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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

POETICS OF VALENTIN KATAEV'S PROSE
OF THE 1960s AND 1970s

A Thesis

presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Ottawa in
partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Ireneusz Szarycz

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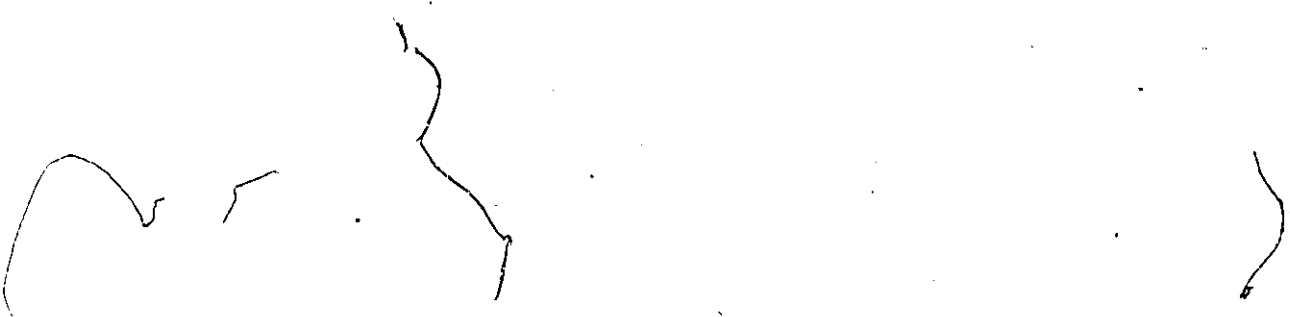
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NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION OF RUSSIAN

For transliterating titles of books, journals, articles, personal and place names, as well as short quotations, I have used J. Thomas Shaw's System III as it is the international scholarly system for the transliteration of Russian. See Shaw's *The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967).

I have translated the titles of Kataev's works only when they are mentioned for the first time in the main text or in the footnotes. Later, like the works of the other writers, they appear in transliteration. Titles in English translation are underlined.

Passages from Russian criticism and excerpts from Kataev's works appearing in the Introduction and Conclusion have been translated into English.

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INTRODUCTION

Valentin Kataev's literary work of the later period, which began in the middle of the 1960s, did not attract as much critical attention as one would expect. The reason for this lack of interest may lie in the fact that for more than three decades Kataev was known as a typical socialist-realist writer who followed the requirements of the method and portrayed reality in its revolutionary development. After such a long "silence" nobody expected the writer to produce works of a very high quality, comparable to the works written during the relatively relaxed literary atmosphere of the NEP period in the 1920s (*Ras-tratčiki* – The Embezzlers – 1926; *Kvadratura kruga* – Squaring the Circle – 1927).

Kataev's reputation in the West rests mostly on his works of this period and, to a lesser degree, on two novels written in the 1930s – *Vremja, vpered!* – Time Forward! (1932), a novel about the building of an industrial complex at Magnitogorsk during the first Five-Year Plan, and *Beleet parus odinokij* – The Lone White Sail (1936), a book from that period which can still be read for pleasure and which brought him a reputation as a writer of children's books.

Kataev has written in many genres – poetry, drama, prose. His first poem was published in an Odessa newspaper in 1910¹ and since then his contribution to Soviet literature has been rather considerable.

Although he made certain concessions to the demands of the time (especially in his works of the war and post-war periods), he managed to retain his style with a specific romantic flavour, characteristic of the southern "Odessa School."

The post-Stalin period was for Kataev a time of difficult re-adjustment to political relaxation and creative freedom. It was a trying time for all writers of the older generation associated with the Stalinist orthodoxy. After about twenty years of stagnation and suppression it became possible, at least to some extent, to experiment with new artistic forms, to employ such formal innovations as to suit new content. The first to take advantage of a new situation, were young authors (prose writers and poets) who, "untainted and untrammelled by the past, burst on the scene in the 'fifties and 'sixties."² They found in Kataev, who was not at that time publishing himself, a mentor and protector. As editor of *Junost'*, the monthly literary periodical, Kataev played an indirect but important part in the Thaw. Under his protection, such new talents as Vasilij Aksenov, Anatolij Gladilin, Evgenij Evtušenko, Bulat Okudžava, and Bella Axmadulina could publish in *Junost'* at a time when it was difficult to publish elsewhere. Rather than compete with the young authors, Kataev devoted himself to theoretical reflections on the essence of literature and on the role and rights of the writer. In his articles on these subjects written in the 1950s Kataev points out the importance of the artist's personality in the literary creative process, and stresses his right to interpret reality in his own individual way: "an artist's consciousness must not be like a mirror, ... must not only reflect, but

also creatively transform the world."³

All these theoretical claims, which did not fall into conventional frames of socialist realism, and Kataev's liberal views on art in general, helped in many ways not only young writers, but also the older generation, to overcome difficulties in re-adjustment after Stalin's death in 1953 and to restore the value and the role of literature in Soviet cultural life.

Under the fresh breeze of the Thaw, despite the attacks of the conservative critics on the movement toward a free authentic literature, writers at last were able to see the world around them in completely new perspectives, to re-evaluate their past and to pronounce a judgement upon their own literary activities in the past decades. They turned to the richness of their inner worlds, to an exploration of those private dimensions which for so long had been inaccessible. Since the 1920s Soviet writers had never been as free of official direction as they were during the time of the Thaw. Even "the reliable Simonov," as Edward Brown notes, "called for a broadened socialist realism within which greater variety might appear; he deplored the constant revision of old novels in the light of present needs; he called for a re-publication of Soviet satirists of the 'twenties, such as Ilf and Petrov."⁴

Konstantin Simonov's views, expressed at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers in 1954, echoed Kataev's article published in 1957 in which he called for formal innovation not only in literature but in art in general "because without constant renewal nothing can live, especially art."⁵ Kataev considered socialist realism wide enough to

absorb what he claims are "new streams and trends."

Kataev's theoretical ideas found their practical realization only in the middle of the 1960s when *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* (The Little Iron Door in the Wall, 1964) and *Svjatoj kolodec* (The Holy Well, 1966) were published.⁶ His ancillary role in the period of literary and political relaxation was not just his modesty but rather a caution dictated by the experience of the past when as early as 1930 Kataev was accused of being almost anti-Soviet. This accusation came from the RAPP critic Iosif Mašbic-Verov, who wrote a review of Kataev's work of the 1920s.⁷ The attack forced Kataev to change his direction and start supporting the regime. It was the beginning of more than thirty years of the writer's "silence." He did not want to make any wrong move which could affect his rather secure position in Soviet literature. He went even further in securing himself against possible attacks by conservative critics in the literary struggles of the 1950s and 1960s: in 1958 he joined the Party and then six years later published a book about Lenin -- a theme which was currently flourishing in Soviet literature.⁸

Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene marks a turning point in Kataev's career. It opens a new chapter in the creative biography of the writer who celebrated his eighty-ninth birthday in January 1986. The Lenin motif, his life on Capri and in Paris, may be viewed "as merely an excuse to make an experimental piece on personal themes more acceptable."⁹ Surprisingly (in view of the politically sensitive topic), Kataev's new book can be distinguished from other writers' works on the Lenin theme by its complexity and inward

focus¹⁰ This feature of the book brought forth negative responses from certain Soviet critics who accused Kataev of letting his own personality dominate that of Lenin.¹¹

To neutralize the impact of these accusations and reduce their frequency Kataev frequently asserted in his new works that he was a Soviet writer who followed the path of the Revolution. One should bear in mind, however, that Kataev was basically an aesthete, and as Robert Russell points out, "his inherent aestheticism has been in check and modified by the need to publish and achieve public recognition and, in later years at any rate, by his commitment to his country and its political system."¹²

Kataev's "commitment" and loyalty to his country may be another reason for his unpopularity among Western scholars who paid considerable attention to dissident Soviet writers and left unattended "those authors who in the appalling circumstances of Soviet life, tried, within the limits of possibility, to write sincerely and truthfully"¹³ and produce works of "considerable interest and merit despite editorial controls."¹⁴

This latter category undoubtedly includes Kataev with his remarkably written books, who "re-emerged in his old age to produce a series of works which are provocatively modern in style and content."¹⁵ These works belong to a new genre of "lyrical prose" which, alongside the Lenin theme and so-called "young prose," appeared in the late 1950s to be further developed in the 1960s. Authors representative of this genre – such as Vladimir Solouhin (*Kaplja rosy*), Olga Berggol'ts (*Dnevnye zvezdy*), Konstantin Paustovskij, *Povest'*

o žizni), Mixail Slonimskij (*Kniga vospominanij*), Nikolaj Tixonov (*Dvojnaja raduga*), and many more – remain largely unnoticed by Western scholars.

Andrej Sinjavskij made a point when he wrote about the variety and complexity of the Soviet literary scene in his article published in *Vostok i amerikanec* (1981). In his opinion Western and emigre critics will find the source of the renewal of Soviet literature in their "homeland," and not in emigration. This is precisely why one should "regard with the greatest possible attention whatever is happening there, and not here."¹⁶ The same point of view was expressed by Aleksandr Solženicyn, who said in a BBC interview: "Not in the emigration, with its luxury of so-called free expression, has literature been successful, but in our homeland, stretched on the rack."¹⁷

The views expressed by these two prominent emigre writers must be applied not only to the writings of "dissidents" or so called "villagers" (justifiably popular in the West), but also to those writers who, like Kataev, turned to self-rehabilitation and bold experiments with time dimensions in their search for the memory of their own youth, and in their "effort to evoke the Russian past."¹⁸ This statement of Brown's is quite valid, for the past is closely related to the future. The past is the memory, the lessons which help in one's endeavours to build the future. These lessons are also to be learnt from those negative phenomena which one has to reckon with and triumph over. The subject of literature is man, and the writer cannot help but be aware that the experience of the past is conveyed like the genetic information of generations to contemporary man.¹⁹

In the genre of "lyrical prose" the authors deal not only with the past but, more importantly, with the artist's self, which becomes a primary object of investigation. This is evident also in non-Russian Soviet literatures which have an infinite wealth of sources and traditions to draw upon and exhibit diversity of styles and forms.²⁰ The non-Russian prose writers immediately sensed the shift in the æsthetic thinking of the 1960s and, like the Russians, changed the imagery and the conventional norms of story composition and character drawing. By the accentuation of the lyrical element and the unfettering of personality, non-Russian Soviet writers have greatly contributed to the birth of "lyrical prose."²¹

Kataev, in my opinion, belongs to the most eminent representatives of the genre of "lyrical prose" in both contemporary Soviet literature and the history of Soviet literature in general. His life and work deserve much closer attention than they have been given during the many decades of the writer's creative activity.

Kataev's work has been closely interwoven with the history of Soviet Russia, and the essence of his writing lies in his deep-seated attention to his country's forward path. He always found in his work his own artistic response to the substantial and profound turns in the spiritual progress of the country.

