the killing of Marusia takes place during yet another drinking session. Drinking in the novel allows the characters to escape the fear and the

[479] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 25.
[480] See Chapter 2.3.

pressure of ideology. Zybin wakes up in the middle of the night to first hear Kornilov tell Rodionov and Potapov the story of the Syrian Queen Zenobie and her fall and punishment by Emperor Aurelian.[481] This story prompts Rodionov to tell the story of another woman, Marusia, whom he was instructed to kill during the Civil War.[482] It is likely that the reference is to Marusia Nikiforova, an anarchist "atamansha" who took part in the Civil War and who was sentenced to death and killed in 1919.[483] Marusia was known for her ability to escape death and was admired for her passion and violence.[484] Throughout the novel a link is established between Ancient Rome and Russia, in particular in reference to the violence and authoritarianism that both states imposed on their subjects. The stories of Marusia and Zenobie provide yet another link between the two states; history is ever repeating. Rodionov is very uncomfortable telling the story, as he explains: "я про все это вспоминать не люблю".[485] It is apparent that he is not only uncomfortable with this memory because of some deeper cause, but also for the pure reason that he had to carry out what seems like an illegal execution. He points out several times that it happened during the war and therefore there was no time and no courts to decide her fate.[486] This guilt is then mixed up with the fantastic turn of events.

Rodionov tells the story twice, in the first instance focusing on the main events. Two weeks after having killed Marusia, he receives a letter from her saying: "Плохо вы меня расстреляли, пишет, все равно я живехонькая. […] тебя, босяканта, за то, что ты меня сам расстреливать на поле водил, я, говорит, живьем на тысячу и один кусок разрежу."[487] This story is dreadful on several levels, the most obvious being that Marusia,

[481] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 149.
[482] Ibid., p. 150.
[483] See Malcolm Archibald, "Atamansha: The Life of Marusia Nikiforova", http://www.nestormakhno.info/english/Marusia.htm (Accessed on 16/03/2011)
[484] Archibald, "Atamansha: The Life of Marusia Nikiforova".
[485] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 151.
[486] The real Marusia on the other hand was sentenced to death by a court, so this may suggest that Rodionov killed one of Marusia's followers. See Archibald above.
[487] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 151.

having been killed, has been resurrected and is seeking revenge. For Rodionov this story is a truly difficult memory as it mixes his guilt at having to commit the deed in the first place with him being punished for it by Marusia's letter. Also, it is unclear whether it is the spirit of Marusia speaking or whether it is her actual living self that is sending letters from beyond the grave. The boundary between life and death is eradicated; death comes alive and exists as something present and dangerous. Not only have the laws of society been overturned, but so have the laws of nature: dead people do not remain dead, and boa constrictors can survive in cold climates.

Potapov is particularly horrified by the story; he becomes angry and almost tearful, which shows the fear that this story instils. While Kornilov calmly remarks "бывает", Potapov gets upset by this accepting remark:

> – Да нет, что же это такое! чуть не со слезами вскочил бригадир. – Раз вы же ее сами мертвую видели, то как же, значит, как вы ее ни стреляли, а она... Так что это – чудо, что ли?
>
> – Вот рассуждай, что и как, – строго ответил Родионов. – Тогда таким чудесам конца-краю не было. Сам же сказал, что Марусек целый десяток ходил.
>
> – История, – сказал бригадир подавленно. – Вот так история.[488]

The conversation is strange, firstly because both Kornilov and Potapov accept the story as true, and secondly, because Rodionov asserts that miracles were common during the Civil War. Both Rodionov and Potapov have to question their relation to reality and personal experience: one has to question his seeing the snake, and the second has to question his seeing the death of Marusia. Reality is destabilised, and as people cannot rely on their reason, the authorities are later able to manipulate and indoctrinate their subjects.

[488] Ibid., p. 152.

The dialogue above is repeated in exactly the same form when Rodionov tells the story for the second time. This exact repetition surprises and unsettles the reader, as on the one hand it seems like a mistake, and on the other, it highlights the fictional nature of the novel. This uncanny repetition creates a sense of *déjà vu*, which parallels Marusia coming back. It is a past that refuses to go away and keeps the characters stuck, as they have nothing new to say and can only repeat what they have said before; the story cannot progress. However, the second time that the story is told, Kornilov concludes the conversation by saying: "Поселилась она у вас в душе с тех пор".[489] Marusia is thus not only a memory that haunts Rodionov, but also something beyond, something that he carries within him. Rodionov concludes by saying that the story is about the Revolution, thus connecting the fantastic, the unbelievable and the horrible with the Revolution. The Revolution allows for things that are unbelievable to happen. And indeed, as Archibald explains, Marusia had several followers, all of whom copied her,[490] and therefore the return of a Marusia became a common event in Revolutionary times.

Describing his killing of Marusia, Rodionov uses many of the images that appear throughout the novel. He depicts Marusia as a snake: "глаза зеленые, змеиные", and calls her "гадюка", while Potapov suggests that she hypnotised him, something that the previous article claims the boa constrictor did to his Keeper.[491] This imagery of a snake that tries to seduce Rodionov and ultimately escapes him and threatens his death, connects the two stories, creating a sense of unity on the one hand and a sense of uncanny on the other. It is as if the reader cannot escape this imagery. There is something comical about "*bova konstruktor*" as described by Potapov, whilst the imagery of a snake in reference to Marusia only adds horror to the story. This connection between the two stories creates an atmosphere of dread. The snake is not only an absurd story, but also something that lives within people. This is

[489] Ibid., p. 164.
[490] See Archiblald.
[491] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, pp. 162-163.

enhanced by the reverse hypnosis that is taking place. Rather than the master hypnotising the snake, it is the snake that hypnotises the master.

The sense of horror is enhanced by Rodionov describing Marusia's skull as it hit the ground and broke in two[492]. It is the skull that is the confirmation of her death, according to Rodionov's reasoning. The image of the skull is taken up again by Zybin as he finds the skull of a dead bride, who is likely to have been murdered, and sees in it a living beauty.[493] Death and life are thus not only closely tied together, but even interchangeable. This repetition of imagery and blurring of borders evokes the sense of uncanny, which in turn makes it hard to navigate within the various ways of knowing and seeing the world. As Kligerman suggests, the uncanny engenders a "loss of sight and orientation,"[494] and indeed, eyes and the ability to see become the focal point of a movement between life and death.

The second corpse in the novel is the bride whose gold is found by some workers in the countryside. Through various incidents the museum loses the gold, which is state property, and therefore the loss turns into a criminal investigation. Zybin is then suspected of knowing the location of the gold and even planning its disappearance, purely because he is as interested in finding it as the authorities. Zybin, however, is not interested in the value of the gold but in its meaning to history, and seems to be personally invested in the story of the bride.

The gold and the bride, like the apples and the snake, are connected. The gold is from her bridal crown, therefore, when it is mentioned, it conjures up an image of a youthful and innocent death. Before finding the bride herself, Zybin draws a connection between her and a roman bride found five hundred years ago. Like the coin found in "Gornyi Gigant" from Aurelian's time,[495] the bride in Kazakhstan is intimately connected to another bride from

[492] Ibid., p. 163.
[493] Ibid., p. 30.
[494] Kligerman, *Sites of the Uncanny*, p. 33.
[495] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 158.

Rome, in the same way that Marusia is connected to Zenobie. This bride is a true beauty despite having been dead for years.

> Она лежала в гробу, но казалась живой. Румянец на щеках, тонкая нежная кожа, длинные ресницы, высокая девичья грудь. На ней был убор невесты. Красавицу перенесли в Ватикан и выставили напоказ. И вот началось паломничество. Приходили из самых дальних мест, и людей становилось все больше и больше. Ходили странные слухи. Женихи начали отказываться от невест и уходить на свидания к гробу. Кончилось все это тем, что по приказу папы гроб опять закопали в землю. Так вторично умерла красавица, пролежавшая тысячи лет в земле.[496]

The story of the bride sounds like a fairytale, which adds another layer of meaning to the bride in Alma-Ata. Both brides come to affect the living world in an uncanny manner. The Roman bride has to be returned to earth because she is more alive than dead. Her power over men is almost sinister, containing a mixture of the beautiful and the frightening. Being situated in a cathedral, as the Alma-Ata bride would be when found – the museum is housed in a cathedral after all – she represents, and simultaneously unsettles, the notion that saints do not decompose. Like a saint she remains almost alive, but like a devil she disturbs the normal course of life. She has to be extracted from society in order for it to return to normality.

Zybin imagines the Alma-Ata bride, or sleeping beauty, through the gold that he is given. In *Khranitel',* Zybin finds more gold, which convinces everyone that the beauty is somewhere in the mountains, as Klara exclaims: "Да, хранитель, значит, действительно ваша красавица ждет вас где-то. Надо искать.[…] Ваша красавица, хранитель. Ваша! Археологическая!"[497] The emphasis on "your beauty" echoes the story of the Roman bride and her young suitors, and the idea that the beauty is waiting gives her human attributes,

[496] Ibid., p. 234.
[497] Ibid., p. 273.

suggesting the bride is slowly coming to life. In the last passages of *Khranitel'*, the Keeper muses on the image of this young bride, concluding that thousands of years have passed but nothing has changed. "Но она надежно укрыта валуном, и две тысячи лет, прошедшие над ней, ничего тут не изменили."[498] The statement is ambiguous, suggesting that neither she nor the life of the living has changed. On the one hand, beauty is permanent and does not die but remains whole even when buried, and on the other hand, a clear connection is made between the violence that killed her thousands of years ago and the violence of Soviet society.

The theme is reintroduced in *Fakul'tet* by Zybin receiving yet another piece of gold from the museum director. The appearance of gold in pieces implies something that refuses to remain hidden and is seeking Zybin's attention wanting to come to light. Zybin is fascinated by the gold: "Это было поистине мертвое золото, то самое, что высыпается из глазниц, когда вырывают вросший в землю бурый череп, что мерцает между ребер, осаживается в могиле."[499] The suggestion that the gold is dead foreshadows its implications for Zybin. Although the image of the skeleton that Zybin paints is familiar to him as an archaeologist, it still comes across as unfamiliar and macabre to the reader. This uncanny mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar, coupled with the image of dead gold, suggests that the gold is "infected".

Subsequently, Zybin and Kornilov discuss who the gold jewellery could belong to. Although at the end of *Khranitel'* Zybin, the director, and Klara have decided that the gold belongs to a beauty, there is still some uncertainty as to who she was. Kornilov suggests that she could have been a shaman while Zybin believes that she was a bride.

> – Да, может быть, и колдунья, – согласился он. [Zybin] – Мы это увидим по похоронному инвентарю. И, конечно, по черепу. Но если она уж очень молодая, – продолжал он, подумав, – то вряд ли колдунья.

[498] Ibid., p. 284.
[499] Ibid., vol.5, p. 30.

> Хотя... – Он слегка развел руками. – Что мы знаем о них? О ней. Что она? Почти наша фантазия.
>
> – Нет, оставьте шанс и для колдуньи, – попросил Корнилов. – Ведь какое это чудо: молодая ведьмочка бронзового века с распущенными волосами мчится по вечернему небу на драконе. Ж-ж-ж! А от нее во все стороны галки и вороны. Кра-кра-кра! А за ней дым, дым бьет в глаза! И над горами – огненный след. А на ней фата и золотая корона. – Он взглянул на директора. – Ведь чудо? [500]

The image of a sorceress reminds us of Marusia and her ability to come back to life. Kornilov makes the whole archaeological examination into a joke; however, coupled with the story of the Roman bride and Marusia, miracles are proven to happen. While Zybin points out that she is only their fantasy, Kornilov lets his imagination loose to create a frightening and comical image of the beauty. His ability to imagine suggests the freedom that is within him, which is underlined by the director's reaction: "Ты у меня смотри, договоришься!"[501] Speaking freely is dangerous, even when it is as silly and exaggerated as a fantasy about a sorceress riding a dragon. The fact that the director smiles at the same time as he threatens Kornilov shows that he himself is aware of the ridiculousness of both Kornilov's suggestion and his own reaction to it. The director is trapped between the ideological and the personal world and has to obey the former. His warning that Kornilov may say too much shows the repression of imagination and the fear that keeps it silent.

While the gold prompts Kornilov to exercise his imagination, the skull of the maiden reveals to Zybin the truth about the dead girl. Upon holding the skull Zybin experiences something akin to a shock and even frightens the director. He becomes as if hypnotised and can see into the past.

[500] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[501] Ibid., p. 32.

> Это было как припадок или наваждение, что-то щелкнуло, сдвинулось с места, и вдруг нечто большое, мягкое, обволакивающее опустилось на него. Он держал в руках голову красавицы. Ей, верно, не исполнилось еще двадцати. У нее были большие черные глаза, разлетающиеся брови и маленький рот. Она ходила, высоко подняв голову.
>
> Он повернул череп и посмотрел на него в профиль. У красавицы была тонкая светящаяся кожа. Она умела царственно улыбаться – была горда и неразговорчива; ее считали колдуньей, ведьмой, шаманкой, а потом ее убили и забросили на край земли. И в течение многих веков лежал над ней камень тяжелый, чтоб никто ее видеть не мог. А вот сейчас он держит в руках ее мертвую голову.
>
> – Вы написали, – сказал он, – "найден под нависшей глыбой". Это не погребенье!
>
> Он именно сказал, а не спросил, он точно знал, что это было не погребенье, а просто дикое поле, глыба и ее тело под ней. Он сам не понимал, откуда пришло к нему Это, но Это пришло все-таки, и он знал об Этом уж все.[502]

The description of what is happening to Zybin is uncanny; not only is he almost hallucinating, but there is also a suggestion that the universe itself has allowed him to look into the past, "что-то щелкнуло, сдвинулось с места". It is almost as if the skull in fact possesses supernatural powers. The fact that Zybin looks into her eyes to gain access to this revelation implies that the eyes are the boundary between the living and the dead, something that is common to all the instances of death depicted in the novel.

Just as in Kornilov's fantasy, Zybin realises that people believed that she was a sorceress. Although Kornilov's image was absurd it turns out that people are very willing to believe the absurd, as is seen in the story of the snake, showing the power of collective

[502] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

indoctrination and fear. While those people are long gone, her beauty survives their malice and is able to testify to their atrocity. This supernatural power to awaken Zybin to her past in turn suggests the return of not only the dead, but also of the repressed; her story will not remain repressed and has been reaching Zybin through gold, and is now transporting him to the past to tell her story.

A connection can be made here to the victims of Stalin's purges, many of whom were not given a proper burial but left in the ground in mass graves. Like the beauty, they were punished not for a crime but for an invented identity that society or the NKVD gave them. The repulsion of these dead bodies by the earth is also reminiscent of Varlam Shalamov's assertion that bodies remain frozen in the ground in Kolyma: "In Kolyma, bodies are not given over to earth, but to stone. Stone keeps secrets and reveals them. The permafrost keeps and reveals secrets."[503] Dombrovskii, like Shalamov, was in a camp in Kolyma, and both authors admired each other's work.[504] It is therefore highly possible that they were inspired both by the same imagery, and by each other's work. What the narrative suggests is that the truth of Stalinist purges, like the truth about the murder of the innocent beauty, will not remain hidden. The dead come back to haunt the living. Although that sounds sinister, there is positivity in the fact that the silent gain a voice through somebody like Zybin, who has not abandoned these "useless things". There are also echoes of Nikolai Fedorov's theory of resurrection of the dead as a positive progress in human evolution.[505] Zybin does not propose resurrection but more understanding of the dead, of a truth that is only available through a connection through history and time.

Whilst in prison and under interrogation Zybin's mind takes him back to the time he spent by the seaside many years ago and to yet another dead girl. There he discovered a grave

[503] Varlam Shalamov, "Lend-Lease", in *Kolyma Tales*, trans. John Glad (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 275-284 (pp. 280-281).
[504] See their letters: http://shalamov.ru/library/24/29.html (Accessed on 16/07/2011)
[505] See Maguire's explanation of the relationship between Fedorov's philosophy and Soviet fiction. See Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts*.

with a great marble statue depicting a girl about to fly away. The rumour told about her is that she threw herself into the sea because of a broken heart, however, this version is disproved by the girl's aunt. Zybin and his lover Lina visit the grave to have another look at the statue, where they meet the gravedigger and the girl's aunt. According to her it is all a myth, and the girl just died from an untreated cold. However, the woman herself makes Zybin feel very uncomfortable, and even scared.

> "Вот она сейчас уйдет, и мы никогда не узнаем, кто она такая и откуда взялась, – остро подумал он, всматриваясь в лиловые тени около ее насурьмленных глаз и в беспощадный разлет бровей. – Придем сюда завтра, и окажется, что никакого тут Михеича нет, то есть, может быть, он и был, но умер сорок лет назад, а склеп стоит забитый, и тут яма, кости и памятник". Он думал так и чувствовал, что цепенеет от страха. Вот откуда она взялась? Ведь не было же ее здесь, и вдруг появилась. И старик откуда-то из-под земли вылез и свел их сюда к этой старухе.[506]

Again, the depiction of this woman resembles that of the dead beauty in Alma-Ata. The woman has the same eyebrows and Zybin imagines a grave full of bones under a stone, just as the one found in Alma-Ata. While Zybin is not fearful of actual graves and skeletons, he is shown to be terrified of living beings. He does not trust his reason and has a feeling of something supernatural happening, imagining that people are appearing out of the ground like the dead. The most familiar is made unfamiliar; the living are suspected of being dead. The boundary between the living and the dead has been disrupted, but it is also Zybin's mind which conflates the two stories. His dreaming and the reality of being in prison are also confused. Zybin's fear and confusion results in him speaking out loud whilst dreaming: "Старый могильщик, старый могильщик, куда же ушел ты, старый могильщик? Зарой

[506] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 230.

меня в землю, старый могильщик, чтобы я уж не видел, мой старый могильщик..."[507] Although the request to be buried and the hypnotic repetition of "старый могильщик" is frightful, Zybin ends his pleading by calling him affectionately "мой старый могильщик". This mixture of fear and affection suggests that death is not necessarily something violent but also something comforting. Zybin expresses the need to be blinded, to not see, again emphasising the relationship between sight and death.

The longing for death can be seen as not only a desire to die, but also a desire to return home. As Royle suggests, the uncanny is a "homesickness", "a compulsion to return to an inorganic state, a desire (perhaps unconscious) to die, a death drive".[508] This death drive has many aspects, one of which is the desire to die one's own death, not a death decided by someone else. As Zybin explains to Lina: "Меня самого мне не хватает."[509] Thus, during the interrogation Zybin wants to return to himself; death is here a form of freedom. As Alexander Flaker suggests Dombrovskii believed in living with dignity, and failing that, dying with dignity.[510] What Zybin strives for throughout the novel is to remain himself, and the madness that he experiences during his interrogations is a shattering of his identity. It is a traumatic dissociation of the self, with Zybin close to schizophrenia. The wish for a grave could thus be a wish to remain whole, rather than to die. Hence, the dreams of death are also dreams of having control over one's life, of having freedom.

In one of Zybin's most terrifying nightmares he is faced by the marble statue that he visited by the seaside.[511] The dream unites all three dead girls, as well as time and space: the suicidal girl by the marble statue, the sleeping beauty at Alma-Ata and the last suicidal girl of the novel (however, this only becomes apparent at the end). In the dream, Zybin's girlfriend

[507] Ibid.
[508] Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 2.
[509] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 120.
[510] Alexandar Flaker, "Grotesk deistvitel'nosti: *Khranitel' drevnostei* Iuria Dombrovskogo", *Cekoslovenska rusistika*, (1989), pp. 39-42 (p. 40).
[511] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 185.

Lina is angry with him for his interest in the dead beauty in Alma-Ata rather than the one they saw by the seaside.[512] The connection between the two dead girls is established, and Lina's jealousy suggests the close relationship Zybin has to the dead. As her proof she gets Neiman to show Zybin the marble statue:

> На полу стоят носилки под черным брезентом. И из-под него высовывается рука. "Неужели?" – холодеет он. "Взгляните, взгляните", – настаивает Нейман и пинком сбрасывает брезент. На носилках лежит та – Мраморная. Она совсем такая, как на горе, и даже руки у нее раскинуты так же, для полета. Но вот глаза-то не мраморные, а человеческие: светлые, прозрачные, с острыми, как гвоздики, зрачками – живые глаза в мраморе. "Так что же, она все время на нас так смотрела, – додумал он, – только мы не замечали?"[513]

The dead are again brought alive, this time it is not the skeleton but the stone itself that is alive. The dead become all-seeing; watching over the living. The dream is terrifying to Zybin. Whether he is in prison or free, he is constantly haunted by the dead. What is particularly uncanny about the above passage is its connection to the last suicidal girl. As pointed out above, there are several repetitions within the novel and these heighten the uncanny atmosphere of the novel. And as Royle points out: "The death drive manifests itself in the 'compulsion to repeat'".[514] Death is thus present not only in the images of the novel but also in its structure.

Just before finding the gold that saves Zybin's life, Neiman stops by a fire organised by some workers by a river.[515] It turns out that they have just retrieved a body of a young girl from the river. None of them are sure of how she died, but they do know that she had a

[512] Ibid., p. 227.
[513] Ibid., pp. 185-186.
[514] Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 89-90.
[515] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 596.

wedding planned, and it seems that she had committed suicide.[516] Neiman is constantly aware of the girl's arm sticking out from the cover that the men have put on her, like the dead girl's hand in Zybin's nightmare. The shadows from the fire makes it look as if she is moving her hand, and once the cover is removed it looks as if her face is moving too. Neiman feels uncomfortable about the body, but is also fascinated by it.

> Тени все прыгали и прыгали по лицу покойницы, и то, что она лежала совершенно спокойно и прямо, как будто действительно заснула или притворилась, что он видел ее ровные крепкие зубы, а в особенности то, что глаза были открыты и стояла в них темно-молочная смертная муть, та белая мертвая вода, которую Нейман всегда подмечал в глазах покойников, – все это заставило его вздрогнуть как-то по-особому. И не от страха и даже не от щемящей мерзкой тайны, которая всегда окружает гроб, могилу, умершего, а от чего-то иного – возвышенного и непознаваемого.[517]

The description of the girl blends characteristics of the other dead girls. In contrast to Zybin's nightmare, this beauty has dead eyes, but she looks asleep like the Roman beauty, and her teeth remind one of the teeth of the Alma-Ata beauty. Like the other dead beauties this one has a profound effect on the person, however, this effect is unknowable. The power of the dead over the living is uncanny through the secrets that they reveal, but in this case, there is something beyond the secret. Her effect on Neiman is supernatural and unidentifiable. Like the beauty buried in Alma-Ata, and whose gold Neiman is about to retrieve, this drowned girl comes alive within Neiman.

> И тут мертвая предстала перед Нейманом в такой ясной смертной красоте, в такой спокойной ясности преодоленной жизни и всей легчайшей шелухи ее, что он почувствовал, как холодная дрожь

[516] Ibid., pp. 598-600.
[517] Ibid., p. 600.