Kataev was intensely interested in all aspects of man's life and the world around him (especially the difficult and puzzling). Moral exigency²² is one of the principal qualities Kataev inherited from Russian classical literature (Puškin, Gogol', Dostoevskij, Bunin). At the same time Kataev's entire work and life have been marked by an

endless quest for his own particular literary style, corresponding to the author's notions of time and its tasks.

Kataev's attraction to literature was early apparent. Born in Odessa 28/16 January 1897, he began writing poems at the age of thirteen (see note 1). These youthful efforts, however, were not yet the beginning of professional writing. His real emergence in literature was heralded by his personal introduction to Bunin, whose influence is certainly evident in Kataev's early works, and his direct contact with the events of the beginning of the century (he fought in World War I as well as in the Civil War, where he was gassed and wounded and spent at least eight months in prison). His short stories written in the mid-1910s were published only after his move from Odessa to Moscow in the early 1920s. In the capital, Kataev began writing for the Soviet railway daily newspaper *Gudok*.²³ He wrote under several pseudonyms, among them Oliver Twist and Starik Sobbakin.

The 1920s constituted a relatively free period in the history of Soviet literature. During its relaxed atmosphere when writers belonging to different literary groups with different orientations²⁴ were allowed to experiment with the form and content, Kataev produced some of his best works, which (as the author himself admits) may be linked with his writing three decades later.²⁵ Kataev's search for his own style is well characterized by Nikolaj Smirnov who, in reviewing the book *Rastratčiki* in 1927, wrote: "The writer's path of V. Kataev is a path of incessant and persistent 'first steps in literature'. Having begun from simple, everyday, realistically profound stories, the writer quickly and abruptly turned to the side of phantasmagoria."²⁶

This feature of Kataev's writing (called by Smirnov "phantasmagoria") which characterized some of his stories of the 1920s (*Opyt Kranca* - Krants' Experiment; *Železnoe kol'co* - The Iron Ring; *Sēr Genri i čert* - Sir Henry and the Devil), re-appeared with varying intensity in Kataev's later works. This is only one of the many features that unify the writer's work of the period under discussion. By his exploration of his private world, by his lack of concern for traditional chronological plot, by his subjective treatment of time dimensions, Kataev drastically departed from the typical "realist" narrative which prevails in contemporary Soviet prose.

It is not surprising that both critics and readers were shocked by *Svjatoj kolodec* when one compares its topic and formal devices to those of novels written in accordance with socialist-realism requirements. As was noted earlier, Kataev in the early 1930s found himself obliged to start supporting the regime, and the novels he wrote during this period (and throughout the 1940s and 1950s) reflect these requirements.

It would be unjust, however, to say that Kataev's prose published at this specific time lacked artistic quality. I think it would have been impossible for Kataev to re-emerge in his seventies and produce works of such high quality without being faithful, at least in some degree, to his own style and manner of writing of the NEP period. Although he changed his theme and portrayed Soviet reality in its revolutionary development, his sharp eye and precise descriptive language are still noticeable in everything he wrote during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

The turning point in Kataev's creative work, according to Soviet critics, was the novel *Vremja, vpered!* But it was also the point at which Kataev's work began to show a lower quality, an inability to deal with new themes that were quite alien to him.

After publishing *Vremja, vpered!* Kataev experienced considerable creative difficulties and abandoned several future projects – novels on socialist construction. Only *Beleet parus odinokij* turned out to be successful because it was based partly on his own experience and written on a theme dear to him – childhood (a theme which later re-emerged throughout his entire work of the 1960s and 1970s).

Although Kataev adapted himself to the Party's requirements and survived, there were moments when he tried to break away from the official directives concerning literature during Stalin's "reign." One of his novels *Za vlast' Sovetov*, published in *Novyj mir* (1948), had to be re-written in accordance with the official criticism it drew in *Pravda* in 1950 by Mixail Bubenov.²⁷ Kataev was accused of showing the wartime resistance as a spontaneous act rather than a movement carefully planned, organized, and directed by the Party and by Stalin personally. The new, revised version appeared in 1951. Ten years later in 1961, Kataev revised the novel once again and included it in his tetralogy under the new title *Katakomy* (The Catacombs).

In the same year Kataev published his novel *Zimnij veter* (Winter Wind), which may be considered to be the author's next step in his attempt to "liberate" his writing from the restrictions imposed by the Party. In this novel Kataev managed to reconcile two diametrically opposed aspects of his creation – the personal and the ideo-

logical. The former is conveyed through the main character in the novel, Petja Bačej, whose dilemma – the necessity of making choices between sides – was clearly of great personal importance to Kataev. The extent to which Petja was dear to him is evident in the way Kataev portrays Petja's inner world.

The personal aspect of *Zimnij veter*, alongside the fantastic elements (introduced here for the first time since the 1920s), dominated the entire work of Kataev's later period (the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s).

All of Kataev's later books (*Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Trava zabven'ja* – The Grass of Oblivion – 1967, *Kubik* – Kubik – 1969, *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona* – A Mosaic of Life: or The Magic Horn of Oberon – 1972, a short story *Fialka* – Violet – 1973, *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* – The Cemetery at Skulyany – 1975, *Almaznyj moj venec* – My Diamond Crown – 1978, as well as works written in the 1980s which will not be discussed in this study: *Uže napisan Verter* – Werter Has Been Written – 1980, *Junošeskij roman* – The Adolescent's Novel – 1983, a short story *Spjaščij* – Sleeping – 1985) are written in a completely new manner which distinguishes them not only from traditional Soviet prose, written in accordance with firmly established patterns, but also from his own writing of the Stalin era.

In his "new" prose, as critics call Kataev's writing after the appearance of *Svjatoj kolodec* and *Trava zabven'ja*, the author shifted the focus of his interest from social values to the exploration of the more private aspects of life. This thematic shift required some

changes in form.

First of all, Kataev rejected chronology, replacing it with "associative principles" – a move which also called for change on a narrative level (it should be noted that first-person narration prevails throughout the works of this period). As a result, the reader receives a subjective picture of the events and characters portrayed – a picture of the world in which time and space lose their usual qualities. In respect to these two categories Kataev is sophisticated and bold. Sometimes he displays a deliberate predilection for penetrating the complexities and intricacies of the world, compressed to the limits within the cramped confines of the human soul. The author fuses together not only temporal and spatial "anti-worlds" but also two different styles – the romantic and the evocative.

The above-mentioned features of Kataev's work of the 1960s and 1970s lead one to conclude that they contributed considerably to the expansion of the artistic range of Soviet prose-writing, resulting in a closer investigation of these features.

Although Kataev's "new prose" provoked responses from both Soviet and foreign critics (American, British, Polish, Nigerian), the number of articles is rather insufficient compared to the author's creative fruitfulness for the last two decades and the quality of his creation. Not only have some of Kataev's later works (*Svjatoj kolo-dec*, *Trava zabven'ja*) received more critical attention than others, but it should also be noted that the majority of critics and reviewers tend to concentrate their attention on the ideological aspect of Kataev's writing. In an interview with Robert Daglish (the English translator of

Trava zabven'ja) Kataev, asked "if he thought his work had been understood in the West," predictably replied: "They will talk politics all the time."²⁸

The most comprehensive overview of Kataev's later period comprises Russell's previously-quoted monograph *Valentin Kataev* (in which there is very little reference to either his *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* or *Almaznyj moj venec* – two important works of the 1970s), along with two articles earlier published by Russell in 1976 and 1982 – *The Problem of Self-Expression in the Later Works of Valentin Kataev*²⁹ and *Oberon's Magic Horn: The Later Works of Valentin Kataev* (see note 12) respectively. Another study dealing with more than one of Kataev's books is an article by Polish critic Stanisław Poręba entitled *Współczesna proza liryczna Walentyna Kataewa (Wokół problematyki czasu)*³⁰ in which there are brief but valuable remarks on the question of time in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene, Svjatoj kolodec, Trava zabven'ja*, and *Kubik*.

Besides Poręba's article, the unusual treatment of the category of time is noted by almost every critic who has published on Kataev's "new" prose. But these are only general statements and the problem still remains open for more detailed analysis. Very much the same conclusion applies to such theoretical questions as narration (narrative point of view) and space, the category most closely related to the category of time. On the latter point Kataev writes in *Svjatoj kolodec*: "Time is a strange substance which even in philosophical dictionaries has no separate heading but goes in the same harness with space...."³¹

Because of the scarcity of criticism, especially on specific theoretical problems, everything that has been published or written³² on Kataev's prose of the 1960s and 1970s – even the smallest findings or suggestions – are invaluable for the purposes of this study.

The analysis of Kataev's prose of the later period (excluding his works of the 1980s) will be concerned with its form – i.e. the question of the narrative situation in all its implications related to the structure and meaning of these works, the temporal and spatial relationships which constitute fictional reality, and the method of characterization. An effort will be made to relate the structure of these works to the ideas which form their content.

In the approach employed in this study the primary focus is on the "narrative situations" ("die primären Erzahlsituationen"),³³ which represent a key problem in the structural analysis of literary prose and remain the central problem in an analysis aimed at discovering the structural principles which make a prose work into an artistic, æsthetic whole. The term "narrative situation" corresponds to the term "point of view" common in both Anglo-American (e.g. Wayne C. Booth's) and Soviet (e.g. Mixail Baxtin's, Boris Uspenskij's) theory and criticism.³⁴

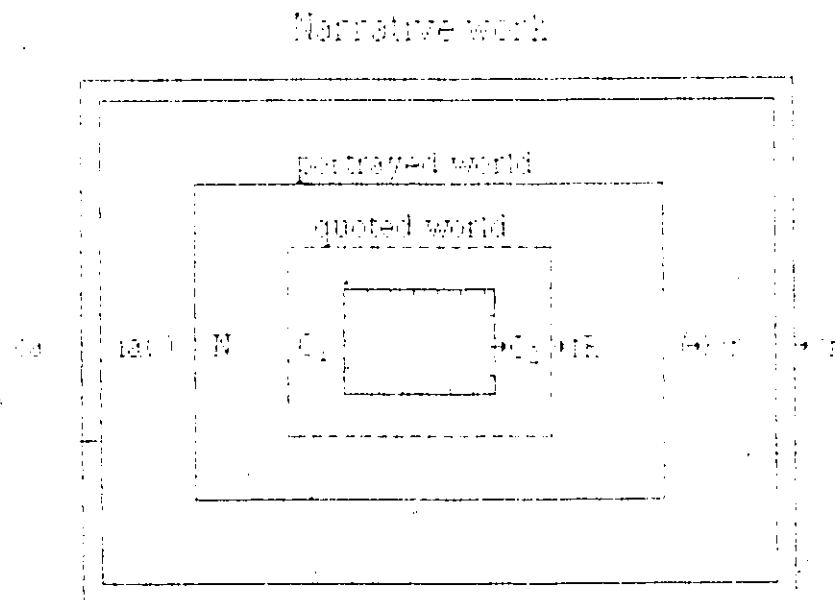
While these scholars concern themselves extensively with the problem of "point of view," credit is due Wolf Schmid for his model of the semantic structure of a literary work.³⁵ Schmid takes into account all the basic levels of expression (communication) of the work. He divides the levels of the narrative work into three basic categories: the *concrete*, the *implied*, and the *fictional*.