> пробежала и шевельнула его волосы. И понял, что вот сейчас, сию секунду он сделает что-то невероятно важное, такое, что начисто перечеркнет всю его прошлую жизнь. Вот, вот сейчас, сию минуту! Но он ничего не сделал, потому что и не мог ничего сделать, просто не было у него ничего такого затаенного, что б он мог вытащить наружу.[…] Но теперь ему уж было все равно. Больше у него ничего не оставалось своего.[518]

The beauty comes alive not only as the person that she used to be, but also beauty itself comes alive and shows Neiman the meaning in "useless things". Her beauty suggests that she has overcome life, which in turn suggests the hardships of Soviet life and her ability to rise above it. Beauty is shown to be free, and immortal. Like her predecessors, this suicidal girl reveals some deeper truths to Neiman. Her effect on him is uncanny, she passes her death onto him. His emotions move in two directions: on the one hand, he wants to act and on the other hand, he is paralysed. Neiman is a prisoner within his body, and his inability to act is the result of not having anything within himself. His action would erase all his past life, which instead of suggesting a certain kind of death, would allow him to continue living. The erasure of life would provide a new life, but the inability to act has erased both. The conclusion is that he has died within, as if the dead girl has passed on her death. "It may be construed as a foreign body within oneself, even the experience of oneself *as* a foreign body, the very estrangement of inner silence and solitude", as Royle suggests.[519] Neiman is estranged from himself, he is unable to act, he has no stable identity or point through which to view life.

This disintegration of identity is not only common to Neiman, as in fact he is the last of three characters to have their identities destroyed through the experience of terror. While the dead bodies haunt the text, suggesting that there is death all around the characters, and at the same time that the dead will not remain out of sight, the living beings are moving towards

[518] Ibid., p. 602.
[519] Royle, p. 2

the dead. The dead bodies are depicted as mostly innocent victims returning to claim their voices back. Although they are uncanny and create a sense of dread and inevitability, they are also positive images because of their innocence. The living dead however, move into death due to their sins. They are punished by some unspoken force and have to continue to exist but not live. Their inner prisons are in fact the more terrifying aspects of the novel. Apart from Neiman, it is Zybin's colleague and friend Kornilov and Zybin's interrogator Tamara Dolidze, who become the living-dead.

4. 5 *The Living Dead*

Both Tamara Dolidze's and Kornilov's stories develop around the issue of gaining knowledge about the Soviet system and their role within it. Kornilov is a character who seems to care very little for the system, while Tamara Dolidze works for the NKVD. Both characters move towards revelations about the State, but from different directions. While Kornilov finds out about life in society and the impossibility of remaining morally free, Tamara discovers that the system controls society and comes to understand the falsity of Soviet law. Ultimately, both realise the lawlessness governing the State, both from the outside and the inside.

The reader first meets Kornilov in *Khranitel',* when he is sacked from the library in which he works and is then given a job at the museum as an archaeologist working with Zybin.[520] Kornilov comes across as a very positive character. He loses his job at the library due to his support for Zybin against Aiupova, the head librarian who puts in a complaint about Zybin and his article. As we see in relation to the dead beauties, Kornilov has a vivid imagination, and he is also shown to be very sensitive to the past, almost to the same extent as Zybin.[521] As Doyle points out, Dombrovskii gave Kornilov some of his own features, his

[520] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 84.
[521] Ibid., p. 214.

looks in particular.[522] Therefore Kornilov and Zybin are similar, as apart from their interest in archaeology they share a similar past: both grew up in Moscow and used to go for walks in Chistye prudy.[523] Kornilov is perceptive not only about the past, but also it seems, about the present as well. During his many nights drinking with Zybin, Potapov and anyone else who is willing to join him, he exposes his views of Soviet society, shouting that the state does not care for its people.[524] His drinking bouts make his inner thoughts known to those around him and partly lead to his downfall. As Doyle aptly points out: "The tragedy of Kornilov is that he sets out with the best of intentions, but, as Dombrovskii himself put it, 'a claw gets caught and the whole bird is done for'."[525]

As Dombrovskii says, Kornilov gets caught in a web of fear and is then dragged under into the sewage system, to use Solzhenitsyn's term for the secret workings of the NKVD,[526] from which he emerges a different man. It is in *Fakul'tet* that Kornilov's fate is sealed. Already at the start of the novel the narrator remarks: "Эти дни потом Корнилову приходилось вспоминать очень часто. Все самое непоправимое, страшное в его жизни началось именно с этого дня. А в памяти от него осталось очень немногое".[527] It is Kornilov's drunken honesty that gets him into trouble, through the sheer fact that he starts to fear that other people will inform on him for speaking as he does. His fear of speaking honestly exposes the collective surveillance that was a great part of the soviet system and that allowed the Great Terror to take place. As Kharkhordin remarks "Mutual surveillance sets the cornerstones of Soviet power: without it, the Soviet Union could never have existed."[528] Peter Holquist further shows that surveillance extended to analysing the mood of the populace in so called "*svodki*", "reports on the population's mood", thus extending surveillance to the

[522] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 150.
[523] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 96.
[524] Ibid., p. 299.
[525] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 150.
[526] Solzhenitsyn, *Arhipelag Gulag*.
[527] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 33.
[528] Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*, p. 110.

subjects' psyche.[529] This surveillance was also a part of the Russian society before the advance of Soviet ideology, and thus was deeply ingrained. It is with this crucial system that Kornilov became closely acquainted – his life changes within one day because of the few things that he says. While he remembers this moment often, there is very little left of that memory. The moment that irrevocably changes his life is inaccessible, much like a traumatic memory. In this case however, it is more likely that Kornilov does not remember the day because of the various drinking bouts.

One of the few people to support Kornilov is Potapov's niece Dasha, a young girl who falls in love with him and his honesty. It is precisely his honesty that attracts her to him: "Он говорит а все молчат. Говорят одно, а думают другое. […] Ну какой же это порядок, какая же тут правда?"[530] Dasha suggests that Kornilov is the only honest man, and while everybody else is divided, Kornilov is whole and truthful. This assumption about everyone shows there was a clear division between what was private and public, and what could and could not be said. Rather than there being a gap between the constative and performative aspects of ideology, here there is a division between the inner personal and outer official ideology. However, unlike the post-Stalinist era that Yurchak analyses, in 1937 there is no space in which to exist "*vnye*", the only space available is to be free within, as both private and public life are under the control of ideology. Dasha is clearly aware of this division and is appalled by it, believing that the outer truth should reflect the inner. Upon becoming an informer for the NKVD, Kornilov has to break off his relations with her, as he becomes divided like the people about whom she speaks above and, thus, does not feel worthy of her love.

The status of truth is constantly under threat in both novels. This is particularly evident in the snake legend, but becomes even more central in *Fakul'tet*. There are several layers of

[529] Peter Holquist, "Anti-Soviet *Svodki* From the Civil War: Surveillance as a Shared Feature of Russian Political Culture", *The Russian Review*, 56 (1997), pp. 445-450.
[530] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 39.

truth at work in *Fakul'tet*: interrogating Zybin, the organs attempt to find out the truth that will serve them in organising a show trial on the scale of Moscow's; Zybin attempts to find out the "truth" about the functioning of the system through Buddo and later Kalandarashvilli; Kornilov learns how to present the truth and how it can be reversed into a lie; and finally, Tamara learns the truth of her role within that system. Kornilov realises the danger that he may be in when Zybin is arrested and so he prepares to be interrogated as well. Potapov explains to him how to behave:

> А если вызовут, не пугайся. Пугаться тут нечего. Это не какая-нибудь там фашистская гестапо, а наши советские органы! Ленинская чека! Говори правду, и ничего тебе не будет, понимаешь: правду! Правду, и все! – И он настойчиво и еще несколько раз повторил это слово.
>
> – Понимаю, – вздохнул Корнилов. – Всю правду, только правду, ничего, кроме правды, не отходя ни на шаг от правды. Ничего, кроме правды, они от меня и не вышибут сейчас, Иван Семенович. Как бы они там ни орали, и ни стучали, и ни сучили кулаками.
>
> – Ты это что? – несколько ошалел Потапов. – Ты того... Нет, ты чего не требуется, того не буровь! Как же это так – орать и стучать? Никто там на тебя орать не может. Это же наши советские органы. Ну, конечно, если скривишь правду...[531]

There are two layers of truth at the centre of this discussion: the truth that Kornilov vows to tell, and a truth about the tactics of the NKVD. Both characters circle around the idea that the authorities use violence to extract the truth. This in itself is confusing, as Kornilov suggests that he will not tell them anything but the truth, even if they beat him. There is a truth in this statement that Potapov does not notice. He is worried about the fact that the organs would use violence to begin with, and concedes that they may do so if Kornilov lies. What he does not

[531] Ibid., pp. 272-273.

notice is the absurdity of using violence to extract something else but the truth, as Kornilov suggests: "Ничего, кроме правды, они от меня и не вышибут сейчас". This exposes a truth that is not challenged by Potapov: that the organs do not want *the* truth, but *a* truth that suits their goals. This truth escapes Potapov but is established as a truth within the text. This in turn suggests that in this context truth does not matter; Kornilov will not be saved by it, which is something that both characters know instinctively and why they are so scared. As rule of law no longer applies, anything can happen to them.

Furthermore, the phrase "не отходя ни на шаг от правды" echoes two famous orders of the Stalinist era: "not one step back" during the Second World War, and "one step to the right, one step to the left – you will be shot" used in Gulag camp marches.[532] Dombrovskii was clearly aware of both of these, in particular the order used in the camps. Both are closely connected to death and dying, and the violence of the Soviet state. Using a phrase that echoes these orders, Kornilov highlights the violence associated with state authorities and their methods for extracting truth. The status of this truth, however, is reversed, as it is more likely that Kornilov will be shot *unless* he steps away from the truth. The orders above reveal the truth of the Stalinist (and also Leninist) period: that people are shot unless they follow the orders of the state. So although Kornilov speaks of telling one sort of truth, his conversation with Potapov uncannily reveals a much deeper truth about the system.

The authorities' interest in Kornilov is not based on his relation to Zybin, as he thought it would be, but his new acquaintance, the former priest, Father Andrei. With him he discusses the Passion of the Christ, and one of the main themes of the novel emerges: betrayal. The full meaning of the Passion of the Christ for the novel is unfortunately too vast a subject for this chapter; however, a brief overview of it is unavoidable. In Dombrovskii's novel, as Semenova explains, Christ is present to restore faith in humanity, the same faith that was taken away by

[532] See Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin, 2003); Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad* (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 84-101.

the Stalinist system.[533] Zaitseva further points out that because Christ is the carrier of truth, he is depicted as any other human – all have the truth within and it is up to each to either follow it or abandon it.[534] By dying on the cross and forgiving humanity, Christ restores faith in mankind, showing that it is possible to choose the good and the truth. Zaitseva, Semenova, Doyle and Woodward all agree that Zybin is the figure of Christ in the novel; the role of Kornilov on the other hand is more ambiguous.[535]

Kornilov discusses the denunciation of Christ with both Father Andrei and the NKVD agent Surovtsev, pointing out that there were two denouncers of Christ, both of whom were his pupils.[536] Kornilov has not denounced Zybin, thus he is not Judas, however, he unknowingly informs on Father Andrei, who in turn very consciously denounces Kornilov. All characters are thus implicated in the system of denunciations, and judging who the "judas" is becomes impossible. Kornilov's and Surovtsev's discussion about the system of informers in the biblical era translates very easily to the Soviet era. Kornilov points out that the court needed at least two witnesses to prosecute him.[537] Similarly, Dombrovskii himself wrote a letter to A.G. Aristov a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, to whom he explained the inadequacy of the Soviet legal system, as it rests too heavily on the words of an informer/witness.[538] Among other things, Dombrovskii points out that any positive aspects that the witness may mention about the accused would be removed immediately together with the witness, who would be seen as inadequate. Similarly, Kornilov's statements about the good nature of Father Andrei are turned into a denunciation by the authorities. Although Kornilov does not consciously inform on anyone initially, he becomes an official informer for the state and thus can be likened to one of the pupils who

[533] Svetlana Semenova, "'Vsiu noch' chital ia tvoi zavet...' Obraz Khrista v sovremennom romane ", *Novyi mir*, (1989), pp. 229-243 (p. 235).
[534] Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, pp. 61,62.
[535] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 161; Semenova, "Vsiu noch'", p. 235; Woodward, "Stoic?", p. 33; Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, p. 64.
[536] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, pp. 286, 320-321.
[537] Ibid., p. 319.
[538] Dombrovskii, "Pis'mo Aristovu A. G." in ibid.vol.6, p. 315.

betrayed Christ. Surovtsev tells him that there is no parallel between the two eras; however, it becomes apparent that the two are closely linked. “Ну чего вы, в самом деле, боитесь? Какое там "но...". Вы ведь не тот, первый, известный свидетель и не тот неизвестный, второй. Вы не ученик и не истец. Вы просто-напросто устанавливаете невиновность человека.”[539] The fact that even the interrogator notices the connection between the two highlights the parallels between the two systems. Like Christ, Zybin restores faith in humanity by forgiving both Neiman and Kornilov as they all sit together on a bench at the end of the novel.

Kornilov’s reports about Father Andrei all end with the simple statement that father Andrei has not said anything anti-Soviet. This in itself is now questioned by the authorities, and while Kornilov seems to genuinely like Father Andrei and want to save him, the authorities turn his words against him. Even before Kornilov knows clearly what is happening, he has an uncanny feeling about his own future:

> Вот все это – мелкое, пасмурное, несуразное, ноющее, как больной зуб, – донельзя, до болезни развинчивало и просто выпихивало со света Корнилова. И он понимал: от этого не сбежишь, не спрячешься, оно всюду и всегда с тобой, потому что оно и есть – ты. И еще мучило сознание – ну куда, зачем он сунулся? Кто его тянул за язык? Захотелось спасти батюшку? Так, спаситель, спаси сначала себя самого.[540]

The tone of the last question is ironical, showing the foolishness of Kornilov in thinking that he could be “the saviour”, like Christ. Kornilov believes that he can only be a saviour by firstly saving himself. However, because the question of saving is raised in connection to fear, it is precisely the fear he needs to escape in order to be free, and not necessarily the authorities themselves. Just as Christ could not save himself, so Zybin is doomed to his fate, however, it is precisely by rejecting fear that Zybin is able to retain freedom within. Conversely, Lina

[539] Ibid., p. 323.
[540] Ibid., p. 329.

names Zybin "*спаситель*," and in fact he is able to save himself, at least spiritually. The contrast between the two characters' responses to fear raises questions about the people's response to terror and the lessons that may be learned from the image of Christ.

The premonition that Kornilov has about his not too distant future is uncanny, as he feels it almost physically but cannot gain any knowledge of what has happened, is about to happen, and what he has done. He is full of questions and has no answers. There is no definition of what it is that makes him feel frightened; it is described only as "оно" and "это". It is something that is both familiar to Kornilov as it equals himself, "оно и есть – ты", but it is simultaneously unfamiliar, as it has no name or definition. Kornilov thus comes across as being possessed by something sinister. It is as if he is divided in two; he is both known to himself and possessed by the unknown; he becomes uncanny himself. His character reflects the society in which he lives. Kornilov has led himself into a trap, one resembling Neiman's, as discussed above.[541] He cannot act as there are no actions left. This fear functions as something independent and powerful, as if it is guided by the devil. He even questions who it was that forced him to speak ("кто его тянул за язык?"), a phrase that is common in the Russian language, implying the revelation of something that should have remained secret. Partly, it is suggested that the devil is Stalin for whom the whole system and the informants work. This devilry is actually pushing Kornilov out of life itself and into some other state, and because it is inside him he cannot avoid it.

Although Kornilov informs on Father Andrei, he does so with good intentions, and when he finds out that his testimony will instead be used against him, he feels the need to confess. His confession makes no impression on Father Andrei and unsettles Kornilov even more.[542] He then finds out that Father Andrei has also seen the authorities, and thus the circle of informants is closed, people inform on each other, and everyone is a sinner. Reading Father

[541] Chapter 4. 4, pp. 183-184.
[542] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, pp. 337-339.

Andrei's report on himself[543], Kornilov realises that a lot of what the priest has said about him is the truth, and that Kornilov did say that the Soviet system does not value people. He now realises that to lie about Father Andrei means that the truth about him may be erased. His fear of ending his life in prison or in the camps prompts this surrender to the authorities:

> Железная горсть схватила и закогтила его сердце. Отпустила и снова сжала. И весь он был полон ржавого железа и тоски. И тоска эта была тоже железная, тупая, каменная. Не тоска даже, а просто страшная тяжесть. Все! Сейчас его заберут. Вот так для него и закончится воля – без обыска, без ордера и даже без ареста.[544]

Kornilov finally understands the full truth about the system – that he could lose his freedom without an arrest and all the lawful proceedings. This understanding translates into fear that lives within him. This metallic assault on his inner self is again like an external intrusion and an illness. Also, the reference to the metal indirectly conjures up the metallic associations of Stalin's name. The only way for Kornilov to escape this heaviness is to commit the ultimate sin, and become an informer for the NKVD. The NKVD gives him a pseudonym *"Ovod*" (Gadfly), a "heroic" name, as they say, and thus Kornilov is initiated into this other world.[545] As his uncanny premonition suggested, he has been forced out of his life into a new self.

Upon arriving home Kornilov has lost all interest in life and the living: "Его как будто обняло само небытие".[546] He is neither dead nor alive, but somewhere in between. The last conversation that Kornilov has with Dasha shows him slowly leaving his faculties; he has some last thoughts on the nature of betrayal, but at the same time openly confesses that he will denounce and destroy Zybin for no particular reason. He also still wonders who was the

[543] Ibid., pp. 369-370.
[544] Ibid., pp. 370-371.
[545] The use of "heroic" refers to the heroic attributes of the protagonist of Ethel Voynich's novel *The Gadfly*, about an Italian revolutionary in the 19th Century whose aim is the unification of Italy. The novel was very popular in the Soviet Union and it was both made into an opera in 1928 and into a film in 1955 with a score composed by Dmitri Shostakovich. For Kornilov to be associated with a novel of such popularity was something of an honour.
[546] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 375.

second student to betray Christ. It becomes evident that Kornilov identifies with the story as he has also decided to betray Zybin. Fear as Kornilov depicts it is all embracing and possessive to the point that no one can escape it.

> Откуда берется страх? Не шкурный, а другой. Ведь он ни от чего не зависит. Ни от разума, ни от характера – ни от чего! Ну когда человек дорожит чем-нибудь и его пугают, что вот сейчас придут и заберут, то понятно, чего он пугается. А если он уже ничем не дорожит, тогда что? Тогда почему он боится? Чего?[547]

Kornilov's question suggests that although he does not care for anything anymore, he is still frightened. It is an uncanny fear that comes from beyond the human faculty for fear, a fear that becomes the person himself. It was precisely this fear that Kornilov wanted to escape by becoming an informer, and instead he is surrounded by fear. Neither the informers nor the common citizens escape the fear that paralyses the whole society. Being an informer, Kornilov is like the messenger of a greater evil who has to roam the earth spreading the fear. Even Dasha he thinks is now infected by his madness: "Видимо, он тоже заразил её безумием."[548]

The story of Kornilov ends with a quotation from Nikolai Gogol's "Strashnaia mest'" ("A Terrible Vengeance"), which is also the epigraph for this part of the novel: "Он умер и сейчас же открыл глаза. Но был он уже мертвец и глядел как мертвец."[549] As in Gogol's story, Kornilov has become a spirit that haunts the earth. Kornilov is finally dissociated from his former self and is now spiritually dead. As Doyle points out: "Kornilov has only been able to save his physical life at the price of spiritual death."[550] Like the dead beauties scattered around the novel, Kornilov is dead but has open eyes. While the "dead beauties" had eyes that

[547] Ibid., p. 378.
[548] Ibid., p. 380.
[549] Ibid.
[550] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 151.

were alive, Kornilov's eyes are what betray his death. His sight now belongs to the NKVD, his ability to observe and report.

Kornilov both dies and awakens from death; death is ambiguous, presented on the one hand as not permanent and on the other hand as alive. The image of a man looking dead is uncanny as it combines something that can and cannot be known into one. It is an impossible image. Also, the fiction of Gogol is presented as something real, thus making the reality in Dombrovskii's fictional world unstable. It is a reversal of Freud's suggestion that being "faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary" is uncanny, as here we are faced with the fiction of something that we have been led to think was real (even on a fictional level).[551] Thus the uncanny extends to the very style of the novel, where intertextual quotations are used to create uncertainty and leave the reader to guess as to the meaning and fate of the characters. Kornilov thus dies not only metaphorically within the novel, but he also dies as a character within the narrative of the novel, as he is split between various literary references: Judas, The Gadfly and Gogol's Antichrist figure.

Like Kornilov, Tamara Dolidze experiences a splitting of her identity. She comes across as a whole and determined character when she is introduced to the reader. She is the interrogators' Shtern and Neiman's niece, and is visiting Kazakhstan from Moscow. In Moscow, we discover, she studied drama and then suddenly abandoned it to become an interrogator. Whilst staying in Kazakhstan she gets the opportunity to practice her interrogation skills on Zybin's case. Zybin behaves with Tamara as he does with the other interrogators. As usual, he draws historical parallels, and in this case recalls Lermontov's poem "Tamara", quoting the line: "Прекрасна, как ангел Небесный, как демон, коварна и зла".[552] The duality that Zybin suggests here relates to all the female characters in the novel. Both the "sleeping beauties" and the women that inform on Zybin in *Khranitel'* (Aiupova,

[551] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 150.
[552] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 495.

Madame Death, Massovichka), represent either the dark or the beautiful. Tamara is both. The narrative of the poem also combines love, passion, a wedding and a funeral, echoing the other images in the novel. The image of a wedding and a funeral are also closely connected in the poem, reflecting the fate of the "sleeping beauties". He thus not only draws a reference to a separate narrative, but also points out that Tamara is stuck within the same images as are present in *Fakul'tet*. This intertextual reference highlights the fictional nature of the novel, unsettling the reality of Tamara's existence.

The focus on Tamara allows the reader a glimpse into the mind of the interrogators and their plans for Zybin. Even Tamara, because she is still learning, finds out the greater plans of the local NKVD. Shtern tells her about the plan for a Moscow-like show-trial and that Zybin is its principal defendant. Shtern helps Tamara to think about how to carry out her interrogation. They conclude that she needs to question the carpenter from the museum, whose name the reader discovers for the first time: Sereda. This is one of the two meetings that change Tamara profoundly; her meeting with Kalandarashvilli is the other. Meeting the carpenter, her tone is patronising and manipulative at first. The old man tells her about Zybin and that he used to love animals and was generally a good man. At this point Tamara brings out a paper which the old man has signed saying that Zybin is an anti-Soviet individual. The old man neither denies nor affirms these statements; he only confirms that it is his signature on the paper and no more. He later remarks that everyone informs on everyone and there is no longer any difference:

> Так что ж нам гневлиться друг на друга? Он на меня, я на него, а телега все идет своей путей. А там всем будет одна честь. Так что пустое все это.[…] Ему сейчас что правда, что кривда – все едино! Раз взяли,

> значит – все! Покойников с кладбища назад не таскают. Ни к чему! Они уже завонялись.[553]

The old man reveals a truth to Tamara that she should know, but does not. He clearly exposes that truth does not matter in the Soviet Law system. He also draws an analogy between the NKVD and death, and suggests that one cannot escape either. Meanwhile, the suggestion that Zybin is a dead body starting to smell stands in stark contrast to the bodies of the dead beauties, all of whom remain almost alive despite having been dead for thousands of years. It is the living who are shown to be closer to death than the dead themselves. The notion of death has become unanchored from its meaning and behaves in unpredictable ways. Sereda's assertions about the NKVD echo both Kornilov's downfall and a thought expressed by the interrogator Miachin earlier in the novel.

> Здесь люди просто пропадали. Был – и нет. И никто не вспомнит. И было в этом что-то совершенно мистическое, никогда не постижимое до конца, но неотвратимое, как рок, как внезапная смерть в фойе за стаканом пива (он видел однажды такое). Человек сразу изглаживался из памяти. Даже случайно вспомнить о нем считалось дурным тоном или бестактностью. Зона всеобщего кругового молчания существовала здесь, как и везде... Но тут она была вовсе иной – глубоко осознанной и потому почти естественной, свободной (назвал же кто-то из классиков марксизма свободу осознанной необходимостью).[554]

This is the hidden truth that rules the world of the NKVD and Soviet society as a whole. Again, the notion of something supernatural and unexplainable is present, and this world is uncanny in itself. The narrative reflects that world. When Miachin points out the silence that reigns both within the NKVD and outside, the sentence ends with ellipsis suggesting

[553] Ibid., p. 525.
[554] Ibid., p. 387.

something unsaid and unsayable. It is the truth of the functioning of this world that Tamara slowly discovers, especially as her uncle Neiman suffers this exact fate.

Another event that disturbs Tamara is the fact that the old man Sereda has brought some apples for Zybin. Apples figure largely in *Khranitel'* and now return as if from a world beyond. As Sereda suggests, apples are put by a cross on a grave, referring to Zybin's metaphorical grave. For Tamara the apples instigate a shock within her, and the episode is worth quoting at length:

> Голос у нее звучал неуверенно. В ней что-то ровно повернулось не в ту сторону.[…] Она словно чувствовала, что с этой передачей далеко не все ладно. Есть в ней особый смысл, привкус каких-то особых отношений, и он-то – этот смысл – собьет с толку не только арестанта, но и следователя. Она еще не понимала, как и чем опасен этот узелок. – Старик торопливо отдернул край платка, и тогда сверкнули крутобокие огненные яблоки, расписанные багровыми вихрями и зеленью, но она совершенно ясно чувствовала, что эти яблоки и следствие – вещи несовместные. И тут она, кажется, впервые подумала о том, что же такое вот это следствие. В духе следствия – вот этого следствия, по таким делам, в таком кабинете, с такими следователями – была развеселая хамская беспардонность и непорядочность. Но непорядочность узаконенная, установленная практикой и теорией. Здесь можно было творить что угодно, прикарманивать при обысках деньги, материться, драться, шантажировать, морить бессонницей, карцерами, голодом, вымогать, клясться честью или партбилетом, подделывать подписи, документы, протоколы, ржать, когда упоминали о Конституции ("И ты еще, болван, веришь в нее!" Это действовало как удар в подбородок), – это все было вполне в правилах этого дома; строжайше запрещалось только одно – хоть на йоту поддаться правде;

> старика заставили лгать (впрочем, зачем лгать? Просто ему дали подписать раз навсегда выработанные формулы. Так милиция всегда в протоколах пишет – "нецензурно выражался") – и это было правильно; то, что она, приняв по эстафете эту ложь, или, вернее, условную правду эту, собиралась укрепить и узаконить ее очной ставкой – это тоже было правильно (это же операция, а на операции дозволено все); то, что за эту узаконенную ложь или условную правду Зыбин получил бы срок и, конечно, оставил бы там кости – это была сама социалистическая законность, – все так. Но во всей этой стройной, строго выверенной системе не находилось места для узелка с яблоками. Она это чувствовала, хотя и не понимала ясно, в чем тут дело.[555]

The realisation of the system's structure and its implication for her is rapid and like a hallucination, reminiscent of Zybin's knowledge about the dead beauty. The narrative is fast-paced and accelerating, suggesting the weight of the knowledge that Tamara receives. The apples, as in the Garden of Eden, open up the truth to Tamara, who has until now not understood the world in which she lives. The narrative is both surreal, implying that something shifts within her, and very matter of fact, referring to the law as it is manifested within the Soviet legal system. Although the knowledge that is imparted to Tamara is clear, she is still uncertain about what is going on. The contrast between the apples – the human kindness they represent – and the dark world of the NKVD, brings forth the truth in the same manner as the image of a dangerous snake coupled with beautiful Alma-Ata highlights the destructive nature of terror. The image of the apples is thus carried through both novels on both a literal plane (they are everywhere in Alma-Ata) and a metaphorical plane (they are the key to knowledge).

[555] Ibid., pp. 523-524.

The second event that disturbs Tamara's existence and her identity as an interrogator is a dinner meeting with Kalandarashvilli and Shtern. Kalandarashvilli has just been released by Stalin from years in a concentration camp.[556] This bizarre event allows Kalandarashvilli to tell Tamara and Shtern about life in the camps. Tamara is shocked by what he tells them. "Бывали времена, когда утром не знаешь, доживешь ли до вечера.[…] Знаю только, что такого быть не может, а оно есть. Значит, бред, белая горячка. Только не человека, а чего-то более сложного! Может быть, всего человечества. Может. Не знаю!"[557] Like Kornilov, who is carrying the disease of mutual surveillance, so does Kalandarashvilli suggest that there is something beyond what one can see and comprehend; that there is an insanity that is ruling the world.

These revelations about the harsh conditions in the GULag camps, coupled with a secret and macabre plan by the authorities to drain fresh blood from dead prisoners, breaks Tamara completely.[558] When Naiman comes back to his home he finds Tamara in hysterics. She is holding the paper about camp blood transfusions and has been heard talking to herself. Neiman manages to calm her down; however, it is evident that she is no longer capable of carrying out her work. As she herself comments: "скорее всего, не он [Zybin] довел, а сама расклеилась".[559] Tamara is clearly aware that she is now divided, or dissociated from her former self. Her identity has fallen apart under the pressure of the Soviet terror. This, however, suggests that she is kind within. As Zybin says to her: "А мне жаль вас, молодость вашу, свежесть, а может быть, даже и душу – все, все жаль! Не такая она у вас скверная, как вы себе это внушили, лейтенант Долидзе! И выглядит она она совсем не так, как вам кажется."[560] Zybin can see straight through her, as he can with the dead

[556] According to Dombrovskii this is based on a true story of Bibineishvilli, who died soon after his release. Ibid., p. 575.
[557] Ibid., pp. 570, 573-574.
[558] Ibid., p. 584.
[559] Ibid., p. 587.
[560] Ibid., p. 567.

beauties. By this point Zybin has also become stronger than he was at the start of the novel; he now knows the price that he has to pay to remain free, and is willing to pay that price. As many have suggested,[561] there is a clear parallel between Zybin and Christ, and at this point it becomes evident that he, like Christ, is able to see Tamara for who she really is and forgive her her sins.

The destruction of Tamara's identity is underlined by a reference to James 1:24. "Она подошла к зеркалу, взглянула на себя и, отойдя, сразу забыла свое лицо".[562] James addresses the unwavering faith that one must have in God, stating that as soon as one wavers and does not follow God's word, one is like a man looking in the mirror and instantly forgetting his reflection: "for they look at themselves, and on going away, immediately forget what they were like." For Tamara, it is her faith in the Communist regime that is now wavering, and as a result she splits into two, the reflection in the mirror and she herself, who does not remember that reflection. It is as if she has left part of her personality in the mirror. The image is uncanny and suggests the dissociation of the self that occurs after a traumatic encounter. It is also another intrusion of a text from outside the novel, as with the quotation of Gogol in relation to Kornilov. As Lacan suggests, the mirror stage is a point of recognition of the organism's relation to reality, [563] something that is broken for Tamara. Her reactions to the world around her show her to be psychologically unstable and traumatised by knowledge. Like the legend of the snake, or the dead bodies, the truth constantly refuses to remain buried and comes to light. For her it is the truth about the Communist regime she has supported, and her own role in it: "И тут ее наконец взорвало. Но это была не злость на него, а какое-то чувство глубокого неуважения к себе, к той роли, которую ее заставили играть."[564] Knowledge and truth are not necessarily pleasant, but they are necessary in and of themselves.

[561] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 152; Semenova, "Vsiu noch'", p. 234; Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, p. 64.
[562] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 587.
[563] See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I", in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
[564] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 560.

And it is precisely reason, the ability to know and understand the world that the Communist regime has tried to abolish and that still exists no matter what. Tamara sees that she was made to be a pawn in their game. However, the apples, the encounter with Kalandarashvilli, and Zybin all wake her up from the acceptance of the world around her. So, although she, like Kornilov, dies, she is also liberated from the world in which she has lived until now. The division between her and her image in fact wakes her up from the living death she has been living.

4.6 *Abolishing death*

Both *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* depict the Stalinist terror through its uncanny manifestations and its effects on individuals. The boundary between reality and fiction is tested not only on the structural level of the novels, but also within the narrative itself. Characters find that what seems to be absurd and unbelievable is in fact real and dangerous, as in the fantastical story of the boa constrictor. On a structural level, intertextual references destabilise the fictional world of the characters as other stories define the "reality" and fates of both Tamara and Kornilov. The narrator leaves intertextuality to speak for and suggest the meaning of their crises. The novels thus, like Kalmykov's painting, extend outward to other works of fiction to then describe the inner disintegration of the characters. Gogol and the Bible stand in for a coherent explanation of this disintegration, bringing together different historical times to describe the effects of terror. Dombrovskii's novels thus expand outward through various references, to then move inward towards the single point of the 1937 terror.

This terror is depicted as traumatic and uncanny. Not only does it destroy individuals through the deeply penetrating fear and uncertainty as to one's place in the world, but it also destroys the human faculty for reason and thought. It is through art, fiction, fairy-tales and history that Dombrovskii is able to create a complete picture of 1937, as by abolishing these

the state impaired the ability of people to think about their present. Zybin obsessively collects the relics of the past and is therefore able to put the events in a larger perspective and eventually abandon his fear and resist the state. Tamara and other interrogators resist any reference made to other events in history; language has to be monological if the interrogations are to succeed. This is broken when old man Sereda brings the apples, as they stand in stark contrast to the single minded universe of the NKVD and illuminate its monological nature.

Only near encounters with death awaken the characters to their present. Death dominates the novel, but its meaning is unanchored, yet again showing the power of creativity to unsettle notions and challenge authoritarianism. The presence of death is uncanny in the novel, as it is almost living, demanding attention of both the characters and the reader. The repetitions of images of death throughout the novel add to its uncanny nature. Terror becomes intricately connected with death, as it both leads to death and is constantly surrounded by it. The dead bodies that seem to appear everywhere in the novels awaken the reader and characters to their mortality, creating a *memento mori*. Terror itself is a *memento mori* to a certain extent. At the same time, Zybin is fascinated by the dead bodies and sees beauty in them, suggesting that beauty is immortal and even present during the darkest periods of history such as the terror. Although the repetitive imagery of death creates a sinister and disturbing atmosphere, it is also used a vehicle for freedom. By unanchoring death from its meaning and finality, suggesting it is living; and by making it a double-voiced word rather than monologic, the novels present a direct challenge to the monological and authoritarian language of the Stalinist era. Death is shown to be the greatest weapon in the hands of the authorities, but by suggesting alternative meanings to this concept, the novels represent freedom.

Fakul'tet ends with the image of Kalmykov painting Kornilov, Neiman and Zybin, and the idea that they are imprinted on the canvas forever. Thus, they become immortal; life and

death are abolished through art and creativity. As the narrator concludes: “И только самые научные из них [Marsians] знали, что называется это чудо фантазией. И особенно ярко распускается оно тогда, когда Земля на своем планетном пути заходит в черные затуманенные области Рака или Скорпиона и жить в туче этих ядовитых радиаций становится совсем уж невыносимо.”[565] The novel thus ends on a positive note; no matter how much a totalitarian regime may wish to stifle its subjects, creativity is immortal, allowing for freedom to exist under totalitarianism. It is precisely this creativity that has engendered the novels, which thereby become testimonies in themselves to the ability to survive and remain whole under stifling circumstances.

[565] Ibid., p. 628.

Chapter 5

Vasilii Grossman as Viktor Shtrum and Iurii Dombrovskii as Zybin: the autobiographical self in *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba* and *Khranitel' drevnostei* and *Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei*

Although there appear to be many differences between Grossman's and Dombrovskii's writing and biographies, there are also surprising similarities between the two authors. Not only did they both write "dilogies" where the sequel was suppressed in one way or another, but they also blend fact and fiction, creating alter-egos in order to depict their own personal trauma in the context of greater historical events. Their novels can be simultaneously termed "documentary literature", testimony, fiction and autobiography. Jane Gary Harris explores the autobiographical nature of twentieth-century Russian literature and suggests that the very popular term "documentary literature" is "more inclusive than 'autobiography' or 'memoirs', since it encompasses both under one rubric."[566] Moreover, the writers' works also include fictional and testimonial elements, adding another dimension to their depiction of themselves in relation to history. This blend of autobiography, fiction and testimony is perhaps best described as "documentary literature"; however, what is more significant is the way in which this blend provides a platform for the two writers to explore the possibility of testimony through fiction and creates a space to conceive of the self as a testifying subject.

In her analysis of "autobiographical statements," Harris shows that, although autobiography is one of the oldest forms of narrative, its definition is still a source of

[566] Jane Gary Harris, *Autobiographical Statements in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 20.

contestation.[567] She discusses autobiography as a dominant form in the twentieth century and notes that the phrase "documentary fiction/literature" was coined in Russia.[568] And perhaps most importantly, she suggests that autobiography should be seen as a mode rather than a genre, proposing to "treat autobiographical narrative not merely as a nonfictional form, but as literary discourse."[569] Viewing autobiography from this point of view makes the complex nature of Grossman's and Dombrovskii's novels less defined, but also paradoxically less in need of definition. The blend of genres and discourses is common to many works of the twentieth century, the "Holocaust novel" being one example, where genre is seemingly defined by the subject rather than the style.[570] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Arkhipelag GULag: Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovania* is the paradigmatic example of this blend of genres, suggesting that narratives relating to mass traumas have been pivotal to the reimagining of genre.[571] Both Grossman's and Dombrovskii's novels fit within this genre-breaking context.

5.1 *The documentary aspects of Grossman's and Dombrovskii's writing*

Both Grossman and Dombrovskii wrote their novels as testimonies to their personal and to the collective experience of traumatic history. Grossman's novels depict the suffering engendered by the Second World War and Dombrovskii focuses on the Great Terror of 1937. Grossman was a war reporter during the war and wrote many articles narrating the horror of the war in *Krasnaia zvezda*, and thus was very familiar with bearing witness to death and destruction.[572] Grossman started writing his great novel on the battle of Stalingrad in 1946, and in a letter to Stalin called it his most important work: "работу я считаю главной работой моей

[567] Ibid., pp. 4 - 9.
[568] Ibid., pp. 13-15.
[569] Ibid., p. 17.
[570] For more on the subject see: Efraim Sicher, *The Holocaust Novel* (London: Routledge, 2005).
[571] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Arhipelag Gulag: Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2008).
[572] For more on Grossman's work at the front and for *Krasnaia zvezda*, see Beevor, *A Writer at War*.

жизни."[573] As explained in Chapter 3, the publication history of the two novels was very different as the sequel was "arrested" and the prequel heavily censored. The connection between the first and second novel is complex, and exacerbated by the many versions of *ZPD*.[574] One of the greatest differences between the two novels however, is the fact that Grossman dedicated the second novel to his mother Ekaterina Savel'evna Grossman, highlighting his emotional relationship to this particular work. Due to this seemingly minor difference the role of Shtrum and the depiction of his trauma change dramatically. In *ZPD* this is an unspoken trauma, forever outside the narrative, whereas in *Zhizn'* it becomes explicit and eventually integrated into Shtrum's identity. In *ZPD* Shtrum's role is not depicted as central, which it is in *Zhizn'*. The autobiographical relation between Shtrum and Grossman and the dedication of the book indicates that Grossman's personal trauma is closely entangled with the writing of the novel.

In their biography of Grossman John and Carol Garrard clearly outline the autobiographical aspects of Grossman's writing[575], yet both *ZPD* and *Zhizn'* are openly presented as fiction. Fiction and fact are here elevated to the same status, but they are not equal in importance. As Harris shows, through Lidiia Ginzburg's definition, documentary fiction provides the reader with a dual cognitive and emotional response, derived on the one hand from the aesthetic nature of the work and on the other, from its factual aspects.[576] For Grossman, fiction is the method through which he depicts his trauma, not a subject in itself; he does not draw attention to his literary style. The autobiographical facts are distributed throughout the novel to many characters and are not only designated to Shtrum. Krymov's visit to Iasnaia Poliana for example, is identical to the notes that Grossman made when he

[573] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 83.
[574] Both Guber and Ellis suggest that there are around 13 versions of the novel. There were also two versions published, one in 1952 and another one in 1964. For more on this subject see Chapter 3.
[575] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*.
[576] Harris, *Autobiographical Statements*, p. 22.

visited Tolstoi's home with the army.[577] Many of the scenes in Stalingrad are based on Grossman's own experience with the army during the battle of Stalingrad. But it is Shtrum who is most closely related to Grossman himself and can be seen as his alter-ego.

Dombrovskii's novels *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* are equally based on his own life and experiences. Like Grossman, Dombrovskii had the first novel published, in 1964, whilst the sequel was only published abroad, as Dombrovskii was aware that it would never pass the censorship in the USSR and that he would put himself in danger of arrest if he did submit the novel for publication.[578] As in the case of Grossman's novels, Dombrovskii's second novel is more explicit about its subject than the prequel, and therefore exhibits some discontinuity from its prequel. One of the most apparent differences between the two novels is that the first part is written as a first-person narrative, while the second novel takes the third-person perspective. However, the novel clearly follows the plot line from its prequel. In this sense, the novels are united despite the change in narration. In *Khranitel'* especially, because of the first-person narrative, the boundary between author and narrator is ambiguous. The reader does not find out the narrator's name until *Fakul'tet,* where the hero is introduced as "khranitel' Zybin". Dombrovskii explains in a questionnaire for *Voprosy literatury* his reasons for the change in the narrative mode:

> Рассказ в первой части "Хранителя древностей" ведется от имени самого Хранителя. Но вот во время дальнейшей работы, над вторым томом, выяснилось, что тут рассказчиком должен быть не герой, а лицо ему постороннее, то есть автор. Пришлось резко ломать стиль. Это и понятно. Не все можно и должно рассказывать о себе. Лучше иногда отступить в сторону и дать слово другому. Он расскажет и полнее, и

[577] For Grossman's depiction of his visit to Iasnaia poliana see Beevor, *A Writer at War*, pp. 54-55.
[578] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*.

> объективнее, и притом еще и смущаться не будет. Но это, конечно, уже не языковая, а скорее морально-этическая проблема.[579]

Dombrovskii makes it clear here that the novel is about him and his experience, although the narration may be removed to third-person narrative. This shows that the simple distinction of first- or third-person narrative voice does not affect the "factual" nature of the narrative. In fact, Dombrovskii suggests that it is third-person narration that allows him to tell the story more objectively and completely. As Harris suggests: "the autobiographical mode, unlike any other mode of narrative perception, has allowed the writer to assert himself simultaneously as a man in history *and* as a creative writer or poet by confronting the immediacy of his present consciousness with his own past as a source of human value in history."[580] The narrator thus has two functions, a literary and a factual one. As Dombrovskii suggests above, the factual and the literary have to blend sometimes to tell the story of the self more fully. However, this does not necessarily remove the factual authenticity of the narrative.

Neither Dombrovskii nor Grossman values fact over fiction; rather, fiction is a path to a moral truth or understanding of the past. As Harris suggests: "for many writers the possibility arises that the autobiographical act may be or become an act of moral testimony. To the extent that the writer's encounter with his culture or with his epoch is confrontational, it may, and often does, involve a significant moral dimension."[581] This is precisely where autobiography for Grossman and Dombrovskii is placed, within a confrontational, moral and testimonial space. As Dombrovskii outlines above, a third person narrator assists with an ethical and moral dimension of autobiography, as the narrator will not flinch in his depiction. There is a division between the narrator and the autobiographical writer – the narrator becomes a character who looks upon the writer as the subject. The use of third person foregrounds the fictional mode of the narrative and thus distances the author from himself,

[579] Dombrovskii, vol. 6, p. 339.
[580] Harris, *Autobiographical Statements*, p. 15.
[581] Ibid.

allowing autobiography to become an act external to the self. The same can be said for Grossman, who leaves no signs of autobiography in his text, thus making his life into fiction (there is no "I" in the text). For both authors, writing about themselves takes on the moral task of testifying to collective history and trauma. Thus the autobiographical mode exposes and defines the self in relation to the collective experience of trauma. This confrontation with the epoch depicted, is what Kali Tal calls an "aggressive" act of testimony. [582] For both authors under discussion here, their autobiographical acts are not only embedded in a greater context of history, but also are a form through which to address their own traumas that are closely related to the past that they confront.

5.2 *Trauma and Truth, Fact and Fiction*

The unpublished status of *Fakul'tet* and *Zhizn'* informs the discourse of the two novels. Although Grossman submitted *Zhizn'* to *Znamia* it is highly likely that he knew it was a dangerous decision. Iurii Bit-Yunan cites the fact that Grossman hid a copy before submitting the manuscript, and the self-censorship that he imposed on the version he submitted, as evidence of Grossman's awareness that the novel may have been in danger.[583] Similarly, Dombrovskii was clearly aware of the impossibility of publishing his novel in the Soviet Union, and just as Grossman's novel could not be published for 250 years, he felt that his novel would only be publishable by the year 2000.[584] Both authors were thus resigned to the fact that although they both spent over a decade writing their masterpieces, the likelihood of publishing and reaching an audience was minimal. In a way, persisting with and writing their accounts of the Stalinist times was a confrontational act itself, not only with the past but also with the present silence. The silence imposed on the authors, both at the time and, in Grossman's case, for decades after, intensified their need for testimony. Both Grossman and

[582] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 7.
[583] See Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, "Intriga i sud'ba".
[584] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 43.

Dombrovskii saw creativity as the ultimate freedom and liberation under repressed circumstances, which may be seen in the fact that the heroes in their novels exhibit a love for science, philosophy and historical artefacts, passions that are stifled by the authoritarian State.

Testifying against a silence puts a pressure on language to depict the unspoken and the unspeakable. Anne Whitehead explains that "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection."[585] A traumatic narrative is thus never a straight-forward narrative. It is believed that a traditional narrative "normalises" the exceptional nature of a traumatic event, which, however, has to be represented for moral and psychological reasons. Laub in particular points out the therapeutic nature of art and testimony, both of which enable a reconstitution of the subject's life after it has been shattered.[586] In her study of autobiography and trauma, Leigh Gilmore explains the complex framework which a testimony enters:

> Instead of claiming that language or representation is in an inimical or proscribed relation to trauma, I would argue for the importance of attention to specific formulations of trauma and to the range of settings in which they emerge. Because testimonial projects require subjects to confess, to bear witness, to make public and shareable a private and intolerable pain, they enter into a legalistic frame in which their efforts can move quickly beyond their interpretation and control, become exposed as ambiguous, and therefore subject to judgements about their veracity and worth [...]. Thus the joint project of representing the self and representing the trauma reveals their structural entanglement with law as a metaphor for authority and veracity, and as a framework within which testimonial speech is heard. Although those who can tell their stories benefit from the therapeutic balm of words,

[585] Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, p. 3.
[586] Laub, "Truth and Testimony".