The *concrete* category consists of the concrete author (for example Kataev) and the concrete reader, both of whom are *extrinsic* to the work of fiction.

The *implied* category consists of the implied author³⁶ (the *intrinsic* reflection of the concrete author) and the implied reader,³⁷ the work-immanent counterpart of the implied author.

The *fictional* category consists of a fictional narrator and his implicit recipient, the fictional reader, both of whom are work-immanent categories.

Schmid's model of the communicative structure of the literary work is reproduced below:



Legend: **ca** = concrete author; **ia** = implied author; **(:)** = originator of the creative act (in the case of implied categories the colon is given in parentheses); **N** = narrator; **C₁, C₂** = portrayed characters; **FR** = fictional reader; **ir** = implied reader; **cr** = concrete reader; **→** = direction of addressed communication (in the case of the implied categories the arrow appears in parentheses).

In the traditional narrative typologies³⁸ a distinction is made between what is commonly called a first-person narrative and a third-person narrative. In the latter case the narrator remains outside the boundaries of the narrated world; in the former case the narrator may be the central character or a secondary character of the narrated world. However, the first-person narrator, according to Schmid, may be classified as either a "narrating I" (analogous to the third-person narrator) or an "experiencing I" (analogous to a *dramatis persona*).³⁹

The "narrating I" always acts as a ~~third-person~~ narrator when he is describing the narrated world, except in the case of the autobiographical narrative where the narrator must refer to himself as "I" and not as "he."

These two basic types of "narrative situations" ("points of view") — the first- and the third-person narratives — do not (as will be seen) oppose one another but co-exist in Kataev's work of the 1960s and 1970s. Once this problem is uncovered, the structure of the whole work is revealed (space, time, characters).

Although the structural method is employed in this study, in many instances it will be supplemented by the phenomenological methods of interpretation (Roman Ingarden, Michel Butor, Wolfgang Iser).⁴⁰ The phenomenological approach to literature does not oppose other methods of interpretation. On the contrary, it aims at integrating the discoveries of other methods and incorporating what is learnt from these methods into a more comprehensive understanding of a text. The way in which the phenomenological method contrasts with

other critical attitudes is in the substitution of the intentional order for the objective order – which is primarily due to the phenomenologist's conception that a literary text is a human act within the world rather than a representation of the world. In his book *Phenomenology*, Joseph Kockelmans writes: "It is true to say that phenomenology is not a description of the 'real world,' but it is a description of the *experience* of the perceived world as the 'primary' reality."⁴¹ We may say, then, that Kataev's "new" prose describes the experience of perceiving the world; for the author himself this perception is the "primary reality."

Though leaning in its method toward structuralism, the present study borrows some phenomenological conceptions as well. The phenomenological method is especially useful in the exploration of temporal and spatial dimensions (cf. George Poulet)⁴² in Kataev's works of the later period.

The theoretical questions outlined above will be analysed on the basis of Kataev's works written during the most productive period, in his literary career. This period, at the moment of present writing, still remains open as Kataev* continues to create and publish his works with the same vigorous energy as in the mid-1960s when the "new" Kataev emerged. Every day can bring a book which may be written in the same manner or in a manner yet unknown to both readers and critics. To avoid any "additions" or "re-writings" (in case a new work should appear), I have limited my analysis to the works written in the last two "closed" decades – i.e., his works of the 1960s and 1970s.

*Valentin Kataev died 12 April 1986 in Peredelkino.

NOTES

¹A poem *Osen'* (Autumn) published in *Odesskij vėstnik*, 19 December 1910. After that, Kataev collaborated with the newspapers *Odesskij listok*, *Južnaja mysl'*, and later with the Petersburg journals *Probužden'e*, *Lukomor'e*, and *Ves' mir*.

²Introduction to the English edition of Kataev's book *The Holy Well*. Translated by M. Hayward and H. Shukman. (London: Harvil Press, 1967), p. 12.

³V. Kataev, "Novogodnij tost" in his *Sobranie sočinenij v devjati tomov* (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja Literatura, 1968), vol. 8, p. 346.

⁴E.J. Brown, *Russian Literature since the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 206.

Il'ja Il'f (1837–1937) and Evgenij Petrov (1903–1942) were a team of collaborators on satiric books, notably *Dvenadcat' stulev* (1928) and *Zolotoj telenok* (1931). Both wrote under pseudonyms: Il'f was born Il'ja Fajnzil'berg; Petrov's actual name was Evgenij Kataev, a younger brother of Valentin Kataev.

⁵V. Kataev, "O novatorstve", in *Sobranie...*, vol. 8, p. 388

⁶Another Kataev work published since Stalin's death was the belated second part of his historical chronicle *Kolny černogo morja* (Black Sea Waves): i.e., *Xutorok v stepi* (The Little Farm in the Steppe, 1956) and *Zimnij veter* (Winter Wind, 1961). The others in the four-volume cycle are *Beleet parus odinokij* (The Lone White Sail, 1936) and *Za vlast' Sovetov* (For the Power of Soviets, 1951).

I share Robert Russell's point of view in his monograph on Kataev: "The work thought by most critics to have heralded the arrival of the 'new' Kataev was 'The Holy Well,' but many of the themes and devices which were to run through Kataev's work for the rest of the 1960s and into the 1970s were introduced in a tale of 1964 about Lenin on Capri and in Paris, entitled 'The Little Iron Door in the Wall.'" — *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), p. 110.

I. Mašbic-Verov, "Na grani. Tvorčestvo Valentina Kataeva," *Na literaturnom postu*, 9 (1930), pp. 35-46, and 11 (1930), pp. 47-56.

⁸The search for the image of the leader, which began during Lenin's lifetime, involved artists from different artistic disciplines — prose writers, poets, playwrights, sculptors, painters, graphic artists, workers in the cinema and theatre.

The first monument to Lenin (the one at the Kazan' railway station in Moscow) was created by a professional artist Georgij Alekseev — sculptor, painter, graphic artist — who took part in the 1905-1907 Revolution. Alekseev began working in 1918, right in Lenin's study in the Kremlin.

Kataev's first work dedicated to Lenin was written shortly after Lenin's death in 1924. It was a poem, a fragment of which is quoted at the end of *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*. Later Lenin motifs appeared in the novels of the Thaw period (*Tutorok v stepi* and *Zimnij veter*).

In addition to *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* — Kataev's so-called "lyrical diary" — the Lenin theme appeared in the prose writings of Emmanuil Kazakevič (*Sinjaja tetrad'*), Marietta Šaginjan (*Sem'ja U'janovyx, Pervaja vsrossijskaja*), and Afanasij Koptelov (*Bol'šoj začin* and *Vožgoritsja plamja*); in Andrej Voznesenskij's poem *Lonžjumo*; in children's books by Zoja Voskresenskaja (*Se, dce materi*), Marija Priležaeva (*Udivitel'nyj god, Tri nedeli pokoja*), Andrej Popov (*Stranicy velikoj žizni*), and Arsenij Rut'ko (*Detstvo na Volge*); as well as in dramas by Nikolaj Pogodin (*Kremlevskie kuranty*) and Dmitrij Zorin (*Večnyj istočnik*).

⁹R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev, op. cit.*, p. 113.

It seems to me that Kataev is still very well aware of the necessity of a thematic or any other kind of excuse to have his works published in the Soviet Union, even though the great literary battles have subsided somewhat and Kataev's *mauvistic* writing is "accepted" and tolerated as "the flouting of 'socialist realist' convention" (*The Holy Well*, Introduction, *op. cit.*, p. 13). See also note 12.

¹⁰An example is Kazakevič's *Sinjaja tetrad'*, in which the author focuses his attention exclusively on the personality of Lenin.

11 R. Kaganova, "Ešče raz ob otvetstvennosti xudožnika." *Vo-prosy istorii KPSS*, 1 (1965), pp. 109-114.

12 R. Russell, "Oberon's Magic Horn: The Later Works of Valentin Kataev," in *Russian Literature and Criticism. Selected Papers from the Second World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*. Ed. Evelyn Bristol. (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1982), p. 190.

The most recent confirmation of Kataev's loyalty to his country and its way of life can be found in his articles published at the end of the 1970s and in the mid-1980s: "I Want Peace," *Soviet Literature*, 2 (1979), pp. 170-173; "Otryvok iz dnevnika," *Novyj mir*, 1 (1985), pp. 83-96 — in English: "Excerpt from a Diary," *Soviet Literature*, 11 (1985), pp. 129-132. Here is an excerpt from Kataev's first article named above in which the writer speaks about democracy, freedom, human rights, and anti-Soviet propaganda in the West (pp. 171, 172, 173):

Soviet power had a difficult and thorny path to tread before, in place of an old and backward Russia, there rose up a mighty power, one of the most powerful states in the world. But in the whole of its sixty years of existence the Soviet state has suffered an incessant and shameless badgering from the straggling remains of the White Guards holed up in Paris, London and Berlin; ... in most recent times, there have appeared the so-called 'dissidents' or 'non-conformists', making of their 'dissidence' and 'non-conformism' quite a lucrative profession. They fled or were driven from their motherland, and living abroad, they set up incessant anti-Soviet clamour which from time to time reaches the ears of honest Soviet people through a great number of radio stations. ... We realize that there is no use expecting our ex-citizens, the 'dissidents', to have a conscience. They have sold their consciences. There remains only naked meanness of spirit.... They do not agree with the Soviet way of life, or more strictly speaking they do not agree with the Soviet state's very existence. That is their right, of course.

13 *Writers in Russia: 1917-1978*. Max Hayward. Edited and with an Introduction by Patricia Blake. (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), p. x.

¹⁴N.N. Shneidman, *Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), Publisher's note.

In his study Shneidman examines the works of Sergej Zalygin, Vasil' Bykov, Jurij Bondarev, Jurij Trifonov, Valentin Rasputin, and Čingiz Ajtmatov. Kataev, unfortunately, is not mentioned even in passing.

¹⁵*Studies in Twentieth Century Russian Literature. Five Essays.* Edited by Christopher J. Barnes. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), Foreword, p. v.

¹⁶A. Sinjavskij, "Dve literatury ili odna," *Novyj amerikanec*, 14 and 20 June 1981. Passage quoted after Brown, p. 293.

¹⁷Quoted after Brown, p. 293. The whole text of this interview was published in Russian in *Posev*, 4 (1979), pp. 20–28, under the title "Ja verju v naš narod – na vsex urovnjax."

¹⁸Brown, p. 18.

¹⁹Kataev's interest in genetics and heredity is very much evident in two of his works of the 1970s – *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona* (A Mosaic of Life: or The Magic Horn of Oberon) and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* (The Cemetery at Skulyany).

²⁰The problem is discussed in detail by Anthony Adamovich in his article "The Non-Russians" in *Soviet Literature in the Sixties. An International Symposium.* Edited by Max Hayward and Edward L. Crowley. (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 101–129.