> the path to this achievement is strewn with obstacles. To navigate it, some writers move away from the recognizably autobiographical forms even as they engage autobiography's central questions."[587]

Gilmore's definition of the relationship of autobiography to trauma informs my approach to the subject throughout this chapter. One of the focal issues that Gilmore points out is the transition between factuality and the simultaneous need to move away from that factuality. On the one hand testimony engages with factuality and even law, but on the other hand there is a need for "the therapeutic balm of words," which calls upon fictive and literary approaches and thus may be outside that verifiable and legal framework. Similarly to autobiography, testimony takes on two specific tasks. One is to represent the unspoken and hidden truth of "what happened", to narrate the facts, and the other is to heal through creating a cohesive narrative. Both of these aims are present in Dombrovskii's and Grossman's testimonies. Shtrum's letter from his mother in *Zhizn'* can be seen as evidence of Grossman's guilt over his mother's death, and his attempt to reconstitute the broken bond between them and thus heal himself in some manner. On the other hand, her testimony is also a factual narrative of what happened to the Jews in Ukraine. Dombrovskii's choice in changing the narrative voice deals with these two tasks by looking both at the events and the self "unflinchingly". Dombrovskii suggests that continuing to write in first-person narrative, he would not only fail to be objective, but would also feel embarrassed and unable to depict what truly happened to him. Testimony is thus a battle against silence on both fronts, in public and private.

Both Harris and Gilmore show that autobiography, because of its varied forms and manifestations, is closer to discourse than genre. In the above quotation, Gilmore points towards the division between the personal and the public in the discourse of testimony. The public aspect comes to bear on testimony in its legal implications: the truth of a witness can

[587] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 7.

be measured from the outside by a comparison to known facts, such as within a legal framework. The private aspect, however, suggests the psychological effects of trauma that can be healed by the "balm of words", and that may need indirect forms of narrative. These two sides of testimony are seemingly in contradiction, however, as Gilmore suggests that by moving away from "recognizably autobiographical forms," writers may attempt to escape some of the legalistic pressures on their testimony, which may be the reason for both Grossman and Dombrovskii's choice to make their autobiographies part of a larger fictional context.

However, although Grossman and Dombrovskii may attempt to circumvent the issues of veracity, they are also simultaneously confronting the past and the State with their writing and frequently in their comments about their work point out its factual authenticity. In their condemnation of the Soviet State the writers do engage with a form of judgement and law. Thus, they use fiction to move away from questions of veracity, but at the same time assert some deeper truth of their narratives. The question of judgement and testimony is explored more in depth in Chapter 2 on *Obeziana* and *Vse techet.*[588] Here, judgement is important mainly in the sense that Gilmore suggests, that of a statement's veracity before a judge.

Truth is rarely easily definable. The complex nature of truth is exhibited in Grossman's letter to Khrushchev: "Прежде всего должен сказать следующее: я не пришел к выводу, что в моей книге есть неправда. Я писал в своей книге то, что считал и продолжаю считать правдой, писал лишь то, что продумал, прочувствовал, перестрадал."[589] Grossman's statement shows two concepts of truth. Firstly he suggests that he has pondered on the truthfulness of his narrative and concluded that there are no untruths in the novel. This statement is a reflection of Soviet literary censorship, where the truthfulness of writing was compared and contrasted to the ultimate "truth" as demanded by ideology. "Arresting" a

[588] Chapter 2, pp. 54-92
[589] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 129.

novel would imply that it was untrue and socially harmful. Grossman, however, challenges the view of truth as something that coincides with ideology. His second assertion of truth is highly personal. It is his thoughts, his feelings and his suffering that he depicts in the novel, and the truth of personal experience cannot be contested by an outside force. Truth and personal experience are therefore equal for Grossman; the personal is linked to the autobiographical discourse within the fictional narrative. There is a division between truth of fact and truth of feeling, analogous to the collective-objective truth and personal-subjective.

Throughout his letter to Khrushchev, Grossman discusses the concepts of judgement and personal experience. Although he depicts the experience as personal, this narrow experience is then extended to the collective experience of war.

> Моя книга не есть политическая книга. Я, в меру своих ограниченных сил, говорил в ней о людях, об их горе, радости, заблуждениях, смерти, я писал о любви к людям и о сострадании к людям.
>
> В моей книге есть горькие, тяжелые страницы, обращенные к нашему недавнему прошлому, к событиям войны. Может быть читать эти страницы нелегко. Но, поверьте мне: – писать их тоже было нелегко. Но я не мог не написать их. [...] Ведь мысли писателя, его чувства, его боль есть частица общих мыслей, общей боли, общей правды.[590]

Grossman draws a clear distinction between politics and the people's experience of war, suggesting that politics functions in a different space. The experience of war is concerned with emotional life, whilst politics is not. Grossman wrote about people's love, suffering, and mistakes, as well as his love for the people and empathy towards them. So the novel is as much about the suffering itself as it is about Grossman's feelings towards that suffering. Harris's statement that autobiography creates a possibility for the writer to assert himself

[590] Ibid., pp. 129-130.

"simultaneously as a man in history *and* a creative writer" is clearly applicable here.[591] Grossman shows that it is imagination that allows him to not only depict his own suffering but also that of others. The author and his subjects come together and the experiences of the past become "общие", whether that signifies pain, thought or truth.

He knew that his book was "arrested" for political reasons, and thus engages in the discourse by which literature is understood, attempting to argue for his novel in the language of the system. He supports this argument later on in his letter:

> Но ведь отпечаток личного, субъективного имеют все произведения литературы, если они не написаны рукой ремесленника. Книга, написанная писателем, не есть прямая иллюстрация к взглядам политических и революционных вождей. Соприкасаясь с этими взглядами, иногда сливаясь с ними, иногда приходя в чем-то в противоречие с ними, книга всегда неизбежно выражает внутренний мир писателя, его чувства, близкие ему образы и не может не быть субъективной. Так всегда было. Литература не эхо, она говорит о жизни и о жизненной драме по-своему.[592]

Grossman controversially divides literature from politics. Although during Khrushchev's thaw the state was more lenient regarding literature, it was still supposed to serve the greater good of the nation. Moreover, Grossman admits to, at times, contradicting the ideology. This open disobedience is made more powerful by the fact that it is something that reflects his inner world (выражает внутренний мир писателя). Grossman thus, bravely challenges the general nature of authorship in the Soviet Union. By using fiction in his writing, rather than straightforward autobiography, however, Grossman is shielding himself with creativity, whose truth statements are more ambiguous and subjective. Yet, this ambiguity and

[591] Harris, *Autobiographical Statements*, p. 15.
[592] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 130.

subjectivity is intimately connected to the author's inner world, thus giving every novel a hint of autobiography and a possibility of creative freedom.

Furthermore, Grossman suggests above that his novel is engaging with the past "страницы, обращенные к нашему недавнему прошлому", rather than merely depicting it. This conversation with the past is simultaneously painful and inevitable, because it is intrinsic to himself. Dombrovskii asserts the same imperative:

> Почему я одиннадцать лет сидел за этой толстой рукописью. Тут все очень просто – не написать ее я никак не мог. Мне была дана жизнью неповторимая возможность – я стал одним из сейчас уже не больно частых свидетелей величайшей трагедии нашей христианской эры. Как же я могу отойти в сторону и скрыть то, что видел, что знаю, то, что передумал? Идет суд. Я обязан выступить на нем. А об ответственности, будьте уверены, я давно уже предупрежден.[593]

Like Grossman, Dombrovskii states that he could not refrain from writing the novel; its writing is essential to himself. He posits himself as one of the very few witnesses who can testify to the most tragic time of the Christian era. For Dombrovskii, however, this is an opportunity: "неповторимая возможность", implying a positive aspect to witnessing, rather than a painful confrontation with a near-death experience. For Dombrovskii the focus is not on speaking about his experience, but the silencing of it: "Как же я могу отойти в сторону и скрыть". Rather than speaking up, he could not silence himself, suggesting that testifying is an inevitable act connected to seeing, knowing and thinking. Dombrovskii sees his testimony in terms of a juridical testimony. He feels an obligation to take the stand at a court that is already assembled. Dombrovskii does not explain what exactly he means by this trial: who is judging whom? The nature of the court is not only ambiguous but also multifaceted.

[593] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 698.

The piece "K istoriku" is meant as an appendix to *Fakul'tet*, in which the question of judgement and law is central. Judgement in the novel is expressed through a condemnation of perpetrators on a moral level, the collapse of legality in Soviet times and the question of what is true and judged as such; his appendix refers to all of these aspects. The piece starts with Dombrovskii explaining that he is not writing this summary for readers or critics, but for historians, investigators and prosecutors. History is thus at the centre of Dombrovskii's address: how it is to be depicted, how it is judged, and the judgements that have taken place throughout history. Dombrovskii's novel and "K istoriku" are both concerned with the miscarriage of justice. As he explains: "Во всей нашей печальной истории нет ничего более страшного, чем лишить человека его естественного убежища - закона и права."[594] Law is central in both history and in his narrative about that history.

The novel stands in for Dombrovskii at a figurative court and he suggests that it is therefore to be judged and criticised as any testimony. Its veracity is one of the issues that Dombrovskii addresses:

> Вот почему для прокуроров и следователей. Прочитав книгу, они, вероятно, потянутся к моим делам, а их по числу посадок четыре и посмотрят, насколько я злостно уклонился от действительности истины. Смотрите, граждане, и оценивайте. Я даже фамилии оставил подлинными – Хрипушин, Мячин, Смотряев, Буддо. Так что все описанное было. В одном я только допустил маленькую перестановку: мое последнее следствие велось не во время Ежова, а через несколько месяцев после него, при раннем Берии. Этим и объясняется сравнительная мягкость всего, что со мной происходило.[595]

Dombrovskii here points to the veracity of a testimonial statement. He expects his work to be judged on its representation of reality, especially by investigators and prosecutors. They will

[594] Ibid., p. 696.
[595] Ibid., p. 694.

be looking at law as it is represented in the narrative, and treating the narrative as a subject of investigation. Dombrovskii uses his own experience as an example for investigating the law itself. He thus places his testimony in a legal context, although it is clearly fictional.

Speaking to future readers and suggesting that they investigate the novel highlights a temporal gap between the writing and reading of the works. Dombrovskii is not only confronting the present silence surrounding the subject, but also looks to the ways in which his novel will be perceived in the future. This is what Harris calls "autobiographical time": "If the 'autobiographical time' is initiated by the writer taking up his pen to confront his own experience of history, his consciousness of the moment of writing is complicated by the fact that he is simultaneously attempting to recollect his past while reimagining and restructuring it according to the ideological and aesthetic principles determined by his present experience."[596] Dombrovskii's autobiographical time, however, is also concerned with the future when his novel is read, and the conditions under which it will be read. The fact that both Grossman and Dombrovskii wrote more or less in secret makes it hard to judge the possible impact of the present, but this perhaps relates to the fact that both authors very clearly point out the silence that surrounds the subject matter of their novels. Neither of them could write within the literary style of the present, as these notions would obliterate any possibility of writing about their subject. It is more appropriate to call it "testimonial time", which is concerned with the impact of the past on the future.

5.3 *Individual and Collective Truths*

Dombrovskii openly states that the events in his novel are true, and that it is closely related to reality; even the names of characters are left unchanged, and he points out where he deviates from real events, for example, that he was arrested under Beria and not Ezhov.[597] The reason

[596] Harris, *Autobiographical Statements*, p. 15.
[597] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 694.

for this is not given, but one can surmise that the year 1937 lends itself better to the representational role it plays in the novel. 1937 embodies the cataclysmic point of the Stalinist terror and becomes a synecdoche for it. Similarly, the fictional form of Dombrovskii stands in for both himself and others who were abused by the miscarriage of justice. Gilmore connects this representational nature of testimony to the notion of nation and belonging:

> The interface of singular and shareable goes to the issue of political representation, for the autobiographical self who is cut off from others, even as it stands for them, is a metaphor for the citizen. Once separated conceptually from a nation, a family, a place, and a branching set of contingencies, how does an individual recognize this disestablished self?
>
> In this context, we could say that the cultural work performed in the name of autobiography profoundly concerns representations of citizenship and the nation. Autobiography's investment in the representative person allies it to the project of lending substance to the national fantasy of belonging.[598]

In testimony this particular belonging takes on a complex nature as trauma breaks the initial bonds between individuals and puts into question one's belonging to the same set of principles and morals.[599] Once an aggressive and violent act has been committed by one against the other, it is hard for victims to trust in the human bond again.[600] Testimony in this case is a way to bridge this gap through empathy and reconstitute the connection between individuals.[601] In Grossman and Dombrovskii's case their autobiographical novels do just that. They attempt to depict the suffering of the people, about which Grossman is clear in his letter to Khrushchev. But at the same time they distance themselves from the nation as represented by the government and State as a whole. A division is therefore posited between

[598] Gilmore, *Limits of Autobiography*, p. 12.
[599] Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, *Traumatic Stress*.
[600] Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn, "Annihilation and Restoration: Post-Traumatic Memory as a Pathway and Obstacle to Recovery", *The International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 11 (1984), pp. 327-344.
[601] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*; Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn, "Failed Empathy - A Central Theme in the Survivor's Holocaust Experience", *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 6 (1989), pp. 377-400.

people and nation, which is one of the reasons that made their novels controversial and unpublishable in the Soviet Union. In the moment of writing the authors are aware that they are already on trial for creating "lies" about the Soviet system. Hence, Grossman's letter to Khrushchev and the trial he calls for:

> Дело в праве писать правду, выстраданную и вызревшую на протяжении долгих лет жизни.
>
> […]
>
> Пусть советские люди, советские читатели, для которых я пишу 30 лет, судят, что правда и что ложь в моей книге.
>
> Но читатель лишен возможности судить меня и мой труд тем судом, который страшнее любого другого суда – я имею в виду суд сердца, суд совести. Я хотел и хочу этого суда.[602]

Both Dombrovskii and Grossman encourage the judgement of their text in terms of their authenticity. Dombrovskii exposes his fictionalisation of the narrative whilst showing its authenticity, and Grossman appeals to a greater truth. Dombrovskii addresses the historian, the prosecutor and the investigator, whilst Grossman appeals to the reader. However, both authors suggest that there is a trial at which their texts must be judged. Dombrovskii simply states: "Идет суд," and Grossman pleads for a trial of heart and conscience, a very personal and subjective trial. Both trials are concerned with establishing truth. One truth is the veracity of the statement and the other, a higher truth embedded within the novels. Truth in this case is both connected to the autobiographical self and to the events that it depicts, it is personal-subjective and collective-objective. It can be verified not only by the writers but also by others outside the novel, thus establishing its factual nature.

This ability to verify an autobiographically inspired truth through collective means is something Jacques Derrida discusses in his essay "Demeure: Fiction and Testimony".[603] In his

[602] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 131.

reading of Maurice Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, Derrida discusses testimony in its connection to law. Within a court of law, as Derrida explains, there is no space for fiction to blend with testimony, however: "there is no testimony that does not structurally imply in itself the possibility of fiction".[604] For Derrida there is an uncomfortable leakage between judicial testimony and fictional, personal and subjective testimony:

> ...if testimony thereby became proof, information, certainty, or archive, it would lose its function as testimony. In order to remain testimony, it must therefore allow itself to be haunted. It must allow itself to be parasitized by precisely what it excludes from its inner depths, the *possibility*, at least, of literature. We will try to remain [*demeurer*] in this undecidable limit. It is a chance and a threat, a resource both of testimony and of literary fiction, law and non-law, truth and non-truth, veracity and lie, faithfulness and perjury.[605]

Testimony thus is precisely a balancing at a limit between two extremes, truth and untruth. This haunting of fiction is something that is at the core of traumatic writing, emphasizing the need to stay faithful to trauma but at the same time to make a text readable. Gilmore also points out that the limit of autobiography is precisely its separateness from fiction.[606] She further suggests:

> While trauma has become a pervasive subject in contemporary self-representation, it is nonetheless experienced as that which breaks the frame. Because trauma is typically defined as the unprecedented, its centrality in self-representation intensifies the paradox of representativeness. Indeed autobiography's paradox is foregrounded so explicitly that the self-representation of trauma confronts itself as a theoretical impossibility.[607]

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[603] Blanchot and Derrida, *The Instant of My Death*.
[604] Ibid., p. 29.
[605] Ibid., pp. 29-30.
[606] Gilmore, *Limits of Autobiography*, p. 9.
[607] Ibid., p. 8.

It is not that the possibility or the impossibility of testimony exclude one another, rather, testimony is a blend of both, and that is one of the reasons why it tells two different kinds of truth. It is this complex relationship between narration and silence that is foregrounded in traumatic narratives, which is also its haunting. Derrida continues:

> In essence a testimony is always autobiographical: it tells, in the first person, the shareable and unshareable secret of what happened to me, to me, to me alone, the absolute secret of what I was in the position to live, see, hear, touch, sense, and feel. But the classical concept of attestation, like that of autobiography, seems by law to exclude both fiction and art, as soon as the truth, all the truth and nothing but the truth, is owing. By law, a testimony must not be a work of art or a fiction.[608]

Testimony is thus trapped between being shareable and unshareable; it demands literary language to represent this duality. However, simultaneously, it is this literary nature that forces testimony outside law. This possibility of sharing allows the truth statements within the testimony to be tested against a common knowledge and understanding. Derrida highlights that a testimony has to be both singular and universal, unique and universalizable:

> The irreplaceable must always allow itself to be replaced on the spot. In saying: I swear to tell the truth, where I have been the only one to see or hear and where I am the only one who can attest to it, this is true to the extent that anyone who *in my place*, at that instant, would have seen or heard or touched the same thing and could repeat, exemplarily, universally, the truth of my testimony.[609]

This is part of the trial that both Grossman and Dombrovskii expect and demand of their novels. This is the testing of the true in the narrative, the establishing of the facts, which Dombrovskii clearly points out in "K istoriku" and Grossman in his assertion that: "Я писал в

[608] Blanchot and Derrida, *The Instant of My Death*, p. 43.
[609] Ibid., p. 41.

своей книге то, что считал и продолжаю считать правдой, писал лишь то, что продумал, прочувствовал, перестрадал."[610] This same establishment of truth is to be found in autobiography: Gilmore explains that the autobiographer is both unique and representative.[611] This replaceability is what extends the narrative beyond the narrow confine of the autobiographical narrative. It extends to a collective and thus becomes to a certain extent representative of what happened.

However, replaceability is complicated by the other truth in the narrative, not the factual, but the deeper moral truth that Grossman suggests can be judged by the heart and conscience of the reader. He asks the reader to make the moral judgements in his place and to judge the event from that position. Here is where a testimony is haunted, in Derrida's terms, by the fictional. It enables the extension of the subjective and personal to the objective and to assert truths beyond the confines of the autobiographical statement. Thus, the autobiographical discourse lends the novel a factual truth, whilst the fictional aspect provides a vision of a different kind of truth. This truth cannot be collectively agreed upon, but it often speaks *for* the collective. It shows *how* something was, rather than *what* it was. Furthermore, it can be extended to that "higher" form of truth, which again is something that speaks for all and acquires the nature of generality, but remains highly subjective. This is what Grossman means when he asks for the trial of the heart and conscience from his readers. Under discussion in this chapter, however, are the first two types of truth, the "what" and the "how", and the ways in which these are explored through the autobiographical testimonial discourse within the fictional form.

Of particular interest is the way in which both authors conceptualise their own identity in relation to their trauma. As shown in the previous chapters, identity and trauma are closely entwined, the one affecting the other. Here, it is the authors' conceptualising of themselves as

[610] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 129.
[611] Gilmore, *Limits of Autobiography*, p. 8.

actors in a greater trauma and their fictional response to that trauma that are under investigation. Derrida calls the connection between trauma and fiction a "miracle":

> ...any testimony testifies in essence to the miraculous and the extraordinary from the moment it must, by definition, appeal to an act of faith beyond any proof. When one testifies, even on the subject of the most ordinary and the most "normal" event, one asks the other to believe one at one's word as if it were a matter of miracle. Where it shares its condition with literary fiction, testimoniality belongs *a priori* to the order of the miraculous. [...] The miracle is the essential line of union between testimony and fiction.[612]

Testimony and fiction meet in their ability to immortalise the event or the individual; both represent a challenge to death and speak against it. Blanchot suggests that to write an autobiography "*in the manner of a work of art*" is to seek to survive, and Derrida concludes that testimony is inevitably tied in with "*survivance*".[613] For Grossman and Dombrovskii the notion of *survivance* is slightly different. Whereas Grossman constantly finds himself on the periphery of death and has to survive his mother's death, Dombrovskii nearly died in Kolyma and was released from the camps as he was expected to die. Describing his experiences to Varpakhovskii in a letter in 1956, Dombrovskii explains it the following way:

> Там в бухте Находка то на земле, то на нарах, то на больничной койке я провалялся год. Умирал, умирал и не умер. (Помните, Вы как-то мне говорили, что если случится железнодорожная катастрофа, то погибнут все, кроме Вас, – Вы столько пережили, что бессмертны. Вот таким же Вечным Жидом чувствовал себя и я.) Когда выяснилось, что я уж и не умру, меня вместе с другими кащеями [*sic*] погрузили в товарняк и повезли.[614]

[612] Blanchot and Derrida, *The Instant of My Death*, p. 75
[613] Ibid., pp. 44,45.
[614] Dombrovskii, vol. 6, pp. 366-375.

As Derrida suggests, testifying can only take place when "one has lived longer than what has come to pass [...] I am the only one who can testify to my death – on the condition that I survive it".[615] Dombrovskii depicts the complex relationship between survival and immortality. Surviving is beyond belief in the same way that testifying to one's own death is impossible. Dombrovskii was faced at the same time with his own death and the impossibility of surviving it. This survival challenges Dombrovskii's conception of his identity, and through a fictional and literary approach he is able to reconfigure and reinterpret his identity. He describes himself as an "Eternal Yid" and a "*koshchei*". As Doyle shows, Dombrovskii's description of his lineage is both "colourful and romantic", but "all evidence indicates that his family was of Polish Jewish origin".[616] Dombrovskii on the other hand often describes himself as a gypsy, something of which Doyle found little evidence.[617] It becomes apparent that Dombrovskii plays with his own identity, and perhaps the choice of identity as a gypsy allows him the freedom that he is looking for.[618] So the reference to being an eternal Yid is both tied in with his true ancestry and the history of Jewish suffering. The reference to *koshchei*, the Russian fairy-tale character whose second name is "immortal", is also present in *Khranitel'*, where the characters speak of their lives depending on a needle in an egg, which is in a pike in the sea.[619] Dombrovskii's use of metaphor shows the inevitable link between testimony and fiction. On another level it also illuminates the link between identity and trauma, where the two are interconnected and understanding survival takes place within the understanding of the self. Dombrovskii thus testifies from beyond death, to his own imminent death, and immortalises its memory in fictional form. Only fiction can represent this paradox

[615] Blanchot and Derrida, *The Instant of My Death*, p. 45.
[616] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 5.
[617] Ibid. For more on this subject see Merlen Korallov, "Chtyre natsional'nosti Iuriia Dombrovskogo": http://ermitazh.theatre.ru/people/creators/writers/dombrovsky/15056/ (Accessed on 20/07/2012)
[618] Both Dombrovskii and Tertz/Siniavskii focus on Pushkin's depiction of Gypsies as a commingling of freedom and obedience to fate. See "Tsygany shumnoiu tolpoi..." in Dombrovskii, vol. 6, pp. 187-209; Abram Tertz, *Progulki s Pushkinom* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange, 1975).
[619] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 281.

which, as Gilmore suggests, "is foregrounded so explicitly that the self-representation of trauma confronts itself as a theoretical impossibility."[620]

Although in the writing of both authors trauma is represented as the open wound within and as an unspeakable darkness and silence, they also actively engage with trauma as an assault by an external other and refuse to remain passive victims. Both reconfigure their own identities to integrate trauma into their being, becoming actively engaged with their own and collective history. The collective aspect becomes crucial here as both writers suggest that they are speaking and standing in for people who could not testify. At the same time the collective is implicated in the trauma itself; both authors depict an assault on themselves by the collective which attempts to subjugate them to the will of the State. Thus, the collective is implied within the testimony in the representational role that the two alter-egos play, and as the very thing against which they struggle. This can be seen in the depiction of other characters such as Krymov and Kornilov, both of whom incorporate the authors' lament about the violence and influence of the state, and at the same time depict the violent forces of collective terror. This duality of victim and perpetrator is what makes the representation of the collective and the individual complex, as it unites two seemingly opposing responses. Both Grossman's and Dombrovskii's novels are conceived in the impossibility of comprehending trauma, but at the same time depict the self as engaging with that trauma in its collective and private dimensions. This paradoxical nature of the two works is what makes their narratives open-ended, refusing to normalise the event.