²¹Compare, for example, the following writers: **Lithuanians** Mikolas Sluckis, Alfonsas Bieliauskas, Jonas Avyžius; **Latvians** Janis Lulis, Jeronims Stulpan, Ojar Vacietis; **Estonian** Paul-Erik Rummo; **Georgians** Nodar Dumbadze, Otar Čiladze, Šota Nišnianidze; **Armenians** Grant Matevosian, Aramais Saakian; **Ukrainians** Evhen Hucalo, Mykola Vinhranovsy; and the relatively young but already nationally acclaimed **Belorussians** Ales' Naurocki, Janka Bryl', Barys Sadanka, Ryhor Baradulin, as well as the late Usevalod Kraucanka, who commit-

ted suicide during a visit to France in 1961. I have not yet mentioned here the **Kirgiz** writer Čingiz Ajtmatov who is one of the best-known non-Russian authors in the West. A detailed analysis of his works may be found in Shneidman, pp. 32-46. See also on Ajtmatov: Nina Kolesnikoff, "The Child Narrator in the Novellas of Chingiz Aitmatov" in *Russian Literature and Criticism...* (*op cit.*), pp. 101-110, and Constantin V. Ponomareff, "A Poetic Vision in Conflict: Chingiz Aitmatov's Fiction" in *Russian Literature and Criticism...*, pp. 158-166.

²²Kataev's morality has been unjustly questioned by some of his critics. See, for example, Majja Kaganskaja, "Vremja, nazad!," *Sinta Ksis* (Paris), 3 (1975), pp. 103-113; Vladimir Dudincev, "Dve magii iskusstva," *Literaturnaja gazeta*, 13 August 1966, pp. 2-3; Benedikt Sarnov, "Ugl' pylajuščij i kimval brjacajuščij," *Voprosy literatury*, 1 (1968), pp. 21-49.

²³A number of young writers who collaborated with *Gudok* had come, like Kataev, from Odessa and Kiev, among them Jurij Oleša (pseudonym "Zubilo"), Mixail Bulgakov, Il'ja Il'f and Evgenij Petrov. See also note 4.

²⁴Throughout the turbulent years of the 1920s Soviet writers, in their quests and searches for the ways and means of representing post-Revolutionary reality, constantly grouped and re-grouped into associations and issued manifestos. A sharp polarization of forces was taking place. The largest organization of writers was the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), established in 1925. In 1921 several young writers organized a group called the "Serapion Brethren" (after the tale by the German romanticist E.T.A. Hoffman). The group included Konstantin Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov, Venjamin Kaverin, Nikolaj Tixonov, Evgenij Zamjatin, Mixail Zoščenko, and Boris Pil'njak. In their manifesto (written by scholar and playwright Lev Lunts) they proclaimed that art was indifferent to politics. Two other literary groups of the 1920s - "Pereval" and "LEF" - arose in 1923. Kataev, like Leonid Leonov, Jurij Oleša, and Isaak Babel', did not belong to any of these groups; however they could be considered fairly close in their outlook to the "Serapion Brethren."

²⁵I have in mind the story *Ser Genri i čert*. In an interview

with L. Antopol'skij, Kataev links this story with *Svjatoj kolodec*: "Obnovlenie prozy," *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1971), pp. 23-31.

For a more detailed analysis of Kataev's works of the 1920s, see Josef Vogl, *Das Fruhverk Valentin P. Kataevs*, Band 179 (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1984); R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev*, pp. 26-72; Danuta Dąbrowska, "Felietony Walentyna Katajewa lat dwudziestych," *Studia Rossica Posnaniensia*, 13 (1979), pp. 137-149.

²⁶Quoted in P. Johnson, *Struggle with Death: The Theme of Death in the Major Prose Works of Iu. Olesha and of V. Kataev* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1976), pp. 162-163.

²⁷N. Bubennov, "O novom romane Valentina Kataeva *Za vlast' Sovetov*," *Pravda*, 16 and 17 January 1950, pp. 2-4.

²⁸R. Daglish, "Kataev and his Critics" in Kataev, *The Grass of Oblivion*. Translated from the Russian and with an Introduction by Robert Daglish. (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. i.

²⁹R. Russell, "The Problem of Self-Expression in the Later Works of Valentin Kataev," in *Studies in Twentieth Century Russian Literature...* (*op. cit.*), pp. 78-91.

³⁰S. Poręba, "Współczesna proza liryczna Walentyna Katajewa. (Wokół problematyki czasu)," *Slavia Orientalis*, L (1974), pp. 63-74.

³¹Kataev, *Svjatoj kolodec* in his *Sobranie...* (*op. cit.*), vol. 9, p. 179. (My translation). All excerpts from Kataev's works quoted in the main text appear in Russian.

On the problem of the narrator in *Trava zabven'ja* see E.M. Ivanova, "Povestvovatel' i avtobiografičeskij geroj v *Trave zabven'ja* V. Kataeva," *Izvestija voronežskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogičeskogo instituta*, 125 (1975), pp. 142-159. See also, by the same author, "Zamyсел i stil' *Travy zabven'ja* V. Kataeva," *Metod i masterstvo* (Vologda), 3 (1971), pp. 210-227; "Otkrytaja avtorskaja pozicija kak osobyj xudožestvennyj priem v memuarно-avtobiografičeskix proizvedenijax novogo tipa," *Učenyje zapiski ivanovskogo ped. instituta*, 105 (1972), pp. 163-177. With regard to *Trava zabven'ja* some rather interesting suggestions can

be found in an article by E.A. Bal'burov, "Svoeobrazie sjužeta novoj kataevskoj prozy. (*Trava zabven'ja*)," *Russkaja literatura*, 2 (1972), pp. 189–196.

A specific problem is analysed in an article written by Nigerian critic P.O. Dada, "The Character of Lenin in Kataev's *The Little Iron Door in the Wall*," *Studia Slavica* 28 (1982), pp. 349–355.

³²By "written" I mean Ph.D. dissertations which have not been published and are available in the form of facsimiles from microfilms. There have been three dissertations written on Kataev in the United States which deal with some of Kataev's later works: Wasil G. Fiedorow, *V.P. Kataev vs. Socialist Realism: An Interpretation* (Indiana University, 1973); Phyllis M. Johnson (see note 26); Dodona Kiziria, *Cinematic Devices in the Works of Valentin Kataev* (Russian text; Indiana University, 1979).

³³This term is used by Wolf Schmid in his book *Der Textaufbau in den Erzählungen Dostoevskijs*, Beiheft zu *Poetica*. Ed. Karl Maurer. Heft 10 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1973), p. 27.

³⁴W.C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968); M.M. Baxtin, *Problemy poëtiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Sovetskij Pisatel', 1963); B.A. Uspenskij, *Poëtika kompozicii: struktura xudožestvennogo teksta i tipologija kompozicionnoj formy* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970).

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren prefer to use the term "focus of narration" instead of "point of view" in *Understanding Fiction* (New York, 1943).

This problem is also dealt with by Bertil Romberg, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977); Franz Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Stanisław Eile, *Światopogląd powieści* (Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1973).

³⁵Schmid, *Der Textaufbau...* (*op. cit.*), pp. 29–30.

³⁶The category of "implied author" corresponds to Viktor Vinogradov's category of "obraz avtora" in *Stilistika, teorija poëtičeskoj reči, poëtika* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1963), p. 79.

³⁷On this category see Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); also Horst Ruthrof, *The Reader's Construction of Narrative* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

³⁸See Romberg, note 34.

³⁹See Schmid, p. 27.

⁴⁰R. Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), and *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); *Inventory. Essays by Michel Butor*. Edited and with a foreword by Richard Howard. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968); W. Iser (see note 37).

⁴¹J. Kockelmans, *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation* (Garden City: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1967), p. 245.

⁴²G. Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*. Translated by Elliot Coleman. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956); and *Proustian Space*. Translated by Elliot Coleman. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

CHAPTER I

MALEN'KAJA ŽELEZNAJA DVER' V STENE AS A TURNING POINT IN KATAEV'S LITERARY CAREER

This small book with a very long title is a very important link in Kataev's literary work. It was his first attempt to break with traditional poetics and to introduce some formal innovations involving the de-canonization of the major norms of socialist-realist canon. As was already noted in the introduction, it opens a new chapter in Kataev's career as a writer. In this book about Lenin as revolutionary leader, Kataev (for the first time since the 1920s) introduces personal themes and speaks about his own tastes and interests. This would have been unthinkable in the period between the 1920s and the so-called Thaw, when individualistic expression and subjective views of reality were reduced to non-existence.

The theme of Lenin's life on Capri and in Paris may be viewed not only as an excuse and disguise for the personal subject matter, but also as Kataev's genuine fascination with Lenin's personality and the history of the Revolution. In his 1966 article entitled *Kak ja pisal knigu "Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene,"* Kataev wrote:

Тема Ленина давно привлекала меня... Всю свою сознательную жизнь я любил Ленина и всегда мечтал написать о нем книгу... если не роман и не повесть, то во всяком случае, его литературный портрет. (1)

In writing a book about Lenin, Kataev was responding to a question which arose in Soviet literature after Stalin's death – namely, how to depict the Revolution and its leader. Up until this point it had been held that Lenin must be completely different from the crowds, that he must be above the masses.² This is the way Lenin is portrayed in the works of Mariëta Šaginjan, Marija Priležaeva, Dmitriij Zorin and many more (see Introduction, note 8).

Although thousands of people had seen Lenin, heard him, talked to him, communicated with him in one way or another at different times and under different circumstances, it had not always been an easy task to achieve his likeness – to form an artistic conception of his inner life and to present it convincingly. And Soviet Leniniana did not fully come to grips with this task. It always managed to put Lenin on a pedestal without seeing in him an ordinary, earthly, simple man (to use Maksim Gor'kij's words).³ Gor'kij knew Lenin personally and in his essay *V.I. Lenin* he points out the difference between the real and the imagined proletarian leader:

Я ожидал, что Ленин не таков. Мне чего-то не хватало в нем. Картавит и руки сунул куда-то под мышки, стоит фертom. И вообще, весь – как-то слишком прост, не чувствуется в нем ничего от «вождя». (4)

Kataev did not meet Lenin in person and he was very well aware of the difficulties awaiting him when he took up the Lenin theme. The above-mentioned article includes this admission:

Ленин – неисчерпаемая тема, которую один человек осилить не может. Поэтому я решил взять какой-

-нибудь небольшой период жизни Ленина и попытаться на этом материале построить образ Владимира Ильича, заранее отказавшись создать что-нибудь монументальное, так как это было мне явно не по силам. (5)

Kataev was, however, a colleague of Lenin's wife Nadežda Krupskaja at "Glavpolitprosvet"⁶ at the beginning of the 1920s. She promised him in fact that Lenin would receive him after he recovered. But Lenin did not recover, and the meeting never took place. Nevertheless Kataev had a great deal of help from Krupskaja in his effort to understand Lenin's personality. She was often telling him about the leader, about his life abroad in Geneva and Paris, about the Party-school he founded in Longjumeau, and many other things which Kataev included in his book.