5.4 *Silence, Darkness and the "Black Hole of Trauma"*

In *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Grossman writes a last letter from Anna Shtrum to her son Viktor, depicting her final days in the Ghetto. This letter is clearly inspired by Grossman's mother's

[620] Gilmore, *Limits of Autobiography*, p. 8.

fate, and is his way of creating a testimony for another. This is where fiction allows Grossman to look beyond the self and intertwine his trauma and testimony with that of another. The death of Grossman's mother in a Jewish Ghetto in Ukraine is deeply connected to the creation of *Zhizn'*. As mentioned above, the novel is dedicated to his mother, but more than that, it enabled Grossman to immortalise his mother in the novel. This is another aspect of the immortal that a witness achieves through testimony, especially through fiction. Grossman wrote two letters to his mother after her death, in 1950 and in 1961, in which he explained that the novel is not only a manifestation of his love for her, but is also an attempt to keep her memory alive. As he explains: "Я – это ты, моя родная. И пока живу я – жива ты. А когда я умру – ты будешь жить в той книге которую я посвятил тебе и судьба которой схожа с твоей судьбой."[621] Grossman describes a union between all three – himself, his mother and the novel – one can stand in for the other. This is of course not to say that they are equal, or that one can truly replace another, but there is a sense that they all speak for each other. Literature in this way becomes an immortalisation of the person it depicts. As Wieviorka suggests: "Above all, at a time when death is omnipresent, the idea arises that the work of art is eternal, that it alone can guarantee memory, that is, immortality."[622] Wieviorka discusses a literary testimony by Calel Perechodnik, who took his daughter to the area from where the Jews of Otwock were deported and for whom he composes his testimony. The language in Perechodnik's testimony and Grossman's letters is strikingly similar. Wieviorka quotes Perechodnik:

> These diaries are that fetus [sic] – and I believe they will be printed one day so that the whole world will know of Your suffering. I wrote them for Your glory in order to make You immortal, so they will be Your eternal

[621] For the letters in English, see Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 352-353; Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 107.
[622] Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 41.

> monument. [...] Now I feel an immortality in myself because I have created an immortal work. I have perpetuated You for the ages.[623]

The belief in the immortality of art and the immortality that it lends to the individuals within art seems to be universal. Wieviorka calls this testimony a protest against death, and one can clearly see that Grossman's letters to his mother not only show an inability to accept her death but also a sense that art can immortalise her. Grossman describes how the people that have known and loved his mother have died and therefore she is erased from collective memory and ceases to exist.[624] This remembering is regained in the novel that not only immortalises the memory of his mother, but also creates a collective memory and stands in for it. Derrida's assertion about the replaceability of witness gains another dimension in this context. It has less to do with verifying a truth but more with collective memorialisation. The relationship between the fictive representation of Grossman as Viktor Shtrum and the death of his mother shows the ways in which trauma is incorporated into the autobiographical identity.

Shtrum, like many other characters in Grossman's novels, is full of contradictions. Although based on Grossman himself, he is not depicted in a particularly positive light. The relationship between Shtrum and his mother Anna Semenovna is established in *Za pravoe delo*. This relationship runs parallel to Shtrum's wife's relationship to her son Tolia. Liudmila's love for Tolia is boundless, but, Shtrum fails to recognise the similarity of her love for her son and his love for his mother. Liudmila and Shtrum mourn their son and mother and fail to communicate their feelings to each other. Their thought processes suggest that this sharing would betray their personal traumas. "У него не было потребности рассказать о том, что он чувствует, жене, дочери, друзьям, он ни с кем не хотел делиться тем, что переживал."[625] For both, mourning and memory of their loved ones permeates their whole

[623] Ibid., p. 42.
[624] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 107.
[625] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 413.

being and existence, something that makes it impossible to speak, of as it is larger than the self.

Shtrum's – and Grossman's – relationship to his mother is also his relationship to humanity as a whole. So, although he seems to fail to share his trauma in the novel, it unites him with the greater collective outside the novel. As Grossman writes in his letter to his mother: "Я почти все время думал о тебе, работая последние десять лет; – эта моя работа посвящена моей любви, преданности людям, потому она и отдана тебе. Ты для меня человеческое и твоя страшная судьба – это судьба, участь человека в нечеловеческое время."[626] The collective and the individual become entwined; testimony to the life of one is also a testimony to the trauma of millions. The fate of his mother is tied in with the fate not only of the people, but also of the novel, which Grossman sees as being representative of his mother's fate. By extension the novel is also the fate of the people, and all three aspects can replace each other. In this triad it is Grossman, or Shtrum, that disappears or is engulfed by the novel. Grossman himself is absent and acts as a witness who speaks for others, but is present through Shtrum.

Early on in *ZPD* Shtrum unites his feelings towards the war with those towards his mother. His mother's letters are more anxious about the beginning of the war, and in her last postcard to him she implies that the city is being bombed and that she feels that her fate is tied in with that of the people around her. In shaking handwriting, she adds a last note asking Shtrum to give her love to Liudmila and Tolia and to kiss Nadia's sad and beautiful eyes.[627] These words, arriving from behind enemy lines, bring the war into focus for Shtrum: "И снова мысли Штрума возвращались к тому времени, когда в тайне вызревала война, и ему хотелось соединить, связать огромные события мировой истории со своей жизнью,

[626] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 107.
[627] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 129.

со своими волнениями, привязонностями, болью."[628] Shtrum's feelings aroused by his mother's postcard are connected to a greater humanity. It is a desire rather than an actuality; history and the self are joined in a complex relationship whereby one affects the other. By embracing the events of world history, Shtrum would be able to respond to them rather than be a passive participant. The events of history affect Shtrum's life more and more throughout the narrative, and he becomes actively involved and has to take a stand against everything that is happening. Shtrum moves from blindness to an awareness of the Soviet system, which is closely tied in with his job as a physicist. Shtrum's passion for science and his love for his mother are the two main strands that run throughout the novels and connect him to the greater humanity. Similar observations can be made about Zybin in *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet*, as will be discussed below.

The novel being an embodiment of Grossman's love for his mother, the relationship between Shtrum and Anna Semenovna also takes place through the written word. The physical distance between son and mother is filled by writing. For Grossman the written word allows him to conjure up an image of his mother during her last days alive and imaginatively take a farewell of himself from her point of view. In this way writing can also bridge a gap in time, as shown above in relation to autobiographical time.[629] The message in a letter always reaches its destination belatedly; it is inevitably temporally distant from both the event it depicts and when it is read. Writing can not only become immortal, but it can also speak from beyond the grave. Just as the postcard takes Shtrum back to the time when war was still uncertain, so is his knowledge about his mother's life very uncertain. The postcard only implies that the war has reached Anna Semenovna's home. The shaking handwriting is a trace from the past suggesting the possible effects of war, which leads Shtrum to surmise that his mother is in danger. The physical space between mother and son is exemplified by the

[628] Ibid., pp. 129-130.
[629] Harris, *Autobiographical Statements*, p. 15.

temporal gap between the postcard (and later letter). Shtrum cannot reach his mother behind enemy lines, whilst her writing becomes a testimony to that inability to connect. Reading her postcard, Shtrum knows of her fate after it has happened, whereas Anna Semenovna is only anticipating it when writing. The event of which both are aware is outside of the narrative, and embraced by the temporal gap.

Anna Semenovna is present in the text only through writing, Grossman does not depict her as a character, but as someone who is constantly absent from the main plot of the novel. Yet she is clearly connected to the plot. Grossman gives Shtrum the same dream he had himself, which he depicts in the first letter to his mother:

> Но еще в сентябре 1941 года я чувствовал сердцем, что тебя нет. Ночью, на фронте я видел сон – вошел в комнату, ясно зная, что это твоя комната, и увидел пустое кресло, ясно зная, что ты в нем спала; свешивался с кресла платок, которым ты прикрывала ноги. Я смотрел на это пустое кресло долго, а когда проснулся знал, что тебя уже нет на земле.[630]

In *ZPD* he depicts the event in the following way:

> Ночью ему приснилось, что он вошел в какую-то комнату, заваленную подушками, сброшенными на пол простынями, подошел к креслу, еще, казалось, хранившему тепло сидевшего в нем недавно человека. Комната была пустой, видимо, жильцы внезапно ушли из нее среди ночи. Он долго смотрел на полусвесившийся с кресла платок – и вдруг понял, что в этом кресле спала его мать. Сейчас оно стояло пустым, в пустой комнате...[631]

The dream in *ZPD* is neither followed nor preceded by any explanation or reflection, but stands as a separate episode in the novel; it is not integrated into the narrative, suggesting that

[630] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 107.
[631] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 133.

no reflection or understanding can be gained from it. In Grossman's depiction of his dream he highlights the fact that he is "clearly aware" that it is his mother's room and that she is no longer alive. In *ZPD* the case is different and Shtrum is not aware of where he is, as signalled by the words: "какую-то комнату", "казалось", and "видимо". The realisation that it is his mother's armchair and that it still retains her heat is sudden. His mother's death not only haunts him through the dream but also within the dream; she is gone but a trace of her remains. This is reminiscent of Primo Levi's depiction of trauma as a "dream within other dreams", suggesting an inability to avoid the traumatic memory.[632] Her death and the certain knowledge of it is a missed experience; Shtrum cannot confront her death, although it is part of his life.

In her study of trauma, Caruth discusses what it means to awaken to a death according to Freud and Lacan. Freud describes a case where a father of a dead boy has a dream in which his son is calling for him. In the dream the son is burning and asks his father: "*Father don't you see I'm burning?*"[633] Upon waking, the father realises that there is a fire in his dead son's room. Caruth presents many differing readings of this dream, but ultimately the awakening is facing the impossibility of witnessing and the demand for a witness by the dying subject: "the awakening represents a paradox about the necessity and impossibility of confronting death."[634] It is precisely this that Shtrum is attempting to face; the warm chair represents the impossibility of witnessing his mother's death, but the dream is his necessity for it. The dream stands on its own in the narrative and is enveloped in darkness, silence and emptiness; it is the absence itself that Shtrum confronts, an absence that in its nature is impossible to confront and imbue with meaning. It is precisely the absence of presence that is at the core of the dream, as his mother and whoever else was there have left a trace to make their absence known. The dream's placement in the narrative and the emptiness that it represents makes it

[632] Quoted in Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 101.
[633] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 93.
[634] Ibid., p. 100.

into a "black hole" in the narrative, where it stands on its own, depicting a nightmarish lack. For Grossman and Shtrum this dream signals the death of the mother. However, for Grossman this meant recreating her in his narrative and writing to her posthumously. Caruth explains that: "To awaken is thus to bear the imperative to survive: to survive no longer simply as the father of a child, but as the one who must tell *what it means not to see*".[635] Similarly Grossman/Shtrum's awakening is a survival that has the ethical implication to witness and to testify. Grossman's survival is depicted in both *ZPD* and *Zhizn',* where he depicts this inability to witness his mother's death but also his attempt to do so by creating her own testimony. This inability to witness permeates the representation of Shtrum's mother's death, and is contrasted to the presence of his mother through her testimony.

As mentioned above, it is through the written word that the trace of Shtrum's mother is represented. This trace reaches Shtrum from beyond the grave when he receives her testimony and her farewell from the other side of the frontline. He receives the letter in *ZPD* but it is only in *Zhizn'* that the reader finds out about its content. Shtrum does not attach any meaning to the package initially, but realising that it is from his mother he awakens in the night and gets dressed: "точно его из темноты позвал спокойный, внятный годос."[636] Writing represents the presence of the absent person. Seeing his mother's words is a similar haunting to the dream; both happen during the night and stand outside the normal course of life. Darkness is the place where his mother's absence resides. It is also a temporally different space: it testifies to a death after its event and is outside Shtrum's normal daily life. Shtrum looks through the package and realises it is a collection of notes written by his mother from the ghetto in which she lived. The narrator explains: "это было ее прощание с сыном..."[637] The testimony that Anna Shtrum writes is not only a description of the events in the ghetto but also a farewell. The two stand equally side by side.

[635] Ibid., p. 105.
[636] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 225.
[637] Ibid.

Anna is concerned with both testifying to the events she witnessed and bidding farewell to her son. These notes have a profound effect on Shtrum: "Исчезло ощущение времени. Он даже не спросил себя, как эта тетрадь попала в Сталинград, через линию фронта..."[638] The narrative again suggests a traumatic void, in terms of both time and the way in which the letter has reached Shtrum. Its presence is impossible, yet it testifies to an imminent absence. This imminent absence has already happened, yet it is only in this moment that Shtrum finds out about it. Again, the temporal gap between the two engulfs the actual event of his mother's death and stands as a testimony to it. It is an absence of witnessed time. The reader does not find out what Anna Shtrum writes; the writing disappears into this nightly void. The next moment is the morning and Strum emerges into a bright and beautiful day. Not only is the content of the letter absent from the narrative, but so is Shtrum's reading of it. Both the mother's and Shtrum's traumas are absent from the narrative. The only testament to this event is Shtrum's expectation that his face has changed. He looks himself in the mirror expecting to see an aged and sorrowful face, but realises that he has not changed. "Вот и все", he concludes.[639] This simple summary stands in a stark contrast to the gravity of the letter. It suggests the impossibility of concluding such an event, and signals an abrupt end. The statement is ambiguous as it refers to his mother, and it coincides with the end of the letter and the end of the night. Shtrum almost hopes for a physical manifestation of his suffering. However, he sees no visible trace of this experience and life outside goes on. In the bright sunshine of the room he focuses on a thread hanging from his bed and sees it shaking as if from the power of sunlight.[640] The darkness of the night is sharply contrasted to the lightness of the day; death is contrasted to life, and does not eliminate life. Like the dream of his mother's death, the letter is a moment that stands outside time and his life. Although it shatters Shtrum's experience of time, it also shows that time moves on, and life continues.

[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid.
[640] Ibid.

This event and the fact that Shtrum has not witnessed his mother's death, yet was also witness to her final days through the letter, is something that permeates his life. The letter replaces the experience and the empirical knowledge of the event and thus embodies his mother's death.

> По несколько раз на день проводил он ладонью по груди, по тому месту, где лежало письмо в боковом кармане пиджака. Однажды, охваченный приступом нестерпимой душевной боли, он подумал: "Если б спрятать его подальше, я постепенно успокоился бы, оно в моей жизни как раскрытая и незасыпанная могила."
>
> Но он знал, что скорей уничтожит самого себя, чем расстанется с письмом, чудом нашедшим его.[641]

Shtrum's very existence is linked to the letter and his trauma. The placement of the letter suggests that it is his heart that he is stroking, that the wound is within his heart. This physical gesture and the union of his existence with the existence of the letter adds a certain corporeality to the trauma. He is depicted as having a fit of pain, which suggests that it is something that lives within him and that he cannot control. The letter stands in for the funeral and the awareness of his mother's death. He simultaneously knows and does not know of her death, it becomes an experience that is not fully assimilated.[642] The letter represents this inability to bury the trauma; it remains alive within him as an open wound, present in everything he does.

The use of the open grave as metaphor also invokes the image of a dark void. In this case the void creates a leakage between Shtrum's daily life and the otherness of the trauma. The image of the grave and the leakage connotes the notion of haunting, which is engendered by the experience of trauma. Trauma thus haunts him and seeps into his daily life from the other side of the frontline and the other side as death. The trauma connected with his mother's

[641] Ibid., p. 413.
[642] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 5.

death is double: on the one hand he is a witness to another's testimony and on the other, he is traumatised by this testimony as it hints at a death to which Shtrum cannot be a witness. His personal trauma is trapped between the witnessing of another's testimony and his own emotions. It is an experience that seems to have no place, and because it has no place it cannot be integrated into his life.

> Штрум перечел письмо много раз. Каждый раз при чтении он испытывал чувство первопознания, которое испытывал в тот вечер на даче.
>
> Может быть его память инстинктивно сопротивлялась, не хотела и не могла включить в себя то, что своим постоянным наличием сделало бы жизнь невыносимой.[643]

As described by Freud, Caruth, van der Kolk, Laub and many others, trauma returns to haunt the person in its literal form, in the way that it was experienced the first time.[644] For Shtrum this is literally possible as he has the letter that embodies his trauma and is able to return to it in its original form. In a way, this possibility suspends time and does not allow for movement forward, as the death of his mother is fixed in time. He does not process and integrate the information in the letter, but experiences reading it as if for the first time. The narrator suggests that perhaps his memory refuses to accept this event as its truth would make life unbearable. It is thus an instinctual preservation of the self that takes place. Knowing the trauma is impossible.

This traumatic encounter permeates his whole life: "Мысль о матери возникала постоянно, вне всякой связи с тем, что он делал в это время."[645] Memory is shown to be fragmented and intrusive. Whereas in the summer house Shtrum expects his face to have

[643] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 414.
[644] Caruth, *Trauma*; Caruth, *Unclaimed*; Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and Not Knowing"; Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, *Traumatic Stress*.
[645] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 413.

changed, it is his life as a whole that becomes affected by the trauma, even though it is not evident in his face.[646] Although everything seems the same, he notices that "и почему-то все изменилось", and similarly people notice that he is not the same person although he appears the same. "Мысль о матери, словно прочная, корневая нить, вросла, включилась во все большие и малые события его жизни."[647] The image of the thread as a representation of a life is also present in the scene at the summer house. There, Shtrum sees a broken thread hanging in the sunlight. The thread represents the life of a person and is also present in Grossman's essay *Trud pisatelia* ("The Writer's Job") published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, where he depicts every human life as a thread that makes the fabric of life. In that essay Grossman denies the ability to find meaning in suffering and loss; he suggests that we do not need a comforting meaning, and that this loss should be remembered for what it is.[648]

> Каждый человек вплетается нитью в ткань жизни. Выдернута, порвана нить... Ткань жизни становится бедней и, как бы тонка, как бы хрупка и непрочна ни была эта нить, оборвавшись, исчезнув, она обедняет ткань. Новые, вплетенные в ткань жизни нити уж никогда не заменят исчезнувшую.[649]

The broken thread in *ZPD* represents Anna Shtrum's death, which then becomes a thread within Shtrum. The memory of his mother is the thread that runs through his life. He points out that it was there before but it was invisible, whereas with her death the thought of her becomes painfully apparent. This image of the thread suggests both the absence and the presence of the person. It signifies a life that is broken, leaving the fabric damaged, which the memory of that life becomes a thread within the person that remembers the dead, creating type of immortality. Furthermore, in his essay Grossman suggests that a thread cannot be

[646] Although, in *Zhizn'* Maria Ivanovna mentions to him that she can see sorrow in his eyes. This is the only reference to his features.
[647] Grossman, vol. 1, p. 413.
[648] See Anna Berzer's Proshanie for more details in Lipkin and Berzer, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, p. 124.
[649] Ibid.

replaced and the fabric forever remains damaged. There is thus no meaning to be found in the absence of a person, it only leaves gaps in the collective human existence. Although the trauma is Shtrum's, it is also a trauma that belongs to the greater whole.

Like Grossman, Dombrovskii frames his narrative about Zybin within the impossibility and void of trauma. Neither *Khranitel' drevnostei* nor *Fakul'tet nenuzhnykh veshchei* deal with what is arguably the cataclysm of Dombrovskii's life – the years in camps where he almost died. Dombrovskii wrote two chapters about the camps in *Khranitel'*, but these were removed by the censors and were later added as appendices to the novel. In his novels Dombrovskii chose to speak of the mechanisms which enable the existence of the camps, rather than the experiences within the camps themselves. However, the camps still haunt the narrative of both novels as they are the unspeakable punishment that may be inflicted on people. It is Buddo and Kalandarashvilli in *Fakul'tet* that provide Zybin with the most essential and succinct knowledge of the camps. Apart from the two short stories and some discussion in *Fakul'tet*, Dombrovskii wrote very little about the camps, and it was mainly in his poetry that he depicted the camp experience. *Fakul'tet* is accompanied by two poems where he shows his relationship both to the novel and the camps. According to his wife Klara Turumova-Dombrovskaia, after finishing the novel, Dombrovskii saw the two poems as the prologue and epilogue to the novel.[650] The first poem depicts convicts being taken to the very edge of the world where there is eternal darkness and silence. The narrator depicts a day when a friend visits him and they start remembering these past days:

Однажды друга принесло,
и стали вспоминать тогда мы
все приключенья этой ямы
и что когда произошло.
Когда бежал с работы Войтов,

[650] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 702.

когда пристрелен был такой-то...

Когда, с ноги стянув сапог,

солдат – дурак и недородок –

себе сбил пулей подбородок,

а мы скребли его с досок.

Когда мы в карцере сидели

и ногти ели, песни пели

и еле-еле не сгорели:[651]

The poem blends the dark and the light, contrasting the simple rhythm and rhyme to the dark subject of the poem. The poem shows that memory is initiated by a collective remembrance. These memories are then contrasted with the inability to remember when the events happened.

Когда ж все это с нами было?

В каком году, какой весной?

Когда с тобой происходило

все, происшедшее со мной?

Когда бежал с работы Войтов?

Когда расстрелян был такой-то?

Когда солдат, стянув сапог,

мозгами ляпнул в потолок?

Когда мы в карцере сидели?

Когда поджечь его сумели?

Когда? Когда? Когда? Когда?

О бесконечные года![652]

[651] Ibid., p. 7.
[652] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

The word “when” is used in its double connotation, implying the temporal framework and the event itself. Whereas the first stanza quoted above shows the certainty of the events, the subsequent stanzas suggest an inability to know when the events happened, highlighted by multiple question marks. Part of this inability is connected to the endless and repetitive nature of the years in camps. The traumatic experience stands outside life as a whole in the same way that the camp is situated outside the living space of people, “Привезли/на самый, самый край земли”. The camp experience is thus beyond both the personal experience of time and life, and the physical space. However, it is also relatable because it is similar to other people’s experience: “Когда с тобой происходило/все, происшедшее со мной?” This suggests that Dombrovskii’s testimony is replaceable in the sense that Derrida suggests; it can be verified by another who experienced “all” that was experienced by the speaker. This question also shows a temporal division between the speaker and the listener; the difference between “происходило” and “происшедшее” indicates a slight difference in tense, which is ambiguous, but it intimates that there is a cyclical nature to this experience, and that the listener suffered what the speaker had already survived. Yet this event is outside the narrative of the poem as there is no answer to when the events happened. This unity of suffering is then connected to the act of creativity and the vitality of testimony:

Мы все лежали у стены –
бойцы неведомой войны, –
и были ружья всей страны
на нас тогда наведены.
Обратно реки не текут,
два раза люди не живут.
Но суд бывает сотни раз!
Про этот справедливый суд
и начинаю я сейчас.

Печален будет мой рассказ.

Два раза люди не живут...[653]

There is a break in the subject of the poem between the depiction of what seems to be convicts in barracks and the philosophical statement that people only live once. Life and trial are united in the poem, showing that one depends on the other. People only live once and therefore it is important to speak about the trials that decide people's fates. This is the subject that Dombrovskii raises in "*K istoriku*," where he points out that the failure of law to protect people is the subject of his novel.

The rivers flowing in the wrong direction may both refer to Heraclitus' statement that you cannot step in the same river twice, and the Stalinist attempt to make rivers flow in the other direction. This exercise resulted in thousands of deaths, which makes Heraclitus' statement even more poignant, as people died constructing a river they could never step into. Dombrovskii repeats the line "Два раза люди не живут" highlighting the great mortality of the Gulag. The ellipsis suggests that something remains unsaid within the poem. Having already pointed out the sorrowful nature of the story – "Печален будет мой рассказ" – the following line indicates that the story is sorrowful precisely because people only live once. The unsaid is thus entangled with a possible death. This gains another dimension as the line is a direct quotation from Pushkin's "Mednyi vsadnik", which in turn depicts the madness of a young man and his eventual death. The element of flooding in the poem and Peter the Great's attempt to control nature is also reflected in Dombrovskii's poem and in the novel where Zybin dreams about the sea. Moreover, *Fakul'tet* depicts the madness of Zybin, but also his ability to survive the madness.

As old man Sereda says in *Fakul'tet*, "покойников с кладбища назад не таскают", which refers to the impossibility of surviving imprisonment.[654] Sereda suggests that if one has

[653] Ibid., p. 8.
[654] Ibid., p. 525.

been arrested, one is more or less dead. This statement underlines the importance of a fair trial as it may decide a person's life. Dombrovskii's story, as he calls it, is born out of this "fair" trial that sends people to the GULag to a certain death. For Dombrovskii this held a particularly important meaning because he almost died in the camps, which places him in the position Derrida defines, of testifying when "one has lived longer than what has come to pass".[655] Survival becomes an impossible event because people only live once and Dombrovskii should have died. He thus becomes a witness to his own death or dying. This impossible witnessing is united within the poem with the reasons for this trauma: the lack of a fair trial. The poem functions as a prologue as the speaker points to a story outside the poem, which will deal with the themes of the poem. As the poem explains: "О время, скрученное в жгут!/Рассказ мой возникает тут..." The convolution of all time is connected to the speaker's inability to tell when the events in the camp happened and also reflects Dombrovskii's statement to Varpakhovskii that they have lived through so much that they have become immortal. This traumatic memory is thus clearly present but has its own temporality that stands outside or runs parallel to life. This knot of time depicts the suffocating nature of the experience, but is also where the story is born. (This may also be reflected in the way in which Kalmykov depicts his art as originating from a single point.)[656]

Both *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* also have prologues in the form of short quotations from other works of fiction or historical writing. In *Khranitel'* the novel is preceded by a quotation from Tacitus' *The Life of Agricola*, which exhibits the same theme discussed above, of having lived longer than what has come to pass.

> мы, немногие уцелевшие, пережили не только себя, но и других: ведь из нашей жизни исторгнуто столько лет, в течение которых молодые

[655] Blanchot and Derrida, *The Instant of My Death*, p. 45.
[656] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 30.

> молча дошли до старости, а старики почти до самых границ человеческого возраста.[657]

Surviving in this quotation is connected to the years that have been eradicated from people's lives. It is within these years that people silently reach the end of time, or the end of feasible time. Surviving is thus surviving these extracted years in which one has outlived oneself. It is an existence outside of time, or normal linear time, an extraordinary time. It is also this silent movement towards death that Dombrovskii addresses in *Khranitel'*. It becomes apparent that Tacitus and Dombrovskii speak for a community, always referring to "our" suffering. The same can be seen in one of the prologues to *Fakul'tet*, where Dombrovskii quotes Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*.

> Когда спросят нас, что мы делаем, мы ответим: мы вспоминаем. Да, мы память человечества, поэтому мы в конце концов непременно победим; когда-нибудь мы вспомним так много, что выроем самую глубокую могилу в мире.[658]

Memory is compared to digging a grave, suggesting the traumatic nature of the memories. This memory also challenges an external other, whereby remembering the past is a victory. Here remembering is possible due to collective memory which stands up to the silence of the majority. The notion of collective in the above quotation, however, is complicated when contrasted to its other aspect. A positive plurality of "мы" is contrasted to a negative one of "вы", both of which inform the novels and their testimonial nature. The second aspect of the collective will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Bradbury's novel, and the idea of memory it depicts is concerned with written remembrance in the form of books. This aspect of the novel underlines Dombrovskii's own belief in the importance of fiction when remembering and memorialising the past. In the epilogue poem "Poka eto zhizn'," Dombrovskii laments the darkness that was his life.

[657] Ibid., vol.4, p. 7.
[658] Ibid., vol.5, p. 5.

Although according to Turumova-Dombrovskaia, Dombrovskii saw the poem as the epilogue, the poem is not a conclusion but an expression of hope about what creativity can do for his life. Like the prologue poem, the epilogue ponders on the human ability and need to testify to the past. Thus, although there is a testimonial novel between the two poems, there is still a hope for a testimony in the last poem, rather than an assertion of a completed testimony.

Пока это жизнь, и считаться
Приходится бедной душе
Со смертью без всяких кассаций,
С ночами в гнилом шалаше.

С дождями, с размокшей дорогой,
С ударом ружья по плечу.
И с многим, и очень со многим,
О чем и писать не хочу.

Но старясь и телом, и чувством
И весь разлетаясь, как пыль,
Я жду, что зажжется Искусством
Моя нестерпимая быль.[659]

Dombrovskii's testimony is thus not only a narration of what happened to him, but also a story of what he cannot tell: "О чем и писать не хочу". He suggests in the epilogue that his story is indescribable, unspeakable, and unbearable: "нестерпимая быль". However, he also points out that it is a story, a fable, suggesting the power of creativity to describe the impossible history through which he has lived. Dombrovskii shows the complexity of depicting the horrific history of twentieth-century Russia. He rarely speaks about the camps but his novels and poems hint at the horror experienced there. It seems that the story of his life

[659] Ibid., p. 631.

in the camps is something he is forever trying to approach but cannot do so in his autobiographic fiction. It is always just out of reach of his narrative, but is also something that he always hints at within that narrative. As Caruth would describe it, it is a history he cannot entirely possess.

5.5 *The Unspeakable Becomes Spoken*

In their dilogies, both writers deal with the unspeakable nature of the traumatic experience. The main characters are faced with a trauma that not only engenders silence, but is also born out of that silence. As shown above, this is particularly true in the way in which Dombrovskii frames his novel with prologues and an epilogue, and the silence that Grossman's main character Shtrum exhibits towards the death of his mother. Both representations suggest the impossibility of speaking about an event that seems to exceed human understanding. Within their novels, however, the authors manage to bring this silence to the fore and to bear witness to enforced silence surrounding them. In *Zhizn'* Grossman again approaches the trauma of his mother's death, but this time with an imaginary letter that Anna Shtrum sends her son. In *ZPD* the contents of the letter are not revealed, whereas in *Zhizn'* Anna Shtrum becomes a witness and a source of strength for her son, the unspoken thus becoming spoken. Shtrum undergoes two great challenges that elucidate the relationship between his mother's death and his own survival; it becomes evident that the two are intricately connected. In *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* Dombrovskii also depicts Zybin's descent into the hell of the Soviet interrogation system. As Dombrovskii explained in "K istoriku", the lawlessness of the Soviet era is its most terrifying aspect, as he depicts in *Khranitel'*. The lack of justice is exemplified though the authorities' search for a truth that suits their goals, and not the truth that is factual and verifiable. The uncertain nature of truth is underlined by a pervasive silence throughout the text, where characters are fearful of speaking and constantly admonish Zybin for his freedom of speech. It

is this collective silencing of the individual and the subjugation of the self to the collective will that both authors make apparent and spoken in their works. Their testimonies to their traumatic experiences are thus not hidden under an unspeakable silence, but on the contrary testify to that silence, making it spoken and speakable.

In *Zhizn'* Grossman re-introduces the story of Anna Shtrum's death, however in this novel, Anna has a voice of her own. In a chapter dedicated solely to the letter that Shtrum receives in *ZPD*, Anna tells her son about her last days living in a Jewish Ghetto. The letter cannot be seen as a document, yet it crosses the purely fictional boundary, because, as discussed above it conflates Grossman's experiences of what he witnessed with his feelings towards his mother. He mentions his need to imagine her last days in a posthumous letter to her: "Я десятки, а может быть сотни раз, пытался представить себе, как ты умерла, как шла на смерть, старался себе представить человека, который убил тебя. Он был последним, кто тебя видел. "[660] Fiction allows Grossman to imagine what his mother's last days were like, and also, perhaps, to make sure that the last person to see her was not her murderer but the reader. As shown above, Grossman unites the novel with his mother's life and fate, and this letter is another form of granting her immortality. Although Grossman was unable to receive a letter from his mother, or indeed to write one to her, he re-imagines the experience through his alter-ego Shtrum and challenges the elusive nature of the traumatic experience.

Facing his own inability to witness his mother's death and the silence that surrounds it –Grossman after all did not know what happened to his mother until after the war – he also confronts the lack of witnessing on her part. By creating Anna Shtrum's testimony, Grossman suggests what his own mother's testimony might have been. He collects his own research and experience with the army and enables an impossible testimony. Although many survivors of

[660] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*, p. 107.

traumatic experiences voice the need to testify for those who did not survive, Grossman takes this possibility one step further. His hope that his mother will live in his book thus becomes a possibility, as it brings back to life an event that is forever unwitnessed. Anna Shtrum starts her letter by saying that testimony relieves the pain of death: "Я хочу, чтобы ты знал о моих последних днях, с этой мыслью мне легче уйти из жизни."[661] Testimony thus eases the trauma of death. As many Holocaust survivors have stated, it is the fact that nobody would know their story that haunted them throughout their experience.[662] The same can be seen in Anna Shtrum's imperative to testify. Grossman unites both his own wish to witness his mother's death and thus be able to respond to this event, and the wish he imagines his mother must have had. The fictional letter gives voice to both Ekaterina Savel'evna and his own trauma, making the missed experience present.

In the letter Anna Shtrum depicts her life in the Jewish Ghetto where she spends her last days among other Jewish people from her neighbourhood. Being a doctor, she comes into contact with many people and finds both caring individuals and selfish ones. Her experience of living alongside other Jewish people and within very tense circumstances strengthens her love for her heritage and people in general. She explains to her son that there are both kind and unkind individuals in the world, no matter which fate or culture one looks at. Her approach is that of universal kindness and love to all, something she hopes to pass on to her son. Through her testimony Anna not only voices her own suffering, but testifies to that of others, thus becoming representative. Grossman's mother therefore stands in the novel for the suffering of the Jewish people that Grossman himself witnessed. His own Jewish identity came to the fore both during the Second World War and the rise of Fascism, and after the war when Soviet anti-Semitism grew and culminated in the Doctor's Plot. The relationship between his mother's death and his own identity is something Grossman explores through

[661] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 53.
[662] Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*.

Shtrum, who becomes aware of his Jewish identity after his mother's death. The trauma of her death and last letter affect Shtrum throughout the narrative as he attempts to integrate her humanity in his own actions. Anna concludes her last letter with: "Вот и последняя строка последнего маминого письма к тебе. Живи, живи, живи, вечно...Мама."[663] Apart from being an impossibility – a call to immortality from beyond the grave – the plea to live forever can also be read as living in a true and honest way, which is the only way to achieve liberation and freedom under repressive circumstances. The theme of freedom permeates the whole novel, and in a separate chapter the narrator points out that when one moves from life to death, one moves from freedom to slavery.[664] However, at the same time the chapter concludes that to remain free, one has to see something of oneself in the other.[665] By recognising the other's humanity, one can remain human and free. This is what Anna Shtrum conveys to her son in her letter, and is something he learns through his own encounter with the violence of the State. Shtrum experiences the power of the state in two ways, firstly by the assault of the Academy on his own autonomy as a scholar and individual, and secondly, as it forces Shtrum to become part of that repressive force. Through these trials Shtrum is tested in his ability to remain free and autonomous, and his freedom to choose the identity that keeps him connected to his mother and his Jewish heritage.

Reading the letter, Shtrum becomes aware that his and his mother's identity as Jews, which he has ignored in the past, is crucial to the way in which they are treated. The spread of Fascism and the fear of losing the war, make Shtrum's identity even more critical.

> Никогда до войны Штрум не думал о том, что он еврей, что мать его еврейка. Никогда мать не говорила с ним об этом – ни в детстве, ни в годы студенчества. Никогда за время учения в Московском

[663] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 62.
[664] Ibid., p. 415.
[665] Ibid.

> университете ни один студент, профессор, руководитель семинара не заговорил с ним об этом.
>
> Никогда до войны в институте, в Академии наук не пришлось ему слышать разговоры об этом.
>
> Никогда, ни разу не возникало в нем желания говорить об этом с Надей – объяснять ей, что мать у нее русская, а отец еврей.[666]

The repetition of the word "never" does not signify Shtrum's ignorance of his ancestral identity, as much as it highlights the fact that cultural, ethnic or religious identity should not matter. The repetition of "никогда" can be seen as the negative reflection of the repetition of "когда" in Dombrovskii's poem. For Shtrum the past "never" is contrasted with the future "always", the present is the moment of change, the realisation, the trauma. For Dombrovskii, on the other hand, it is the present reflection on the past, an attempt to place an event in a temporal framework. Both traumas are depicted through a relationship to time, as either a defining moment in time or a lost event.

Grossman does not shy away from exploring Shtrum's faults and weaknesses, laying bare both his insecurities and his vanity. This is particularly evident in Shtrum's relation to his work, which is his passion and freedom, but is also tied in with his vanity and need for admiration. The two sides of Shtrum seem irreconcilable, and indeed, he finds it hard to balance between the two. It apparent however, that his vanity is related to the collective perception of him, whereas his love of science is within him and independent of outside forces. This division between the inner and the outer existence is what makes life in the Soviet State dangerous. Shtrum's love of science is united with his lust for freedom, and the freer he is in his actions, the more inspired his work becomes:

[666] Ibid., p. 62.

> Штрума удивляло, что он достиг своего высшего научного успеха в пору, когда был подавлен горем, когда постоянная тоска давила на его мозг. Как же оно могло случиться?
>
> И почему именно после взбудораживших его опасных, смелых, острых разговоров, не имевших никакого отношения к его работе, все неразрешимое вдруг нашло решение в течение коротких мгновений?
>
> Но, конечно, это – пустое совпадение.
>
> Разобраться во всем этом было трудно...[667]

Anna Shtrum's plea for Viktor to "live forever" and his daring conversations with his friends in Kazan', all inspire him to create a theory that is immortal, and which thus enables him to "live forever". Trauma here does not prevent Shtrum from working, and he finds this hard to reconcile. It is almost a betrayal of his unmanageable sorrow to then succeed in his most significant discovery. This sorrow is depicted as a literal pressure on the mind, which should abolish the possibility of anything being created from there. The honest conversations with his friends also instil fear in Shtrum, but it becomes apparent that it is precisely this freedom that allows for creativity to exist and for him to create a new theory. The use of the word "nerazreshimoe" implies both the inability to solve a problem, and the forbidden nature of something, in this case the conversations. The forbidden and the unsolvable are thus equal, and removing the negative aspect of these two concepts allows for freedom and creativity to exist.

Although Shtrum's invention brings him fame and success in the Academy, rather than securing his place, his achievement brings him difficulties. The reason for the great offensive against Shtrum is unclear, but it is likely that it is connected to his Jewish identity. Being a subject of investigation, he is required to fill in a questionnaire about his identity and past. As Halfin, Hellbeck and Fitzpatrick among others have shown, identity, and in particular the

[667] Ibid., p. 256.

representation of the self, was one of the central tools through which the Soviet purge system functioned.[668] The questionnaire is not purely a statement of Shtrum's identity, but is also a test of his ability to understand Soviet discourse on this subject.[669] Shtrum is clearly aware of the fact that he is expected to answer in a certain way and that his answers may not coincide with what is needed at the time. This episode can be contrasted with Krymov's confident replies to the same questions in his interrogation.[670] Krymov thinks that because he is a Party member he cannot answer the questions wrongly, whereas Shtrum is aware that he is already in a precarious situation and that the questionnaire is only another form of subjugating him to the power of the Academy and will be used against him irrespective of what his answers are. Knowing that his answers will be interpreted differently, and being unsure of his identity, Shtrum falls into a confused silence when faced with the questionnaire. The first question relates to his name, surname and patronymic. Even this simple question makes him question who he really is. He wonders what his parents' relationship was like and hence what his true surname is. He remembers seeing a different name for his father, so how does he truly know his identity.

Even in the second question that asks for his date of birth, Shtrum considers pointing out that it is only what he was told. The third question relates to his gender and although Shtrum confidently puts down "male", he also feels that he is not a real man as he did not stand up for his friend Chepyzhin when he was expelled from the Academy. It is the fifth question in that is of particular concern for Shtrum as it relates to his ethnicity. Shtrum senses that although this question was irrelevant and simple before the war, it has now gained a new significance.

[668] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Halfin, *Terror*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*.
[669] See in particular Halfin, *Terror*.
[670] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 430.

> Штрум, нажимая на перо, решительными буквами написал: "еврей". Он не знал, что будет вскоре значить для сотен тысяч людей ответить на пятый вопрос анкеты: калмык, балкарец, чеченец, крымский татарин, еврей...
>
> Он не знал, что год от года будут сгущаться вокруг этого пятого пункта мрачные страсти, что страх, злоба, отчаяние, безысходность, кровь будут перебираться, перекочевывать в него из соседнего шестого пункта "социальное происхождение", что через несколько лет многие люди станут заполнять пятый пункт анкеты с тем чувством рока, с которым в прошлые десятилетия отвечали на шестой вопрос дети казачьих офицеров, дворян и фабрикантов, сыновья священников.
>
> Но он уже ощущал и предчувствовал сгущение силовых линий вокруг пятого вопроса анкеты.[671]

The response to this question differs from the others as Shtrum is certain in his answer. It is the war that has defined his identity, and his mother's death that has consolidated it. The fifth question is dangerous because Shtrum is certain and because of the time in which Shtrum lives, in the same manner that the sixth question used to be (class origin). The distance in time between what is, what was, and what will be, is elucidated by the narrator. The sixth question used to be dangerous, the fifth question will be, and Shtrum is on the precipice between the two moments. The answers to the questionnaire are precarious as their meaning changes depending on changes in the State's ideology. Shtrum feels that this questionnaire strips the individual of all humanity; man is not irreducible to a simple identity. "Этот принцип бесчеловечен. Он бесчеловечен и слеп. К людям мыслим лишь один подход – человеческий."[672] Shtrum seems to not believe in identity as such; all humans are equal and it is the removal of this equality that is the great trauma of his era. His mother, he himself and

[671] Ibid., p. 431.
[672] Ibid., p. 434.

others around him are judged on a specific perception of identity that fits with a certain ideology. He imagines creating his own Academic questionnaire that would only ask about the person's passion for science and not their ancestry, thus liberating science from what he sees as its compromising position in twentieth-century history.

The fear initiated by the questionnaire leads Shtrum into a silence; he cannot speak of who he is and he cannot adequately respond to the accusations of the Academy. Silence becomes a complex response to the events surrounding him. In order to save himself from the assault of the Academy, Shtrum writes a letter of repentance, explaining that his theory and use of foreign theories was wrong. This repentance is a lie and denies the very thing he loves and that allows him a sense of freedom. He writes this letter in secret and keeps it in case he loses his strength in the face of the fear of the State, but is deeply ashamed of writing it and is profoundly affected by it. There is a contrast between Shtrum's letter and his mother's letter. Whereas his mother's letter was a defiance of the Fascist inhumanity, Shtrum's letter would be a confirmation of the State's inhumanity, admitting that it is the state that defines his identity. Denouncing his work, Shtrum would renounce his freedom. However, the pressure of collective condemnation of him leads to him writing the confession in secret. The Academy has both written about his "anti-soviet" theory in their paper and have organised an assembly to discuss Shtrum's work and place in the Academy. Shtrum's friends and colleagues start to ignore him, and his family find themselves in complete isolation. Writing the confession is Shtrum's private release, which allows him to consider the freedom of his choices.

> Но невидимая сила жала на него. Он чувствовал ее гипнотизирующую тяжесть, она заставляла его думать так, как ей хотелось, писать под свою диктовку. Она была в нем самом, она заставляла замирать сердце, она растворяла волю, вмешивалась в его отношение к жене и дочери, в его прошлое, в мысли о юности. Он и самого себя стал ощущать скудоумным, скучным, утомляющим окружающих тусклым

> многословием. И даже работа его, казалось, потускнела, покрылась каким-то пеплом, пылью, перестала наполнять его светом и радостью. Только люди, не испытавшие на себе подобную силу, способны удивляться тем, кто покоряется ей. Люди, познавшие на себе эту силу, удивляются другому, – способности вспыхнуть хоть на миг, хоть одному гневно сорвавшемуся слову, робкому, быстрому жесту протеста.[673]

There is a great contrast between the moment when Shtrum creates his theory, as depicted above, and the moment when he writes his confession. Despite his mourning over his mother's death and the forbidden conversations that he has with his friends, he is inspired in his intellectual work. However, when he succumbs to the pressure and falls in line with the regulations, his theory and work become dull. Both his mother's letter and his forbidden conversations are acts of free will and confrontations with silence, whereas succumbing to the pressure of the State-fear (госстрах), Shtrum loses his freedom and enforces the silence about the reality in which he lives. His confession enables the State to continue its violence and thus indirectly contributes to the perpetuation of the violence that happened to his mother. Despite this, the pressure and fear that Shtrum experiences are physically palpable and the narrator explains the difficulty in judging people who have surrendered under this pressure. Shtrum is as if paralysed by fear, and he acts upon it without being able to do anything about it. This yielding is depicted as death and dying: the fear stops the beating of his heart, brings darkness and covers the joy of his life, his work, with dust and ashes. The pressure of the State is thus a form of death, which is contrasted with the spark and light that defines resistance. The episode is no doubt informed by Grossman's failure to resist the State when his cousin Nadia was arrested and his bravery when his wife Ol'ga Mikhailovna was arrested as a wife of an enemy

[673] Ibid., pp. 502-503.

of the people.[674] Grossman was not ignorant to the workings of the authorities and had come into contact with the functions of the State on more than one occasion. By giving Shtrum some of his own experiences Grossman is perhaps attempting to understand the ways in which individuals responded to this type of pressure. The subject is further elaborated in *Vse techet* where an imaginary trial of the Judases takes place.[675]

In the end Shtrum decides to keep the letter hidden and not attend the assembly at which his fate is discussed. This episode may also reflect the period when *ZPD* underwent great censorship and Grossman refused to take part in any meetings held about the novel, for which he was criticised.[676] Shtrum's refusal to attend the meeting is the first time he feels truly free and happy. This decision brings back the thought of his mother: "Он стал думать о матери. Может быть, она была рядом с ним, когда он безотчетно переменил свое решение. Ведь за минуту до этого он совершенно искренне хотел выступить с истерическим покаянием. Он не думал о Боге, не думал о матери, когда непоколебимо ощутил свое окончательное решение. Но они были рядом с ним, хотя он не думал о них."[677] It is his speech that is depicted as hysterical: his decision to stay at home and stay silent is surrounded by calm and confidence. His mother is thus present with him in whatever he does, but it is not a traumatic presence, it is a strength. The traumatic encounter has thus turned into a source of strength. His mother's testimony and her experience have become a moral compass for him. Silence here is an aspect of freedom; to remain silent is Shtrum's right, but at the same time Grossman depicts the silence that surrounds Shtrum and the inability to respond to the events surrounding him. Silence is thus dual; it is on the one hand an act of defiance, and on the other hand, it is also a symptom of Shtrum's inability to speak about his reality. Shtrum cannot testify to the intellectual violence of the State, but this

[674] For the story on Nadya see Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, pp. 108-113.
[675] See Grossman, vol. 4, pp. 293-296.
[676] Guber, *Pamiat' i pis'ma*.
[677] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 521.

testimony is enabled by Grossman's fictional depiction of the events. The autobiographical self is thus examined in a fictional realm where the narrator can investigate the State's violence by creating a distance between the self and the autobiographical influence.