Kataev's first poem dedicated to Lenin was written shortly after the leader's death in 1924. Kataev quotes a fragment of this poem at the end of *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*:

Жестокую стужу костры сторожили,
Но падала температура
На градус в минуту, сползая по жиле
Стеклопанной руки Реомюра... (7)

Over the years Kataev had been edging closer and closer to the Lenin theme (considered by Soviet critics the most important theme in Soviet literature), for everything he had previously written touched on it in one way or another. Lenin motifs are present in *Beleet parus odinokij* and in *Vremja, vpered!* Later they appeared in the novels of the Thaw period – *Xutorok v stepi* and *Zimnij veter*. Kataev continued to cherish his ambition of writing a book about

Lenin. For this purpose he travelled (as early as 1931) to Paris where he met French communists Marcel Cachin and Paul Vaillant-Couturier as well as the participants of the Paris Commune. His talks with them largely contributed to his final decision to write a book about Lenin's life in the city of the French Revolution, the city of Marx and Engels, Robespierre and Marat, Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁸

But thirty years were to pass before the decision led to practical realization. Aware of the responsibility and the challenge ("Na každ-
dom etape našego istoričeskogo i literaturnogo razvitija leninskaja
tema – vseгда *probnyj kamen' dlja pisatelja*"),⁹ Kataev was obliged
to read Lenin's works in their entirety, to study a great number of
memoirs of Lenin's contemporaries and to read the writings of Marx
and Engels.¹⁰ Also indispensable were successive visits to France in
1958, 1960, and twice in 1961.

Despite this scrupulous preparation Kataev did not intend to
write something "monumental" (as he himself admitted in the previ-
ously quoted passage from his article *Kak ja pisal knigu "Malen'-
kaja železnaja dver' v stene"*), but rather, taking advantage of his
newly-found dominion over time, he wandered in the Paris streets
where Lenin seemed to have just ridden by on his bicycle, mingled
with the crowds of workers in the tiny Bobino theatre listening to the
chansonniers that Lenin used to like so much, and took notes of Len-
in's lecture sitting in the far corner of the Bolshevik school in Long-
jumeau. With such power Kataev was able to be carried back half a
century and see a postman whistling a tune walk along the narrow rue
Marie Rose in Paris, enter house number 4 and climb to the first floor

to deliver a registered parcel from Russia. And not just to see but actually to "become" that postman, walk up the winding wooden staircase, pause in front of a door and ring the bell:

И вдруг я испытал то же ни с чем не сравнимое ощущение... на один короткий миг мне показалось, что время переместилось назад, на пятьдесят лет, и почтальон несет в адрес m-eur Oulianoff, на второй этаж, заказную бандероль из России... а что, если вдруг откроется дверь и мы увидим на пороге живого Ленина.... (11)

With such an approach to the Lenin theme, Kataev challenged not only traditional Soviet Leniniana but also fossilized principles of socialist realism. For him the key problem in the creative process was the artist's position, his right to express his concept of life and reality in his own, individual way. These basic questions are closely connected with the general problem of poetics as a system of expressive means. And Kataev depicts the figure of Lenin from his own specific angle, creating for this purpose a certain space and time in which the events are to take place. Nor is the traditional concept of genre relevant in the case of *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*. This book ushers in a new stage in the evolution of Kataev's prose.

One can define Kataev's new work as a "diary" in which history is filtered through the prism of the author's personal feelings. And indeed on the first page of the book Kataev writes:

...эта книга не исторический очерк, не роман, даже не рассказ. Это размышления, страницы путевых тетрадей, воспоминания, точнее всего — лирический дневник, не больше. Но и не меньше. (12)

In this "lyrical diary" one can find that kind of subjectivity which enables the author to participate in some way in the actualized events. Historical facts here are mixed with pure fiction and the author's own experience and imagination. In one of his articles Kataev wrote that it is impossible for an artist not to use his imagination, that this is a tool of his trade. He arranges hundreds of facts in one episode, thousands of impressions in one artistic image.¹³

Very similar thoughts were offered by Solženicyn in his interview for the BBC on the subject of *Lenin v Gjurix* – a book written ten years after Kataev's "lyrical diary" was published:

I should say it is a form of creative research. My aim is to reconstruct history in its fulness, in its authenticity, in its complexity, but for this I have to use artist's vision, because a historian uses only documentary material, much of which has been lost. The historian uses evidence from witnesses, most of whom are no longer alive... whereas the artist can see farther and deeper, thanks to the force of perception in the artist's vision. I am not writing a novel. I am using all the artistic means available to me to penetrate as deeply as possible into historical events. (14)

This specific blend of document and fiction, memoirs and imagination, determines to a considerable degree the structure of *Malen'-kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, in which there is little regard for conventional connected narrative.⁶ This helps Kataev to focus the reader's attention on his personality, tastes, and memories – and, at the same time, to "range as freely as he wishes, both in subject matter and in time, setting down incidents from various periods without regard to chronology."¹⁵

The author admits in his "diary" that the loss of a chronological

sense comes with advancing years ("Ni s čem ne sravnimoe sladkoe oščuščenje poteri vremeni, vernee, ego smeščenija.... Vse časče i časče ono presleduet menja teper', na sklone let"),¹⁶ but this is only an excuse for his private reminiscences in the book, along with his anticipation of the reflections on the nature of time in most of his later works.

The loss of a sense of time enabled Kataev not only to bring together by association his childhood and his old age, to link past and present, but also to weave his very personal theme into a book about Lenin. And indeed it is intriguing that, as Russell points out, "although the figure of Lenin acts as a focal point for what narrative there is in the tale, Kataev's approach to the revolutionary leader is that of a contemporary, and while the point of view *appears* to be Lenin's, it in fact is Kataev's."¹⁷

From the above one may conclude that there are two parallel structures in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*. One is the "narrative skeleton"¹⁸ (Lenin's activities on Capri and in Paris), the other — the author's own memories and digressions. These two structures (narrative and digressive) fit closely together, flowing freely into each other, although for these two different structures Kataev employs two different narrators.

Thus, *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* begins with the digressions of the first-person narrator, introducing the topic and defining the "genre" of the book. Right in the middle of the work, this narrator identifies himself with the concrete author, assuming his biographical features:

По странному совпадению, я тоже в 1910 году, примерно в это же время, может быть, на месяц раньше, в первый раз в жизни попал на Капри. Мне было тогда тринадцать, а моему брату Жене — будущему писателю Евгению Петрову — семь лет: (19)

The concrete author, therefore, may be considered to be the narrator in *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene* — the first-person narrator (one remembers that Kataev was born in 1897, so he was thirteen years old at the time of his first visit to Capri in 1910 and that he had a younger brother Evgenij, a well-known satirist of the 1920s). But at this point it is necessary to note that Kataev's "lyrical diary" is not a typical documentary or autobiographical work; as was mentioned earlier, literary fiction is one of the indispensable elements of the structure of the book, and its documentary and biographical features were exposed to some creative transformation. In this case the concrete author obtains separate bases of existence with the limits of the presented world. He appears here not only as a *subject* (the "I" of the implied author), but also as a *character*, as an *object* of presentation (the "I" of the narrator).

The personality of the implied author appears when he presents historical documents about Lenin, memoirs of his contemporaries, and when he refers to the implied reader and talks about his work on the book. In all other cases the narration in the first-person indicates the author as an object. Since the implied author deals with documents which are undoubtedly very objective sources of information, he presents (in contrast to the first-person narrator) a more objective point of view on the characters and the events in the presented world.

Another *subject* of presentation in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* is the third-person narrator, whose task is to present the events from the reconstructed past – the past within the limits of a historical time (1908–1911). He takes a rather objective position in his presentation, even though he is to some extent dependent on the first-person narrator and describes only those events which appear in the latter's imagination.

Many of the paragraphs about the events from the past are introduced by a phrase such as "ja vižu" or "predstavljaju sebe" and then described from the position of the third-person narrator. This indicates that he plays the specific role of the "ambassador" in the reconstructed world. All information flowing from the "ambassador's" position is supplemented by the "I" of the implied author from his objective viewpoint as, for instance, in the passage below:

Горький сидел рядом с Лениным, сузив глаза, и задумчиво подергивал кончики усов над бритым, солдатским подбородком. Выжидательно помалкивал. А Ленин уже овладел собой, был спокоен, холоден, насмешлив и настроен далеко не мирно.

Есть известная фотография «В.И. Ленин у М. Горького на о. Капри», где Владимир Ильич, в зимнем костюме, в котелке, бритый, играет с Богдановым в шахматы, а Горький в своей знаменитой, сдвинутой набок демократической шляпе, сидя на перилах террасы и как бы возвышаясь над всей группой, подпирает подбородок рукой, но смотрит не на игроков, а прямо в объектив фотографического аппарата; сзади видна волнистая линия гор и кое-где угадывается туманная полоса Неаполитанского залива. (20)

The first paragraph of the quoted passage is presented from the point of view of the third-person narrator, who describes the

situation from an eye-witness position and refers only to Gor'kij's and Lenin's gestures, mimics, and inner thoughts. This incomplete and one-sided picture of the characters complements that offered by the implied author (in the second paragraph), who has at his disposition an objective document (a photograph) which supplies more detailed information about the appearance of Gor'kij and Lenin along with the picturesque environment. But for Kataev this is not enough and the next paragraph begins as follows:

Недавно я побывал на Капри. Мы отправились раз-
скивать виллу и террасу, где свыше полувека тому на-
зад Ленин играл в шахматы. (21)

These two sentences belong to the first-person narrator who wants to verify and confirm the two previous sources of information.

In this way, by a collaboration of the implied author, the first-person narrator and the third-person narrator, the reader receives not only a three-dimensional image of every episode or character portrayed, but also the impression of the authenticity of the historical facts. Kataev is not indifferent to this problem; indeed he pays considerable attention to the techniques of presentation in his "lyrical diary." This specific triangle of the narrative perspectives in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* displays Kataev's technical virtuosity, which enables him to achieve the goal and to retain his central place as a character (first-person narrator). He never effaces himself. From his central position the first-person narrator gives free rein to his eclectic tastes, often ascribing them to Lenin, as in the passage in

which Lenin and Krupskaja watch an airplane take off:

Почему я так ясно представляю себе этот пейзаж, типичный для Иль-де-Франс лета 1911 года; знойный ветерок, шелковый блеск клеверного поля, брошенные в траву сиреневые обертки швейцарского шоколада «Сюшар», серебряные бумажки, до рези в глазах блестящие на солнце, аэроплан, косо повисший над дальней колокольней.... Почему мне так приятно об этом писать? Вероятно, потому, что в то время почти абсолютно все увлекались полетами, и я сам, четырнадцатилетний мальчик, зажав дыхание, лежал в полях, ловя тот сокровенный миг, когда в глазах совершалось волшебство полета, превращение тела, бегущего по земле, в тело, летящее по воздуху. Только это было не под Парижем, а под Одессой.... (22)

The above quotation may also serve to illustrate Kataev's way of changing narrative perspectives. Information received from the third-person narrator (in the preceding paragraphs) evokes – in the first-person narrator's mind – an association with similar events from his own experience. These events are described by the first-person narrator and commented on in the form of a digression by the implied author. (The words "kogda v glazax soveršalos' volšebstvo poleta, prevraščenie tela, beguščego po zemle, v telo, letjaščee po vozduxu" do not belong to either of the two narrators. These words can only belong to the implied author, who in this way links two similar events which happened in the past in two distant geographical places). In this way the "narrative triangle" is fulfilled. Also evident here is the author's anticipation of his transformations of things and persons in his works of the 1960s and 1970s ("prevraščenie tela, beguščego po zemle, v telo, letjaščee po vozduxu").

At this point it is necessary to emphasize that Kataev introduces

the "narrative triangle" device in order to throw more light on the events in historical time and at the same time to disguise his own personality. Ironically, however, he only makes himself more visible.

This explains why the third-person narrator never relates more recent events, events beyond historical time. His omniscience is limited, and is directed to the past but not to the future, which is in the range of judgement only of the implied author and the first-person narrator.

One can see that in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* two subjects of presentation (first- and third-person narrators) relate their stories from different temporal positions, and the worlds in which they act have different temporal extents (dimensions). The events in the reconstructed world, as one already knows, take place within the period of 1908–1911. The events in the world of the first-person narrator take place between 1908 and the 1960s.

In the first case the narrator acts like a reporter. He observes the events and the characters from the distance of an eye-witness. He never loses them from his sight. Step by step he follows the main character (Lenin) on his way to the National Library, describing not only the streets of Paris, but also Lenin's everyday routine:

Осторожно, держа за твердое седло, Ленин сводил по ступеньям лестницы подпригивающий велосипед, стараясь, чтобы педаль не задела за точеную балясину. Внутри кожаной треугольной сумки на раме под седлом глухо погромыхивали велосипедные инструменты, аккуратно завернутые в полотняную тряпочку. (23)

The narrator-reporter is able to see the things which cannot be

seen by an ordinary observer. He knows that the tools in the triangle bag are "akkuratno" wrapped into the cotton rug. His omniscience reaches Lenin's feelings and habits, too:

Он привык начинать свой трудовой день при низком звуке фабричных гудков, которые как бы стоят в этот ранний, неприятный час вокруг всего Парижа, производя странное впечатление прутьев толстой решетки — звучащие, густые, навевающие на душу уныние.

...Он привык по утрам видеть вокруг себя кепки, шерстяные шарфы, потрепанные пиджаки, куртки.... Он привык слышать звук медленно движущейся толпы парижских пролетариев.... (24)

From time to time the voice of the third-person narrator joins that of the implied author. He interrupts, for example, the narration of his "ambassador" and comments on one or another situation from his point of view. A change of the form of narration from third to first person (in the form of a digression) indicates the implied author's position. But not in all cases is there a change in the form of narration. Sometimes it is hard to determine who is the narrator. The two sentences below will serve as an illustration:

Из них, наверное, многие — сыновья коммунаров, а некоторые, быть может, и сами дрались на баррикадах.... Знают ли они, что среди них едет на велосипеде человек, который через несколько лет возглавит первую в мире социалистическую революцию и, главное, доведет ее до полной, окончательной победы?... (25)

These two sentences, in accordance with the earlier context, could belong to the third-person narrator. But while his omniscience is limited to the period of historical time, the second sentence tells the

reader about events which do not belong to either of the worlds presented in the "diary." Only the implied author can tell the reader about such events. He comments from the position of the "present" and the Russian Revolution for him is one of the historical facts which happened in the past. He could not, however, pronounce the first sentence which expresses the thoughts of the third-person narrator about the French Revolution, about the pre-history of the events being currently portrayed. Only the third-person narrator as an omniscient story-teller may relate events from the past beyond the limits of the presented world. Only he can vividly describe the historical moment which took place in May 1871. Following Lenin as he rides his bicycle along the River Seine, the third-person narrator, by the principle of association, begins telling about those days in the Paris Commune:

В мае 1871 года здесь, вдоль набережных на Сене, стояли канонерки Коммуны — целый лес высоких железных труб, извергавших густые клубы черного дыма и белого пара.

Между ними сновали лодки, подвозя снаряды, и время от времени с палуб канонеров стреляли пушки, посылая шипящие гранаты в сторону Гренель, откуда наступали версальцы. (26)

The third-person narrator's comments or thoughts are always directed to the past; the comments on the same situation from the position of the implied author are always directed to the future from the actual temporal point of the situation being commented on or, in other words, the implied author speaks from the position of the "present." This point may be better clarified by the following quotation from *Trava zabven'ja*:

По отношению к прошлому будущее находится в настоящем. По отношению к будущему настоящее находится в прошлом. (27)

Kataev's main concern in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* was the reconstruction of the past (the past in relation to the present, as the author himself wished) – the historical past, when Lenin lived and worked. Kataev achieves the fullest possible picture of this past by combining documentary and fiction, by imposing different points of view on the same historical facts. The best illustration of this can be found in the following historical situation:

The third-person narrator "leaves" the hero (Lenin) for a moment – by doing so he stops the action – and begins talking in a digressive manner about events which have already occurred or are occurring, although at this specific moment they are out of his sight. He knows them, however, from earlier observations – i.e., the narrator tells the reader about political and artistic life in Paris at that time. He simply speaks about the Montparnasse district of the city and the Rotonde café which Lenin frequented:

Гораздо чаще Ленин бывал в кафе «Ротонда»... Там происходили менее конспиративные встречи с французскими социалистами, впоследствии членами Французской компартии. Здесь между французскими социалистами и русскими социал-демократами велись оживленные дискуссии, в то время как за соседними столиками ораторствовали художники, покинувшие одряхлевшие улья Монмартра и теперь роившиеся на вошедшем в моду Монпарнасе... Здесь можно было встретить множество интереснейших людей... (28)

This information offered by the third-person narrator now confirms the second "I" of the concrete author – the first-person narrator travelling in France and visiting the same places where Lenin lived and worked. He had visited Montparnasse and the famous café back in the early 1930s:

Здесь в 30-х годах я застал еще примерно такую же обстановку, как при Ленине, даже тех же самых людей, всегдашних «Ротонды» и «Дома». (29)

In such cases, when the "report" of the third-person narrator is supplemented by a comment or confirmation by the first-person narrator, it reveals not only his presence, but also the distance in time between the level of narration and the level of the events portrayed in the reconstructed world.

In the case of the third-person narrator who is a part of this world and relates directly to the reader, this distance is practically non-existent. In the case of the implied author, who does not belong to the reconstructed world but comments on one or another situation in this world from the contemporary position (from the point of view of the present, as has been stressed several times), the distance in time between the level of his narrative digressions and the level of the presented world is rather considerable. From such a distance he is not able to see the whole picture of this world and therefore he relies on information flowing from the "ambassador," limiting himself to sporadic comments on this information and to providing additional news from objective documentary sources (cf. for example the

photograph introduced in the passage quoted on page 34 above – note 20).

The distance in time between the level of narration of the first-person narrator and the level of the reconstructed world varies from *very close* or almost simultaneous (cf. the quotations on pages 33 and 36 – notes 19 and 22 respectively) to *distant* (as in the quotation on page 41 – note 29). But in either case all events are described in such a way that in Kataev's "lyrical diary" they seem to be taking place *now*. The past and present are brought together. Time in the sense of past, present, and future, simply does not exist. It is only a continuous present, which is perceived through the fragmentation of time. The first-person narrator creates his own time and therefore chronological time becomes meaningless. His past is revived only to reveal some aspects of the present. One can see here the negation of the past, as the past is inseparable from the first-person narrator's present reality.

So it is with the category of space. There is no clear distinction between "here" and "there." It is only *here* and *now* as in the following vividly depicted scene where the subject and his wife visit an aeronautical museum situated in a wood near Paris:³⁰

Пишу так подробно потому, что едва мы сели в вагон на площади Инвалидов, как тотчас я снова стал ощущать приближение знакомого мне чувства потери времени. Все предметы вокруг как бы начали медленно перемещаться в другие измерения.

Каштановый парк, ронявший свои крупные рубчатые семипальные листья, резко пожелтевшие по краям, как будто от ожогов какой-то едкой кислоты, превратился вокруг нас в романтический лес, где в любую минуту мы могли встретить доброго короля Дагобера и услы-

шать медные звуки волшебного рога Оберона, пересчитывающие черные стволы вековых деревьев... Но вот среди стволов показалась громадная кирпичная стена какого-то глухого строения с маленькой железной дверью. Мы подошли к ней по толстому ковру опавших листьев... и вдруг мы очутились в удивительном мире первых летательных аппаратов....

Это были не копии и не макеты, а те самые, подлин-ные, которые... медленно летали над лугами моего детства, моей юности. (31)

Kataev's mention of Oberon and his magic horn³² is significant in that it explains the story's startling temporal and spatial interrelationships, for the legendary Oberon "possessed the ability to transport himself instantly to any place or time, a power that Kataev begins to claim more and more for himself in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s."³³

In *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* this "magic" power is reduced to the power of the artist's imagination, thus the figure of Oberon may be viewed here as a symbol of this imagination, as well as of art in general. What Kataev is offering the reader in his "diary" is not a mirror-image of reality but rather a description of this reality exclusively in terms of the subject's own experience of it, his own perception of the objects (human and non-human) being described. The important thing is not what is actually seen but the way in which the subject sees – witness the above-quoted passage (note 31) where an ordinary autumn scene in the park is perceived as if it were from a fairy tale with many details invisible for the observer bereft of imagination.