The strength that Shtrum feels from his mother is tested again when he is saved by Stalin's phone call and the Academy attempts to involve him in their new campaign. This second test of Shtrum's strength is the opposite to the first, as rather than being attacked, he is now asked to participate with the attackers. The collective which wanted to expel him now attempts to integrate him into its functioning. This is depicted as by far the more precarious situation, as resistance becomes more complex.[678] The members of the Academy want Shtrum to sign a letter condemning a foreign article that claims the Soviet Union abuses its scientists, something Shtrum knows to be true as his assistant, who is Jewish, has been left behind in Kazan'. The expulsion of Chepyzhin earlier in the novel, and even Shtrum's own experiences, are all evidence that the article is truthful. In response to the article the Academy writes a letter, which is essentially a condemnation of a Soviet scientist, Chetverikov, who has been arrested by the organs. Shtrum is aware that signing the letter is morally reprehensible but the friendliness of his colleagues wears him down: "Вот эти дружественность и доверчивость сковывали его, лишали силы."[679] It is these seemingly positive relations that represent the pressure of the State. It is not an obvious violent assault on the individual but a silent and friendly moulding of individuals into obedient followers that embodies the terror. As Shtrum concludes: "Попробуй отбрось всесильную руку, которая гладит тебя по голове, похлопывает по плечу."[680] This tender assault is something that is impossible to respond to. It is likely that this episode is based on Grossman's own inability to withstand the pressure when he signed a letter of condemnation at the *Znamia* journal in 1937.[681] Grossman thus

[678] This issue is also informs the narrative of Nikolai and Anna in *Vse techet*, see the previous chapter.
[679] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 624.
[680] Ibid., p. 625.
[681] Garrard and Garrard, *Bones of Berdichev*, p. 128.

understood the intricate emotions involved in the state terror apparatus. Shtrum loses his nerve faced with the great fear of losing his authority and his job again, and succumbs to signing the letter. Whereas in the first trial Shtrum triumphed, the second one becomes his fall.

The effect of signing the letter is dual. On the one hand Shtrum joins the ranks of the powerful and those who judge, but on the other hand, he loses his freedom and self-respect. "Он потерял внутреннюю свободу, ставши сильным."[682] Signing the letter signals a loss of himself, just as his confession was earlier in the novel. On that occasion he regained himself by refusing to confess publicly, and whilst his refusal to attend the meeting earlier brought his mother's memory closer to him, his signing of the letter now distances him from her. "Он боится думать о матери, он согрешил перед ней. Ему страшно взять в руки ее последнее письмо. С ужасом, с тоской он понимал, что бессилен сохранить свою душу, не может оградить ее. В нем самом росла сила, превращающая его в раба."[683] There are three letters in the novel, all of which have a different impact: the letter from his mother, the secret letter that he wrote, and the final letter he signs. His mother's letter is his moral compass, his first letter written to the academy is his active engagement with Soviet discourse, and the last letter only requires his passive signature and is his resignation to State power. Signing the letter results in a simultaneous growth of strength and lack of strength. The power of the State takes over, and Shtrum's personal strength cannot withstand it. The battle of the self against the other takes place within, rather than without, as was the case with his previous confrontation with the Academy. It is this important realisation that changes Shtrum, that the power of the State is growing within him, not happening from without.

Shtrum's compromised and weak behaviour shows the difficulty and even impossibility of choice that people faced under the duress of the all-powerful State. The fact

[682] Grossman, vol. 2, p. 627.
[683] Ibid., p. 628.

that this power grows on the inside makes resistance even harder as it is an invisible part of the self. The two trials through which Shtrum goes through show the different forms of subjugation employed by the State. One is that of positing the collective against an individual, and the other, that of including that individual in the collective. However, against this collective, Shtrum places another collective: that of all human kind. This is where Grossman consolidates one of the main moral points of the novel. For Shtrum the sin of joining the collective becomes the focal point of his life and identity. It is also from this moral failure that he redefines himself yet again:

> С ясностью он увидел, что еще не поздно, есть в нем еще сила поднять голову, остаться сыном своей матери.
>
> Он не будет искать себе утешений, оправданий. Пусть то плохое, жалкое, подлое, что он сделал, всегда будет ему укором, всю жизнь: день и ночь напоминает ему о себе. Нет, нет, нет! Не к подвигу надо стремиться, не к тому, чтобы гордиться и кичиться этим подвигом.
>
> Каждый день, каждый час, из года в год, нужно вести борьбу за свое право быть человеком, быть добрым и чистым. И в этой борьбе не должно быть ни гордости, ни тщеславия, одно лишь смирение. А если в страшное время придет безвыходный час, человек не должен бояться смерти, не должен бояться, если хочет остаться человеком.
>
> – Ну что ж, посмотрим, – сказал он, – может быть, и хватит у меня силы. Мама, мама, твоей силы.[684]

Shtrum's moral stance here is derived directly from his mother. The only way he can remain her son is by repenting his sin. It is unclear exactly what Shtrum will do but it seems likely that an inner moral change rather than an outward action such as withdrawing his signature is needed. Shtrum is called to a perpetual battle to remain human, a battle whose outcome has to lack all pride and vanity. It is this particular pride concerning one's achievement that leads to

[684] Ibid., p. 629.

the possibility that one will succumb to the power of the state. Such was his failure in the first instance when he managed to resist the collective and not confess at a public meeting. The pride he felt at having done the right thing and then being forgiven by Stalin and the Academy leads to his second fall. As he later realises, the difference between a good man and a bad man is that the latter prides himself on all the good he has done, whilst the former will forever admonish himself for the one bad thing he did.[685] Pride and external approval all stand in the way of true moral action. The battle against evil is eternal and internal. In a way, one has to change the range of one's emotions, and the only thing that can remain is surrender, which extends to the possibility of death. By dissociating death and fear, one is able to transcend both and remain human. This moral possibility is not a simple one. As Shtrum shows, he is in great need of a strength beyond himself, the strength of his mother. It is in morally critical and challenging points that his mother's presence is felt most. His trauma thus permeates his life but it also changes throughout the novel and becomes a source of strength rather than an open wound. Shtrum thus seems to choose one collective over another. By fighting to remain human he belongs to the greater collective where there are no nationalities or class differences, and all human beings are treated equally. By doing this he defies both the Fascist ideology which killed his mother and the Soviet ideology which put the pressure on him to act inhumanely. The argument of Fascism/Nazism being equated to Communism thus finds expression in Shtrum's moral choice as well as in other parallels presented in the novel. His stance to hail the human in every individual challenges both ideologies' attempts to define people narrowly.

[685] Ibid., p. 628.

5.6 *Challenging the unspeakable*

Zybin's story in *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet* is not unlike Shtrum's. Both characters clash with the authoritarian collective that attempts to subjugate their identities to its will, however, Dombrovskii shows how this functions not only within society but also prison. Zybin struggles to remain free and autonomous in *Khranitel'*, where he is constantly attacked by various individuals, and then in *Fakul'tet* experiences the assault on his freedom by the Soviet judicial system. In both cases it is Zybin's refusal to be silent, or his insistence on silence, that is at the core of the conflict. The following discussion focuses firstly on the ways in which the unspoken terror of 1937 is made apparent in the novels, and secondly, how Zybin uses silence in order to respond to this terror.

As shown above (p.239), Dombrovskii sees his testimony as representative of many people's fate, "Когда с тобой происходило/ все, происшедшее со мной?" However, as indicated in the discussion of Bradbury's quotation, there is a dual collective in the novels, an "us" and a "them". In the novels discussed here, Dombrovskii depicts the hero's struggle against the collective. The collective is an extension of the state's power, and through it the State can coerce its people and perpetuate lawlessness. In *Khranitel'* the collective also enforces a silence surrounding the State's repressive nature, about which Zybin cannot remain silent. In contrast, in *Fakul'tet* the NKVD focus on speech, attempting to force Zybin to speak the "truth," and here silence takes on another nature, becoming rebellious. Although silence may mean the lack of speech, it is also misdirected speech, or a logical contradiction that does not allow meaning to be created. This is the form of silence that Zybin creates in *Fakul'tet*, where he refuses to answer the investigators' questions in the manner in which they want him to. The violent nature of the interrogation itself also creates a traumatic fragmentation of Zybin's mind, which towards the end of the novel falls into complete silence. By depicting this silent terror and its traumatic effect, Dombrovskii makes the unspeakable spoken.

Zybin's definition of himself is challenged by an imposition of an identity by the collective. His traumatic experience is this conflict with the outside forces that attempt to define him. His testimony is thus not only a narrative of events but also a narrative about the personal identity that is challenged by these traumatic events. In *Khranitel',* Zybin describes the attacks on himself where people constantly attempt to subjugate him to a set of external common rules. The terror and the imposing nature of the State create the fear which bends people to its will. Zybin's personal journey through the terror happens in two phases, he first realises what the terror implies and how it manifests itself, and secondly, he takes a personal stand against that terror.

The identity of the Keeper as a worker in a regional museum is seemingly a-political, but he soon finds out that there is no such thing, and being the Keeper of history, he is even more so involved in constructing a political view of the past. Several episodes at the Museum force the Keeper to realise that he cannot remain separated from the greater collective. Although most of the events seem minor and trivial, their possible repercussions are not. One of the earliest confrontations is between Keeper and a *kolkhoznik* Rodionov, who brings the Keeper some artefacts he has found. The Keeper deems these to be completely useless for the museum and declines the offer. This seemingly trivial event leads to the museum Director fearing for the Keeper's life. The director is the character who mediates between the collective and the Keeper, constantly explaining the situation to him. "Какой же ты, к бесу, хранитель, а? Приносит тебе человек ценные экспонаты, отдает, заметь, задаром, а ты нос воротишь, отказываешься. Как же это так?"[686] The Keeper's failure to recognise that he can use the artefacts to promote antireligious propaganda puts into question his very position at the Museum and his identity. The notion of a Keeper is thus not just someone who collects artefacts but also has to transmit their collective value to the public. When the

[686] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, p. 51.

director suggests that the Keeper will write a small piece explaining how Rodionov's finds show antireligious feeling, he questions himself: "'Да в кого же он меня хочет превратить?' – подумал я".[687] Already early on the Keeper understands that he cannot remain autonomous from the outside world, that his very identity is moulded into something useful for the museum and the collective.

Just as Shtrum's relation to science is that of love and freedom, for the Keeper art and history are a place of freedom and true knowledge. This is evident in his article about the State library in Alma-Ata and its ignorance of the historically valuable books it holds. A confrontation between the Keeper and the librarian Aiupova make the terror palpable. The Keeper publishes an article in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* about a collection of ancient books in the library and how they have been neglected by its librarian. This event is very clearly based on Dombrovskii's own experiences and the article can be read in his collected essays.[688] The first-person narrative and the lengthy quotations from the article reinforce the autobiographical nature of the narrative, however, the lyrical nature of the language and the presence of various dialogues suggest that the narrative is a work of fiction. Dombrovskii's testimony thus remains suspended between the fictional and the factual. He is clearly testifying to Aiupova's attack on himself, but in a fictional forum. Whereas the Keepers/Dombrovskii's article is concerned with a lack of interest in the past and specifically in the artefacts that are available to all, Aiupova's fury is based on the fact that she feels he has criticised the library. The library represents the utopian perfection of Soviet society, thus any criticism directed towards it suggests she is failing at her job in supporting the progress of Socialism. By these calculations the article becomes truly dangerous.

The meeting between Aiupova and the Keeper is aggressive but also involves a sense of humour and absurdity. It turns out that because of a misprint in the paper it appears there

[687] Ibid.
[688] Ibid., vol.6, 173-179.

was a librarian called Popiatna. This absurd mistake is one of the reasons Aiupova is furious with the Keeper, claiming that it is entirely his fault, although it is in fact during the printing that the mistake occurred. The hatred between Aiupova and the Keeper is palpable, but what is most terrifying for him is that her absurd accusations are taken so seriously. "Содержание разговора до меня уже не доходило совершенно. Я сидел, молчал, качал ногой, и внутри у меня было пусто, одиноко и мерзко."[689] The political implications of a simple trivial mistake have a deeper effect on the Keeper. He is depicted as a character who cares very little for the political forces, as he explains to the director: "Ну вы поймите, я археолог, "хранитель древностей", как вы меня называете, я занимаюсь тем, что умею, – клею горшки и пишу карточки. В политпросвете вашем – я ни в зуб ногой."[690] The Keeper clearly sees a division between his profession, his identity, and the events that surround him. When the two merge he becomes unsettled. There is a clear division between the public and the private. For the Keeper, his interest in the past is his private passion, but he finds that it is the collective that dictates how that passion can be expressed.

His slow awakening to the political implications of all his actions is facilitated by the director. He explains to him that Aiupova, despite her absurd anger, is right. In several discussions the Director keeps trying to inform the keeper about the time in which he lives:

> Ты ведь чувствуешь, какое время наступает.
>
> – Какое же? – спросил я тупо.
>
> – Очень строгое время наступает, – сказал директор и вдруг рассердился. – Да ты что, ребенок, что ли?[691]

The Keeper does indeed have childishness about him, defying authority at every point, preferring to stay in his attic investigating old objects (which he points out he liked doing as a child), and his view of his present seems very naive. By being child like he is able to

[689] Ibid., vol.4, p. 107.
[690] Ibid., pp. 204-205.
[691] Ibid., p. 120.

introduce the reader to the terror and its manifestation in society and thus perhaps explain it better. His naiveté constantly points out the absurdity of the situation in which he finds himself, showing that the terror is not a natural and acceptable way of living. There is a clear focus on time in the director's speech; it is the time in which they live that defines the ways in which they can act. The time is also only imminent and has not yet arrived, "наступает", suggesting a possible catastrophe. This imminence is evident in the way in which people are treated – the director explains that the central meaning of the purge is to get rid of the enemies before they become enemies, something which is a clear violation of law.

> Всех неустойчивых, сомневающихся, связанных с той стороной, готовящихся к измене, врагов настоящих, прошлых и будущих, всю эту нечисть мы заранее уничтожаем. Понял? Заранее!
>
> – Понять-то понял, – сказал я, – чего ж тут не понять... Но разве можно казнить за преступление до преступления? Это значит – карать не за что-то, а во имя чего-то. Так ведь эдак жертву Молоху приносят, а не государство укрепляют. […]
>
> – А мы вот уничтожаем во имя нашей революции, – негромко крикнул директор и топнул сапогом. – И будем уничтожать. Поэтому не спрашивай другой раз, почему снимают портреты и кого именно снимают. Знай: сняли врага. Еще одного скрытого врага разоблачили и сняли. И ты вот эти самые свои вопросики поганые оставь при себе. И язык! Язык держи-ка подальше за зубами. А то оторвут вместе с умной головой. Некогда сейчас разбираться. Понимай, какое время наступает.[692]

The Keeper points out that what the director and the people around him support is not the law, but a form of sacrifice. In the same way that children were sacrificed to Moloch, people sacrificed to the Revolution, the greater good. As the Keeper gains understanding about his

[692] Ibid., pp. 121-122.

environment he is no longer in confusion as to what is happening, but why. He clearly understands that the society around him is trying to eliminate enemies, but he does not understand how a person can be judged before he commits the crime. This questioning is dangerous as it subverts the status of the Revolution, which is why the director encourages him to be quiet. One of the main issues that the Keeper is frustrated by is the notion of time advocated by the state. The crimes of the future are to be punished in the present, and the imperceptible crimes of the past, the unmasking of enemies, are to be punished in such a way as if they never happened (the removal of portraits). The terror eliminates not only the existence of crime, but the people themselves, without any reflection. The present becomes a precarious balancing act between an unstable past and unpredictable future, thus eliminating the passage of time, which is highlighted by the director's comment: "некогда". The trauma is thus unlocatable in time as it is always absent, making the speaker's question in Dombrovskii's poem "когда?" very apt for this period.

The director's speech also highlights the division between the personal and the collective. He speaks in the plural for a collective belief, whilst he explains the Keeper's actions in the singular. He thus shows how the Keeper is not taking part in the collective action and how this could be his downfall. The director commands the keeper to "know" and admonishes him for questioning. Knowledge in this sense is transmitted from the collective actions and cannot be questioned – there is no personal reflection involved. The director also suggests that by questioning this system the Keeper himself may become an enemy, and thus he accidentally reveals that the system is flawed. Speaking becomes a crime, and that is why the director begs the Keeper to keep silent. The director's depiction of the system shows a lawless State based on sacrifice, where a lack of time to assess the guilt or innocence of the individual is seen as being responsible, rather than the State itself. Time, and therefore history, is the perpetrator according to the director. Using a metaphor thus points towards the

unspeakable nature of the terror, and the invocation to the Keeper to watch his tongue also suggests that it has to remain unspoken.

All the attacks on the Keeper's behaviour, his tasks at the museum and his interest in history and archaeology destabilise his identity. He attempts to remain withdrawn from the society around him and to focus on his work, but finds that he has to actively take part in the collective. This pressure results in a monologue through which the keeper imagines a confrontation with the invisible forces around him, or "the times" as the director calls it. This imagined confrontation is worth quoting at length:

> Ведь и в самом деле получается, что дразню. Я-то стараюсь пройти тихо-тихо, незаметно-незаметно, никого не толкнуть, не задеть, не рассердить, а выходит, что задеваю всех – и Аюпову, и массовичку, и того военного. И все они на меня кричат, хотят что-то мне доказать, что-то показать. А что мне доказывать, что мне показывать, меня просто нужно оставить в покое!
>
> "Товарищи, – говорю я всем своим тихим существованием, – я археолог, я забрался на колокольню и сижу на ней, перебираю палеолит, бронзу, керамику, определяю черепки, пью изредка водку с дедом и совсем не суюсь к вам вниз. Пятьдесят пять метров от земли – это же не шутка! Что же вы от меня хотите?" А мне отвечают: "История – твое личное дело, дурак ты этакий. Шкура, кровь и плоть твоя, ты сам! И никуда тебе не уйти от этого – ни в башню, ни в разбашню, ни в бронзовый век, ни в железный, ни в шкуру археолога". – "Я хранитель древностей, – говорю я, – древностей – и все! Доходит до вас это слово – древностей?" – "Доходит, – отвечают они. – Мы давно уже поняли, зачем ты сюда забрался! Только бросай эту муру, ни к чему она! Слезай-ка со своей колокольни! Чем вздумали отгородиться –

> пятьдесят пять метров, подумаешь! Да тебя и десять тысяч не спасут".[693]

It is precisely the fact that the Keeper is attempting to keep himself separate from the collective that results in an assault on him. It is not that he has done anything but the fact that he remains silent and does not partake. What the Keeper fails to recognise is the relationship between his identity and "the time". He believes that studying history means he has nothing to do with the present, but as the Massovichka has shown him, this is not the case. The collective voice that responds to his plea suggests that the Keeper does not just study history, but is history himself. He is physically part of history and therefore has to physically remove himself from his place above and join the collective below.[694] The conversation between the Keeper and his imaginary audience is the unspoken and unspeakable battle between the individual and the collective. The Keeper attempts to define himself but is not allowed the privilege; he has to become what the collective is asking of him. This is not a plea but a threat, as no distance will save him. It is unclear what from, but as in the director's speech above, not acting as expected will lead to dire consequences.

The above dialogue not only takes place in the Keeper's imagination but is also a fictional representation of what he was experiencing at the time. The Keeper highlights to the reader the dialogue was created after the event:

> Конечно, я сейчас здорово упрощаю весь ход моих мыслей: делаю все ясным и четким. Тогда ничего этого, понятно, не было и не могло быть. Но вот то, что я крошечная лужица в песке на берегу океана, это я чувствовал почти физически. Вот огромная, тяжело дышащая, медленно катящаяся живая безграничность, а вот я – ямка, следок на

[693] Ibid., pp. 175-176.
[694] Woodward, "'Cosmic' Vision", pp. 902-903.

> мокром песке, глоток холодной соленой воды. Но сколько ты его ни вычерпывай, а не вычерпаешь, ведь океан тоже здесь.[695]

This autobiographical statement highlights the complex genre of *Khranitel'*: that it is a fictionalised narrative of true events. The explanation suggests that the fictional aspect of the novel allowed Dombrovskii to explain things better than he himself understood when they were happening. He may not be truthful to the way he perceived the events at the time, but he is truthful in his explanation of these events post facto. The difference between the two types of discourse shows the fluid nature of autobiographical and testimonial narrative. The "autobiographical time" of the novel can be an asset, rather than a hindrance that has to be overcome.

The image of the puddle and the ocean represents the Keeper's relationship with the collective which attempts to swallow him and make him part of the whole. There are positive and negative aspects to this. The puddle is made of the same material as the ocean and thus belongs to the whole, but it can never separate itself and function without it. In a similar manner, Dombrovskii testifies to the experience of the Terror that many people shared and of which he is one witness, but at the same time he was forced into a Soviet collective to which he did not belong. There is thus a complex relationship between being a part of a collective and at the same time resisting it. This division of "us" versus "them", of positing one collective against another, raises crucial questions that are explored in both novels. After all, the greater human collective includes all people, whether they are victims or perpetrators. This unity of all mankind raises questions of people's morality that the novels attempt to explore through such characters as Kornilov, Tamara and Neiman. It is through the Keeper's trials that the narrative investigates these issues. An indeed, *Fakul'tet* ends with the sights of the Keeper/Zybin, Kornilov and Neiman sitting together on one bench, having shared the

[695] Dombrovskii, vol. 4, pp. 175-176.

same abuse by the state. It becomes apparent that it is not the collective in itself that is problematic, but its function as an extension of the oppressive State.