Note also how an old man at the museum is perceived as the same man who worked at the aerodrome near Longjumeau fifty years

earlier; how Luigi, a Capri boatman, becomes in the first-person narrator's imagination the same boatman who had ferried him and his brother and father to the Blue Grotto half-a-century ago, thereby instantly transforming the setting to the Capri of 1910; how a snowstorm in the Paris of the 1960s carries the hero³⁴ back – again in his imagination – to Red Square in the Moscow of 1924:

Вьюга бушевала. Вокруг пили кофе. Звенели ложечки. И потом в дыму метели я увидел Красную площадь и Мавзолей Ленина.... (35)

Unlike the reconstructed world described from the third-person narrator's point of view, the events recounted by the first-person narrator are unverifiable. The reader receives the world as it is perceived by the subject. All the elements of this world are screened through the subject's consciousness and enriched by his imagination. The picture of the world presented by the first-person narrator becomes even more obscure when some of its elements are described from two different points of view – the first-person narrator as a child and the same narrator as a grown-up (the subject looks back and evokes the world of the child that he was). In such cases the grown-up narrator usually doubts the "authenticity" of such descriptions; his doubts, however, only emphasize the importance of the imagination in the process of presenting and depicting the world. Imaginary events and characters are often more intriguing than those one actually lives through. They not only fill the gaps in reality but also serve to elucidate certain aspects of reality.³⁶

Here is an example from *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* which will illustrate what has been said above. Following a slight accident with a crochet needle the young hero is taken to a hospital to be seen by the famous French doctor Duboucher:

Вдруг перед нами появился громадный — как мне тогда показалось — мужчина в модном заграничном костюме, просторном и вместе с тем удивительно хорошо сидящем на его плотном теле, в блестящих штиблетах, с коротко остриженной, большой, круглой, по-бычьей опущенной головой и эльзасски голубыми, бычьими глазами, выпукло и грозно глядевшими на меня и на тетю из-под стекол наимоднейшего парижского пенсне — золотого с пружиной. (37)

Three paragraphs further on follows the commentary of the grown-up narrator who from his position expresses his uncertainty as to the exactness of the portrait drawn earlier:

Возможно, что образ Дюбуше, сохранившийся в моей памяти, был нарисован фантазией перепуганного насмерть мальчишки. Может быть, не было ни голубых «эльзасских» глаз, грозно глядевших из-за стекол наимоднейшего парижского пенсне. Быть может, не было даже этого самого «пенсне — золотого с пружиной». А было только умное саркастическое лицо, показавшееся мне в ту минуту ужасным, как лицо Петра Великого во время Полтавской битвы. (38)

In the above instance one can notice an intentional discrepancy between the two portraits drawn. The first-person narrator does not refer to any authoritative source or opinion to prove the validity of the event and character (in the case of the third-person narrator there are many external means of confirmation — witnesses, memoirs, pictures, photographs). The reader may wonder if the meeting be-

tween the doctor and the little hero ever took place. The way in which the figure of Duboucher is described clearly suggests that this description is drawn exclusively from the position of the grown-up narrator. Frightened and full of pain, a child could not possibly notice so many details in the doctor's appearance, and it would be difficult to ascribe to a child such phrases as "modnyj zagraničnyj kostjum," "elzasskie golubŷe glaza," "naimodnejšee parižskoe pensne" and so on. One should bear in mind as well the physical limitations of human memory, particularly in certain situations of emotional stress ("obraz Džubuše, soxranivšijsja v moej pamjati, byl narisovan fantaziej perepugannogo nasmert' mal'čiški").

In this way the reader is given some idea of both the character's appearance and of his activities in Russia at the beginning of this century. His purported involvement in the revolution of 1905 is presented as historically inaccurate. The grown-up narrator recollecting those days simply admits: "Ne znaju, byla li eto pravda." And phrases such as "o nem xodili legendy," "budto by," "kak utverždali očevidy," "nekotorye mal'čiški... pod strašnoj kljatvoj doverili mne tajnu," which appear quite frequently in the passage devoted to Dr Duboucher, leave no doubt as to the largely imaginary nature of the events.³⁹

In the light of the above it may be said that even the first-person narrator's memory serves here only as a rhetorical device to give his retrospective knowledge a less rigid and definitive appearance and at the same time to link personal themes (even imaginary ones) with the Lenin motif. This also applies to the first-person nar-

rator's recollections of his journey with his father and brother to Capri in 1910 and his vivid description of the "miracle" of flight he witnessed near Odessa in the summer of 1911.

In contrast to the first-person narrator's world in which Dr Duboucher appears to be a product of the child's fantasy and the grown-up narrator's imagination, the same character is portrayed as a historical figure in the world represented by the third-person narrator. It was Dr Duboucher who saved the leg of Lenin's friend (comrade Inok) from being amputated and whose phrase "možet byt', oni xorošie revoljucionery, no kak vrači -- oni osly" ⁴⁰ became the leader's favourite saying.

In this way Kataev re-introduced a fantasy into his own prose. A combination of realistic and fantastic elements was to prevail – in a more developed form – throughout his later works. In *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* these elements appear only in the first-person narrator's world, while the world of Lenin (the "narrative skeleton") remains under the jurisdiction of the third-person narrator.

The figure of Lenin and the characters close to him are presented in a traditional way, typical for Kataev's prose of the "period of silence." It is evidently clear that the writer's intention was not to misrepresent Lenin's physical appearance, his character or actions, but rather to depict them faithfully, to show Lenin as a revolutionary, an intellectual, a politician. And that is why Kataev so frequently quotes others' remarks on Lenin – the words of the leader's contemporaries who knew him personally. In his article *Mysli o tvorčestve*, published in 1961, Kataev wrote:

Сейчас я ушел в другую работу, совсем не похожую на ту, что до сих пор делал. Я пытаюсь написать о Ленине. Это не повесть. Это воспоминания современников Ленина, рассуждения, домыслы и цитаты.... У меня много воспоминаний о Ленине, в них масса интересных подробностей.... Мне хотелось бы выбрать лучшее, процитировать и прокомментировать все это своими рассуждениями. (41)

Although Lenin is mainly portrayed as seen through the eyes of others (Krupskaja, Gor'kij, Kržyžanovskij, Lunačarskij, Lepešinskij, Knjazev, Zemljačka, Bonč-Bruevič, Alekseev, Šanovalov, Semaško), it must be noted that the author's commentaries and "rassuždenija," his creative imagination and the narrative devices described earlier, all contribute considerably to the over-all impression of Lenin's character. The portrait of the revolutionary leader which the reader receives is complex and convincing. Kataev was able to penetrate his hero, to feel as he felt, to imagine the conditions under which the hero acted, to understand him, and to see in him a man with all human weaknesses ("No ved' i on byl čelovek, so vsemi čelovečeskimi slabostjami").¹² In his article *Mysli o tvorčestve* Kataev stresses the importance of the ability of the writer to "become" the character described, in order to achieve the fullest possible portrayal of that character's image:

Чем глубже писатель сумеет войти в жизнь своего героя, перевоплотиться в него, тем правдивей и жизненней будет созданный им образ. Писатель на время должен как бы сделаться героем своего произведения. Если же я просто умозрительно представляю себе человека и заставляю его делать то, что я бы хотел, чтоб он делал, человек этот получится не объемной фигурой, а плоскостной. Я должен проникнуть в его психологию, как бы зажить его жизнью. Для этого мне нужно поверить в него, поверить в его необходимость, в необходи-

мость его поступков в предлагаемых обстоятельствах. Всецело поняв своего героя, как бы став им, я не смогу ошибиться, сделать его фальшивым. А уж тогда и читатель должен поверить в него. (43)

Kataev not only "becomes" his main hero in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* and imaginatively participates in Lenin's everyday activities, but also (in the words of Nigerian critic P.O. Dada) takes "the reader with him in his 'rounds' of interviewing people and gathering information and opinion of people who either knew Lenin or heard about him...." Dada continues:

The author and the reader go in search of Lenin together and the reader partakes of investigating with him about who Lenin was.... The author takes the reader with him everywhere he goes - through the streets of Paris, to the cafe 'Ronde', to the National Library, to the taverns, to Boulevard Saint Michel, by the Pantheon, through Boulevard Montparnasse. (44)

Thus, as was noted earlier while discussing narrative points of view, the first-person narrator shares Lenin's experiences, sees and describes the places visited as if they were seen through the eyes of Lenin. Every place visited by the subject evokes in his imagination pictures from the past and he sees what Lenin saw at the beginning of the century. When the first-person narrator is not able to share Lenin's experiences he refers to the experiences of others, but even these seem to function as if they were his own.

Consider, for example, how vividly the first-person narrator describes the spring on Capri, even though he never had an opportunity to see it with his own eyes. But the spring view on Capri appeared to be essential "to reveal Lenin's character multi-dimensionally, in his

relation to particular events and environments." 45 The solution to the problem was found in Bunin's poem in which the author gives his poetic impression of this most romantic of the four seasons of the year. A fragment of the poem is quoted in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*:

Вид на залив из садика таверны.
 В простом вине, что взяла я на обед,
 Есть странный вкус — вкус виноградно-серый —
 И розоватый цвет.
 Пью под дождем, — весна здесь прихотлива,
 Миндаль цветет на Капри в холода, —
 И смутно в синеватой мгле залива
 Далекие белеют города. (46)

Bunin's poetic picture works miracles, and the first-person narrator begins his account with an already familiar phrase:

...Удивительно ясно представляется мне апрельское утро на Капри, пристань, а за ней в несколько ярусов розовые, лиловые, голубые, палевые, малиновые домики, как живая мозаика, отраженные в мелких волнах под сходнями только что прибывшего из Неаполя парашодника. (47)

Again there follows the description of Gor'kij and Lenin from the point of view of the first-person narrator (imagination), the implied author (photograph), and the third-person narrator (eye-witness). These descriptions are not entirely new but are already anticipated in the narrative triangle device at the beginning of the chapter. In this way the reader is presented with a faithful image of the revolutionary leader and a clear picture of the Capri spring which the first-person narrator never saw in his life.

Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene reflects the new tendencies of the later period of Kataev's writing and the author's engagement in a search for new forms and devices in order to keep pace with an ever-changing and increasingly complex world. It is evident that the inner structure of the book has undergone some major changes compared to Kataev's traditional socialist-realist prose. The traditional (third-person) form of the narrative and the traditional plot (factual accounts of Lenin's life in the West) are interwoven with fantasy, introspection, personal memories and thoughts.

In addition to the character of Lenin, Kataev reveals some personal aspects of the life of his first-person narrator, i.e., his inner self. Another important feature of the writer's "lyrical diary" which departs strikingly from socialist-realist canons, is his bold experiment with temporal and spatial dimensions.

Reconstructing the course of historical events on the basis of documentary material, his own experiences, fantasy and imagination, Kataev in my opinion succeeds in creating an impressive picture of an epoch and a convincing image of the revolutionary leader. Much of the personality of the writer is incorporated into the character of Lenin (he calls him "moj Lenin")⁴⁸ and this is what makes the figure of the leader so lively and true-to-life.

Kataev's "lyrical diary" by no means should be interpreted as "a parody of Soviet Lenin hagiography" in which the writer "manages to contrive a dismal portrait of Lenin."⁴⁹ There is no trace of "dismalness" in the portrait drawn by Kataev. On the contrary, Lenin is pictured as a gentle and understanding individual ("samyj čelovečnyj

čelovek")⁵⁰ who has, as has every human being, his doubts and hesitations, who misses his homeland and tires of the hardships of exile:

Захотелось тишины, покоя, красоты природы, солнца.... Он не только устал от эмигрантской сутолоки, но также сильно стосковался по России. В проливе между Корсикой и Сардинией вспомнил свою родную Волгу.
(51)

It was not Kataev's intention to make a parody of Soviet Leniniana or to be ironical toward Lenin. What the author does in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* may be considered as his plea for a renovation in the form of the novel, a plea for the right of the artist to depict the world (physical and human) in the light of his own personality, his own feelings and beliefs.

The "lyrical diary" appears to be a considerable step forward in Kataev's career as a writer, a step toward the enriching and diversifying of formal devices. Even the "genre" of the book (defined by the author himself as a "lyrical diary") suggests that Kataev does not consider the observance of literary canons to be of paramount importance.

Such formal devices as self-exploration, association, fantasy, imagination, lack of chronology, and narrative perspectives – introduced in this book about Lenin – can be found in more developed form in all Kataev's later works. These will be discussed in the following chapters.