The image of water and sea becomes central in *Fakul'tet*, but in a completely different way, as a memory of the time he spent by the sea with his lover Lina. This memory of a different time punctuates Zybin's experience of the present – it both fragments the present and comes into competition with it, haunting Zybin with its beauty. This memory becomes increasingly interruptive as he is arrested by the authorities on false charges. The museum Director loses some archaeological gold and Zybin is suspected of knowing where it is. *Fakul'tet* is an exploration of what happens during an investigation and an exposé of what happens to the human mind when interrogated. Zybin becomes increasingly disoriented ,and the involuntary memories of the sea break into the narrative, preventing him and the reader focusing on the interrogation. The two experiences become intertwined in Zybin's mind:

> Сон был волей, а свет тюрьмой, и тюрьма эта присутствовала во всех его снах. Вот и сейчас – счастливые, свободные, веселые, они стояли на высоком берегу над морем, болтали, смеялись, а белый мертвенный свет, пробившийся из яви, горел над ним, и он все равно был в тюрьме. Так у него всегда начинался кошмар; то и это мешалось, сон и явь перебивали друг друга, разрывали его на части, и он бился, бредил и вскакивал.[696]

This ripping of Zybin's consciousness represents his inability to experience the trauma of imprisonment. He is both present and absent in the moment of the events. His consciousness cannot perceive and integrate the horror of the investigation. Light here represents death, "белый мертвенный свет", while darkness and sleep are the escape. Light refers to the conveyor belt interrogation that Zybin has been put on, which forces him to stay awake. Zybin starts to perceive himself as a zek after some time in imprisonment; he no longer is a free

[696] Ibid., p. 215.

individual.[697] This use of the word "zek" is a foreshadowing of what may happen or will happen to Zybin. It is also a haunting from outside of the text. The poems that surround the novel both depict experiences in the camp, something that is absent from Zybin's experiences in the novel, however, together with the word "zek," they suggest his inevitable fate. His identity, as exemplified by his name, changes from an individual to one of the many convicts. Even his name exemplifies a division that is taking place within himself, as zybkii means "unstable" in Russian. His identity has a further definition within his dream of the sea, a memory he calls "the most precious of all". He finds Lina with a broken foot by the sea and helps her, after which she starts calling him a Saviour.[698] This could also be connected to the relationship between Christ and Zybin, in which Zybin may be seen as the Christ-like figure in the novel.[699]

Lina, like the museum director, is depicted as understanding the workings of Soviet society, but in contrast to the director, she is fearless of that society. Finding Zybin in Alma-Ata, the couple resume their relationship, and after a romantic night together Lina asks Zybin to be careful of what he says and does:

> Пойми, люди попросту боятся. А ты покушаешься на их существование. В мире сейчас ходит великий страх. Все всего боятся. Всем важно только одно: высидеть и переждать. […] в наше время и слово считается делом, а разговор – деятельностью. Есть времена, когда слово – преступление. Мы живем сейчас именно в такое время. С этим надо мириться.[700]

Like the director, Lina focuses on time as a representation of the terror, suggesting it will pass as long as one follows the rules. It is something one has to accept. Lina points out that

[697] Ibid., p. 251.
[698] Ibid., p. 218.
[699] Doyle, *Dombrovskii*, p. 161; Semenova, "Vsiu noch'", p. 235; Woodward, "Stoic?", p. 33; Zaitseva, *Khudozhestvennye iskania*, p. 64.
[700] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 119.

speaking is a crime and silence is the only way to survive. What Lina explains is a silent agreement between people to stay silent, something that Zybin repeatedly breaks, putting everyone in danger. Lina's warning to Zybin is also a suggestion to follow the collective in this silent agreement and not stand on his own. However, it is precisely this collective fear and acceptance of fate that Zybin does not want to tolerate. He explains that he is perfectly aware of the times, however, this does not change his attitude, in fact, it only fuels it:

> Только дурак сейчас спрашивает: за что? Умному они [вопросы] и в голову не придут. Берут, и все. Это как закон природы. Только я не могу уже больше переживать это унижение, этот проклятый страх, что сидит у меня где-то под кожей. Чего мне не хватает? Меня самого мне не хватает. Я как старый хрипучий граммофон. В меня заложили семь или десять пластинок, и вот я хриплю их, как только ткнут пальцем.[701]

Zybin is split between accepting his reality and being infuriated that he has to do so. The very fact that any questioning of the authorities' actions is useless makes him furious. The subordination of the self to State power and the collective destroys for Zybin his ability to be himself. The fear he experiences reduces him to a gramophone, the same imagery Grossman uses to describe Krymov's crisis.[702] Zybin explains that all he does is repeat famous Soviet slogans and that this detaches him from who he really is. Unlike Krymov, who believes in the slogans he espouses, Zybin feels these make him act as someone else. It is thus not just silence and speech that are in danger, but the silence and speech that belong to the self. Being silent in an interrogation is impossible; what the authorities want is a confession, but a false confession that will suit the truth that they are establishing. The freedom to speak differently from the slogans is removed. To listen silently to anti-Soviet discussions is also forbidden. Thus, the spoken consists only of public slogans, and the silent is the private beliefs that disregard these slogans.

[701] Ibid., p. 120.
[702] This is also discussed in Chapter 3.3.

The complex relationship between truth, silence and the law permeates the whole novel. The power of words becomes unmeasurable, and this is why Lina, Klara and the director beg Zybin to be quiet. This fear that is represented as silence permeates all relationships:

> И тут между ними, как некое спасенье, как недоговоренность, возникает некто – человек секретный, фигуры не имеющий. Он рождается прямо из воздуха этого года – плотного, чреватого страхами – и идет третьим, вслушивается в каждое их слово, запоминает их все и молчит, молчит. Но он не только запоминает. Он еще и перетолковывает услышанное. И перетолковывает по-своему, то есть по самому страшному, несовместимому с жизнью. Потому что он самый страшный человек из всех, кто ходит по этому побережью, из тех, кого сейчас несут суда, машины и самолеты. Он непостижим, бессмыслен и смертоносен, как мина замедленного действия.
>
> Позже выяснится, что он еще и очень, смертно несчастен.
>
> Он навеки замкнут в себе. Потому что эти двое носят его в себе, всегда – третьего.[703]

The fear represented by a third listener is also depicted as a saviour, as it prevents the speakers from saying anything dangerous. The same ghost is also deadly and insurmountable, born out of the year of terror. A distance is thus created between individuals by the reinterpretation of human relations into an ideological and political framework. This fragmentation of human relations is what testimony is attempting to rebuild by addressing the "мы" aspect of the collective. The fear that divides people is represented as a ghost, which shows the difficulty of testifying to the secret and impossible truth of human relations. This ghost is something that is agreed upon by the two speakers; both feel its presence, and yet it is divisive. It listens to the words, reinterprets them and may lead to arrest and even death.

[703] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 175.

Simultaneously, this third is depicted as sorrowful, which seems inconsistent with the evil that the ghost represents, however, it is imprisonment within the self and the other that creates its sorrow. Informing on others is shown to be another form of imprisonment.

Throughout the novel it emerges that one of the main reasons for informing is fear. Kornilov fears for his life and decides to become an informer. As suggested in Chapter 4, becoming an informer is a type of death, making the image of the informer as a ghost very apt.[704] The ghost is something produced by fear and silence, and perpetuates both. This informer relationship extends to what is happening in the greater Society, which further challenges Zybin's perception of himself and the world in which he lives. It appears that everything is as it should be, but there is a sense that what appears to be true is in fact a great lie. This internally divides Zybin's mind and ability to act in the world:

> Вот с этого разговора сознание Зыбина как бы раздвоилось. Он не принял рассуждения директора в полный серьез – мало ли что ему придет в голову? – но в душе его вдруг угнездился темный, холодный и почти сверхъестественный ужас. Он боялся брать в руки газеты и все равно брал и читал их больше, чем когда-либо. Боялся говорить об арестах и все равно говорил. Боялся допускать до сознания то, что таилось в каких-то подспудных глубинах, но все равно в душе этот холод и мрак жил, нарастал и уже присутствовал при каждой встрече, при каждом самом беглом пустом разговоре. Но разум у него был еще защищен надежно этим вот "не может быть". И поэтому он действительно не знал, почему подсудимые на процессах так откровенно, так говорливо, так хорошо выглядят и почему они такой дружной и веселой толпой идут на верную смерть. И что их гонит? Неужели совесть?[705]

[704] See Chapter 4.5.
[705] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, pp. 192-193.

As well as showing the fear that lies within Zybin, the narrative also shows his compulsion to continue speaking about subjects that are forbidden. He is divided within himself between his thoughts and his behaviour. The word "fear" is repeated throughout the quotation, showing not only how it spreads within his consciousness but also in the way he acts it out. Whilst in *Khranitel'* fear is less openly expressed, in *Fakul'tet* it is openly stated how fear permeates the being and does not allow the individual to remain autonomous. This fear is present and informs everything that Zybin does. It is not a clearly conscious fear and understanding, due to the fact that his reason is still protected by disbelief. The word "eshche" shows a difference in Zybin between his disbelief and his later understanding that the unbelievable indeed happened. The narrator foreshadows Zybin's future knowledge, gained during his imprisonment.

Zybin, as shown in his speech to Lina, is unwilling to bow down to the fear and silence surrounding him. When arrested Zybin reminds himself to let go of the fear and to remember that all people are equal. By doing so he will not succumb to becoming an informer and harming someone else for the sake of his own liberation.

> Слушай, сейчас тебе будет очень трудно. Ты уж это почувствовал и заюлил. Так вот помни: если с бандитом можно, то и с тобой можно. А с тобой нельзя только потому, что и с бандитом так нельзя. Только потому! Помни! Помни! Пожалуйста, помни это, и тогда ты будешь себя вести как человек. В этом твое единственное спасение.[706]

In contrast to *Khranitel'*'s first-person narrative, in *Fakul'tet* the second person is used to explore Zybin's inner dialogue. Like Shtrum, Zybin realises early on that it is only by acting humanely to each individual that Zybin himself can remain human. The different identities ascribed to individuals are only external definitions and not who people really are. Just as Anna in *Vse techet* shouts "они люди", so do both Shtrum and Zybin realise that identity does

[706] Ibid., p. 90.

not define the way in which a person can be treated.[707] More importantly, it is their response to people that defines who they are. By acting human Zybin can remain human, which is his only salvation. As he contemplates his past by the sea, he remembers the crab he almost killed, and again realises that all life is sacred and his attitude to all life is what defines his humanity. By breaking the man through interrogations the State reduces him to a less than human state, which is what the NKVD try to do with Zybin. Zybin finds ways to resist the pressures of interrogation, but this resistance also becomes his trauma that he attempts to integrate into his being.

Throughout his interrogation Zybin finds different ways of avoiding the questions that the interrogators ask and forcing them into the silent space in which he resides. Zybin's actions lie outside the way in which the system operates, partly because he is fuelled by the freedom of creativity. As seen in the director's confusion when entering the Keeper's world in the museum, the inspiration that fuels Zybin is outside the Soviet cultural parameters. When watched by a "buddil'nik" in the interrogation office, Zybin explains to his warden where the term comes from and its ancient history, something which baffles and confuses the "buddil'nik". The battle between the interrogator and Zybin is over who can get whom to speak first. The interrogator demands a truth from Zybin, but does not even tell him what he is imprisoned for. Through isolating the individual from all knowledge and remaining silent, the interrogators attempt to get Zybin to speak of something for which he can be implicated. Zybin however leads them into logical corners, forcing the interrogators to lose nerve:

> – У нас отсюда не выходят.
>
> Но тут зек быстро спрашивает:
>
> – Так что ж, по вашему, советский суд уж никого и не оправдывает?

[707] Grossman, vol. 4, p. 322.

> Сразу же создается острейшая тактическая ситуация: ведь не скажешь ни “да”, ни “нет”. И следователь начинает орать.[708]

The fury and anger that Zybin elicits in the interrogators leads to torture and physical abuse, but Zybin does not abandon his methods. His mind becomes fragmented, as shown above, and the dreams of the sea rip his consciousness between dream and reality. Despite his traumatised state of mind, Zybin does not abandon his belief-resistance and refuses to collaborate with the authorities. As Andrei Vasilevskii aptly points out in reference to Dombrovskii’s attitude during the terror and his time in the camps: “А если невозможно достойно выжить, надо достойно умереть.”[709] This is clearly seen in Zybin’s attitude. He abandons all fear and becomes calm when faced with his destiny, never bowing down to the authorities. After learning about the prison system from Buddo and from his own interrogation, Zybin decides to go on a hunger strike. This decision makes Zybin feel calm for the first time since his imprisonment, despite his almost hysterical exclamation:

> Но он не смотрел на них. Он смотрел куда-то вовне себя. Он знал теперь все. И был спокоен.
>
> – И имейте в виду, что бы там еще вы ни придумывали, – сказал он громко солдату, который заглянул в глазок, – какие бы чертовы штуки вы там еще ни напридумывали, сволочи!.. Не ты, конечно! Не ты! – поскорей успокоил он солдата. – Ты что? Ты такой же заключенный! Мы и выйдем вместе! И еще кое-что им покажем! Ты мне верь, я – везучий! Мы им с тобой обязательно покажем!
>
> Он подмигнул солдату и засмеялся.[710]

Her he looks outside himself rather than inside, as he has done until now. The novel has structurally represented the rupturing of Zybin’s mind, its division between the present moment and the memory of the past. This looking inward made Zybin realise and admit that

[708] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 253.
[709] A. Vasil'evskii, "Kto ustoial v sei zhizni trudnoi...", *Znamia,* (1986), pp. 231-231 (p. 231).
[710] Dombrovskii, vol. 5, p. 267.

his actions in the past have been reprehensible. He realises that the crab he caught in Anapa, and wanted to kill for a female friend, is in fact also alive and deserves to live. He concludes early in the novel that: "Да, тот краб был человек"[711], but only through the complete narrative of his time in Anapa does he integrate that knowledge. This knowledge allows him to draw parallels between his own imprisonment and his attempted murder of the crab. Realising the value of life allows Zybin to understand the value of not just surviving but living a morally worthy life. He even sees the connection between himself and the prison guard, realising that both are prisoners of the same system, thus uniting them in a collective humanity. The division between "us" and "them" is present here as well, however, or the guard becomes part of "us" against an indefinable "them". Zybin includes his perpetrators into the notion of "us," suggesting their similar fates under the pressure of fear of the State. Similarly, Zybin tells Tamara that he pities her and her youth, understanding that it she is as much a victim of the system as himself.

Zybin refuses all attempts to intimidate him into a false confession. It is during his hunger strike that he gives up all fear of death and is close to dying, in the same manner that Dombrovskii suggests to Varpakhovskii that he was dying but did not manage to die. In *Fakul'tet*, it is Zybin who reaches the end of his life but is then brought back to life and released from prison. During his imprisonment Zybin moves from being an individual, to being a zek, and to finally completely dispersing into nothingness. "И не было уже Зыбина, а была светлая пустота. Так продолжалось какое-то время, может быть, два дня, может быть, месяц."[712] The trauma of the interrogation – the lack of protection from the law – has destroyed Zybin, and he is slowly dying in his punishment cell. Just as there is silence in society, so Zybin becomes this silence and emptiness. Zybin is no longer within life but somewhere in between; time disappears to the point that even his memories of the sea

[711] Ibid., p. 23.
[712] Ibid., pp. 612-613.

disappear. Although Zybin almost dies, it is a defiant death that confronts the authorities, showing that their power does not extend to his freedom. This defiance is similar to what Vasilevskii says of Dombrovskii's belief that if one cannot live with integrity, one should die with integrity. This is precisely what Zybin does, and it is through this fictional narrative that Dombrovskii depicts his own dying in a camp. This dying is the traumatic conclusion of Zybin's confrontation with the law, or the lack of it.

The novel ends with the release of Zybin, when he is depicted as a broken man. Physically he is hunched over, and as the narrator explains, Zybin "вдруг понял, что смертельно, может быть на всю жизнь, устал."[713] This tiredness is both physical and mental and leaves an impact for the rest of the life. It is literally imprinted on his body. Zybin's ability to resist is shown as a freedom but also as a difficult choice, and Dombrovskii shows people who were not able to resist. The interrogator Neiman, the informer Kornilov, and the survivor Zybin, all come together at the end of the novel, awaiting the horror that is yet to come. All are tired and worn out by the fear and abuse of the state, and although they are re-imagined in the painting of Kalmykov, showing the importance of creativity, the novel ends by pointing out that it all happened in "чреватый страшным будущим год."[714] So Dombrovskii shows that although the narrative depicts a traumatic point in his and the nation's life, it is only a beginning of worse times. However, the reader is left with the feeling that Zybin is able to survive whatever the future brings. The union of the three characters also shows the union of "us", of humanity, against the inhuman that is happening around them which is already a form of victory over "them".

[713] Ibid., p. 622.
[714] Ibid., p. 628.

5.7 *Survival*

Both Grossman's and Dombrovskii's novels depict the silence surrounding the traumatic Soviet past. The silence is both within the novels and surrounds them, as they make spoken that which has remained secret. The ability to make the unspoken and unspeakable speak is tied in with survival. As Derrida suggests, one can only testify once one has lived longer that what has come to pass, and as Dombrovskii explains in his letter to Varpakhovskii, both he and his friend have lived through so much that they have become immortal. The same idea is exhibited in the fate of Zybin who, through his confrontations with the system, survives his hunger strike and emerges victorious. Although Zybin is clearly broken in some manner, he has also beaten the system. His abandonment of his own life and commitment to a worthy death shows his transcendence of the traumatic situation. By depicting this near-death, Dombrovskii demonstrates his own survival and is able to testify to it, and all that preceded it. Similarly, Shtrum survives his mother's death without being able to witness it and face the trauma. Grossman's guilt and inability to respond to his mother's death is made explicit in the narratives of *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*, where the silence surrounding her death finds expression in her testimony.

Surviving the death of his mother, Grossman immortalises her in his novel and simultaneously speaks of the inability to respond to this trauma. It is through his love of his mother and through her letter that Shtrum is able to respond to his own encounter with the powerful State. The trauma is thus transformed from a silence to a positive action. Although the novel does not depict what happens to Shtrum after his signing of the letter, it becomes evident that it is the memory of his mother that provides the strength to resist the State. Grossman depicts the psychological pressures that force people to commit reprehensible acts and shows there are ways to resist it, and that ultimately it is resistance which allows man to survive. Similarly, only when Zybin decides to remain true to himself no matter what the

authorities may do to him, does he gain the ability to survive. As shown elsewhere, succumbing to the pressure and working with the authorities is depicted in the novel as a form of death,[715] whereas Zybin's resistance holds the key to survival. Both Grossman and Dombrovskii use fiction as a way to situate their own traumas within that of the collective, and testify to their own and others' survival. It is the fictional and creative aspect of the novels that lends both their characters and the greater collective the immortality that resists the State's power and silence. The unspeakable nature of the trauma becomes not only spoken through the fictional realm, but also becomes integrated into the writers' lives through their alter-egos.

[715] See Chapter 4.5.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Freedom and Trauma

This thesis has interrogated the fiction of Dombrovskii and Grossman through the prism of trauma theory. The particular focus has been on the concepts of identity, testimony and unspeakability, all of which are intimately connected with the overarching themes of memory and history. Trauma has been viewed from the specific cultural perspective of Soviet studies and Soviet subjectivity, which has enabled the development of alternative views of the ways in which trauma may be experienced or narrated. Indeed, in the second chapter, I find that the influence of Soviet ideology may preclude testimony and perpetuate silence about personal and historical trauma. Focusing on both Soviet ideology, and ideology per se, allows the delineation of its manifestations and implications for trauma and testimony. This question has been important for the thesis as it permeates both writers' works and influences the depictions of characters and their traumas.

Chapters two and three deal with the two writers' works separately, but highlight similar themes in their works. Identity has emerged as crucial to both authors' novels. In Grossman's *ZPD* and *Zhizn'*, Krymov's, Sofya Osipovna's and Liudmila's identities are at the centre of their traumatic experience. It is through its disintegration that trauma is experienced and through its eventual reconstitution that it is survived. The conception of the self is central to both trauma theory and recent studies of Soviet subjectivity, and here the two intersect. Identity as analysed in the thesis is both an internal relationship of the self to catastrophic historical events and an external imposition by an oppressive regime. This is evident in Dombrovskii's novels as well, in which Tamara Dolidze and Kornilov are depicted as battling with themselves and becoming the "living dead" due to their involvement in the State's

oppressive methods. Ultimately, identity comes to the fore in the final chapter where the writers' own identities as well as those of their alter-egos are examined in their relation to history and testimony. Like the characters described above, Shtrum's and Zybin's identities are fragmented by trauma. Through testimony, however, the two authors are able to recreate and embrace their trauma in fiction, thereby transcending it.

Despite the ability to integrate trauma, exhibited by the writers' novels, the often reiterated nature of trauma as that which is unspeakable is also present. The characters in the above texts are often confronted with the inability either to speak of, or to know their experiences. This is particularly evident in *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet*, as discussed in chapter four. The Great Terror is depicted as present but unspoken; fear permeates the characters, but it is never made clear what they fear. This sense of unspeakability finds its expression in the uncanny nature of the novels. A different form of unspeakability is apparent in the final chapter, which deals with the authors' inability to face their own traumas, as is evident in Shtrum's silence about his mother in *ZPD* and Dombrovskii's depiction of camps in his poetry as being outside normal experience of life. However, this silence about trauma is not final, and both authors find an expression for it through their fiction, especially by creating alter-egos that hold a space between fiction and testimony. Making the unspeakable spoken thus allows for an integration of traumatic experience into the self.

Throughout the thesis, a duality in the fiction of Grossman and Dombrovskii emerges: they depict trauma simultaneously as unspeakable and life-shattering, and as something that can be spoken about and become part of the self. Neither author provides any clear answers or resolutions to this duality within their novels, but both suggest the union of darkness and lightness of life. In Grossman's novels this is expressed through a constant union of opposites: in Sofya Osipovna's love for humanity whilst dying in a gas chamber, in Liudmila's embracing of pain of death and the joy of life, and in Shtrum's moral failures and

triumphs. Dombrovskii shows something similar by undermining the stability of the notion of death in *Khranitel'* and *Fakul'tet*, showing that creativity can liberate not only concepts but also man, as it does Zybin. Whilst these contradictory and unsettling aspects make the novels open-ended and inconclusive, they also allow for freedom to emerge within the very structure of the novels. As discussed above, the theme of freedom and slavery is paramount in the writing of the two authors, and this also means freedom from trauma. Trauma is persistently present not as a wound, but as that which belongs to life itself. This is what affords the freedom in the two novels, and is perhaps something that would merit further exploration in future work.

In investigating the relevance of trauma theory to the Russian experience of history, as depicted by these two authors, I have found that some aspects of the theory illuminate some of the ways in which the writers responded to the events their witnessed and experienced, especially in their inability to speak about and to testify to them. Despite this both authors' novels conclude that trauma is not final and definitive in its effect on man, but can become a part of life. In this way, the thesis highlights the tendency to adopt a very narrow perspective within trauma theory, which posits this kind of experience as defining. Both authors therefore suggest that an event is not intrinsically traumatic.[716] Furthermore, this exploration also brings into question the conclusions of recent work on Soviet subjectivity, which cannot account for the traumatic experience of history without taking into consideration a wider spectrum of human responses. Studies of the interrelationship of language and identity have been invaluable in understanding the reactions to historical catastrophe as shown by the novels. Yet Soviet language and ideology create only one strand in the many narratives that are produced about an event. Characters are shown to be awakened from the influence of Soviet ideology by trauma, indicating its fleeting impact. In the end, neither trauma nor Soviet influence gain

[716] Susan Radstone and Jeffrey Alexander propose a similar coclusion about trauma theory. See Chapter 1.1 for more on this topic.

primacy, and the characters are seen to be negotiating between the many discourses and views of the events; it is this that allows them to experience freedom in slave-like circumstances.

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