NOTES

¹Kataev, "Kak ja pisal knigu *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*" in his *Sobranie sočinenij v devjati tomach* (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja Literatura, 1968), vol. 8, pp. 454, 456. The footnote numbers for indented quotations are given in parentheses.

²See *Istorija russskoj sovetskoj literatury v četyrex tomach* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), vol. 1, p. 206.

³Gor'kij's essay "V.I. Lenin" is recognized as the best literary portrait of Lenin, unsurpassed in its artistic strength and depth. See M. Gor'kij, *Sobranie sočinenij v vosemnadcati tomach* (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja Literatura, 1960), vol. 18, p. 254.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Kataev, "Kak ja pisal knigu...", *op. cit.*, p. 454.

⁶Kataev worked as a revolutionary agitator at the collegium of the People's Commissariat of Education, writing pamphlets for the Party's newspapers and journals.

⁷Kataev, *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* in his *Sobranie...*, vol. 9, p. 141. All further references to *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* are to this edition.

⁸Kataev, "Kak ja pisal knigu...", *op. cit.*, p. 457.

⁹Vsevolod Surganov, "Čerty sovremennoj literatury," *Literaturnaja Rossija*, 2 (1965), p. 4. (My italics.)

¹⁰Kataev, "Kak ja pisal knigu...", *op. cit.*, p. 458.

¹¹*Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, pp. 27–28, 29.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³Kataev, "Mysli o tvorčestve" in his *Sobranie...*, vol. 8, p. 416.

¹⁴Quoted in Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn. A Biography*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 942.

¹⁵R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 112.

¹⁶*Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 7.

¹⁷R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev*, p. 111.

¹⁸R. Russell's term, *ibid.*

¹⁹*Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 71.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*, p. 101.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

²⁷Kataev, *Trava zabven'ja* in his *Sobranie...*, vol. 9, p. 393.
All further references to *Trava zabven'ja* are to this edition.

²⁸*Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 37.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Compare R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev*, p. 112.

³¹ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, pp. 107–108.

³² Oberon, king of the fairies in the French mediæval poem *Huon de Bordeaux* (first half of the 13th century). Although the figure of Oberon appears in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and in the romantic epic *Oberon* by the German poet Christoph Wieland, Kataev's Oberon is based on the one in the French poem, for Kataev in the quoted passage also mentions King Dagobert ("dobryj korol' Dagober") who made tours of justice through Burgundy and Austrasia in 630–631, giving needed relief to the poor.

³³ R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev*, p. 112. The name of Oberon appears in the title of Kataev's 1970s work *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*.

³⁴ By the term "hero" here I mean the first-person narrator as a character as was defined at the beginning of the chapter.

³⁵ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 142.

³⁶ Compare R. Howard in his Foreword to *Inventory. Essays by Michel Butor* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), p. 29.

³⁷ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, pp. 24–25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴¹ Kataev, "Mysli o tvorčestve," *op. cit.*, p. 421.

⁴² *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 70.

⁴³ Kataev, "Mysli o tvorčestve," *op. cit.*, pp. 412–413.

⁴⁴ P.O. Dada, "The Character of Lenin in Kataev's *The Little Iron Door in the Wall*," *Studia Slavica* 28 (1982), p. 353.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁹ E.J. Brown, in V. Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (London: Indiana University Press, 1976), Foreword.

⁵⁰ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 82.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

CHAPTER II

THE NARRATIVE "POINT OF VIEW" AND THE PRESENTED WORLD IN *SVJATOJ KOLODEC*, *KUBIK*, AND *KLADBIŠČE V SKULJANAX*

In the preceding chapter I discussed a work where document and historical fact constituted an integral element of the whole structure. It provided the basis for a reconstruction of a definite historical situation (Lenin's life as an émigré in Paris). The reconstruction there consisted in the author's filling some gaps that had been left not fully defined by the sources. This naturally entailed a necessity to go beyond a strictly documentary genre and turn to fiction – that specific element capable of joining together loose historical data and facts into a consistent whole.

This specific combination of document and fiction was fashioned in such a manner as to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader as to when he is dealing with factual data and when with figments of the imagination. A helpful means to this end is provided by the duality of the subject of presentation used by Kataev in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, i.e., the division of the subject into the double "I" and the "he." Closely related to the "I" are historical documents (the "I" of the implied author) and memories of the narrating "I" from his own past, whereas reality in its reconstructed version is associated with the third-person narrator. The presence of the third-person

narrator in the presented world immediately signals the situation and events as being of an imaginary nature.

It is an entirely different kind of subject matter that the reader is faced with in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. The first two works are deeply rooted in the realities of the contemporary world. However, that does not mean that they objectively reflect the existing reality. All Kataev does is to draw his material from that reality, after which he moulds it in such a way as to give, within the scope of rather short compositions, as precise a rendering as possible of all the complexity of that world.

One can thus observe here a process that is just the reverse of the "novel" about Lenin: not a reconstruction of the past, but rather, a construction of a new model of the world which is related only indirectly to the objectively given reality and expresses the author's specific world-outlook. That world is regulated by a literary logic of its own and possesses its own literary structure. It is composed of many planes, complex and rich in minute details. Each of these details, though apparently existing separately, contributes to a consistent, uniform, and meaningful whole that can be understood only after a careful study of all the planes making up the literary reality of these works.

Just as complicated and multi-dimensional is the above-mentioned work of the 1970s, *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. In this book, called by Kataev himself a "family chronicle" ("A čto, ne nazvat' li ee semejnoj xronikoj ili daže romanom-xronikoj?"),¹ the author goes far beyond his own lifetime and deals with his ancestors — the mili-

tary family Bačej (on his mother's side) and the clerical family Kataev (on his father's side).

Kataev claims in his book that he had found his grandfather's and great-grandfather's diaries, the contents of which provided him material for his "family chronicle." In this "chronicle" he vividly portrays (not necessarily in the order given) the war against Napoleon in 1812 (great-grandfather's diary), the battles in the Caucasus in the middle of the last century (grandfather's diary), the pre-revolutionary days (the first-person narrator's own experience) and the present time (the viewpoint of the implied author).

By the use of a diary (which resembles Lermontov's *Geroj našego vremeni*) as a source of information about those earlier days, and by defining the genre of the book as a "family chronicle," Kataev tries to convince the reader of the authenticity of the events and characters portrayed in it, that they are not just the fruits of his imagination. At the same time, however, the author admonishes the reader not to believe him entirely and to consider the allegedly found diary as an excuse for going almost to the roots of his family tree in order to convey to the reader his philosophical message on the essence of human life and death, to express his own point of view on the questions of heredity, re-incarnation, and the immortality of the human soul.

In reading the "chronicle" an attentive reader will notice some inconsistency in the passage quoted in the "preface" to both diaries, supposedly written by one of the narrator's (i.e., Kataev's) aunts in 1911. Kataev quotes the "preface" twice (pp. 34, 148), so offering the opportunity to compare these two quotations from the same "source":

Воспоминания капитана Елисея Алексеевича Бачея
(1783—1848).

Разбирая бумаги покойного отца, мы нашли отдельный портфель, в котором были сложены бумаги и документы деда по отцу Елисея Алексеевича Бачея. Среди этих бумаг оказалась небольшая тетрадка старинной желтой бумаги, на первом листе которой рукой нашего отца написано: «Замечания моего отца о некоторых военных действиях, в которых он сам участвовал».

С большим трудом читается написанное старинным почерком, но чем дальше, тем интереснее и живее становится рассказ, обрывающийся, к сожалению, на 1813 году. Сведения о дальнейших военных подвигах деда в кампании 1813 и 1814 гг. мы знаем из документов и рассказов покойного отца. (2)

And more than a hundred pages farther on the writer quotes the same "preface" again:

Воспоминания капитана Елисея Алексеевича Бачея
(1783—1848)

Разбирая бумаги покойного отца, мы нашли отдельный портфель, в котором были сложены бумаги и документы деда по отцу Елисея Алексеевича Бачея. Среди этих бумаг оказалась небольшая тетрадь старинной желтой бумаги, на первой странице которой рукой нашего отца написано: «Замечания моего отца о некоторых военных действиях, в которых он сам участвовал». С большим трудом читается написанное старинным почерком, но чем дальше, тем интереснее и живее становится рассказ, обрывающийся, к сожалению, на 1813 году. Сведения о дальнейших военных подвигах деда в кампании 1813 и 1814 годов мы знаем из документов и рассказов покойного отца. Марина Бачей.
18 апреля 1911 г. (3)

The underlined differences in the two passages quoted above — which, as Kataev wants his reader to believe, were taken from the same source — suggest rather that the so-called "preface" is only a literary device, the author's own creation, and further, that the

"diaries" of his ancestor's are the product of his imagination as well. It is possible to consider these "diaries" as the narrator's own "memoirs" about his previous life because of his strong feeling of the link between generations. — in the book he even "becomes" his grandfather and great-grandfather. At one point the narrator clearly states:

...наше бытие — его и мое — соединилось, и уже трудно было понять, кто я и кто он.
 Кто правнук и кто прадед?
 Я превратился в него, а он в меня, и оба мы стали некоторым единым существом. (4)

The narrator's ability to incarnate himself in other people and objects was already apparent in his works of the 1960s, especially in *Svjatoj kolodec* and *Kubik*, and to a considerably lesser degree in *Trava zabven'ja*. This particular feature of Kataev's works may be viewed not only as a "pretentious way of conveying to the reader the act of artistic depiction"⁵ but also, or even first of all, as Kataev's philosophy, his very own viewpoint on life, death, and the place of an individual in the world — the world which controls time and not vice-versa.

In *Trava zabven'ja* Kataev only theoretically claims his ability to transform himself or identify himself with the object of his description — not through magic but only imagination:

...он мог быть мною, если бы я обладал силой воскресить себя того, давнего, молодого.... Но так как у меня нет этой волшебной силы... я могу считать его лишь некоторым своим подобием, несовершенным воплощением моего теперешнего представления обо мне самом того времени.... (6)

But in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* this theoretical claim is put into practice, indeed it becomes the author's major concern and forms (as was noted before) part of his philosophy. This is only one of the features which unite these three works and make it possible to discuss them together in this chapter.

To create a model of the world which might more fully express the key philosophical questions of the three "novels," Kataev had to find adequate methods and means of expression. In the first place he gave up the use of linear sequence of time and experience. He built his works around the principle of inversion, which naturally forced him to forsake plot and give prominence to a more subjective view of reality. It is this free association in the author's memory which serves to construct the narrative.

Subjectivity, in the broad meaning of the word, is precisely what constitutes the fundamental quality of the world portrayed in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. It appears before the reader's eyes as it is seen and perceived by the primary character of the "novels", i.e., the first-person narrator, alias the main hero (in *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* the narrative situation is more complicated than in *Svjatoj kolodec*, but this will be discussed later in this chapter).

The events and situations in these books are there only to provide a focal point for the experiences of the narrator-hero; they exist only as components of his subjective inner world. In this way the primary narrator not only is the *subject* but also the *object* of presentation. He constitutes an integral component of the world which he

himself has created and within which he exists.

The prominence given the subjective approach to reality has made *association* the supreme ordering principle in "arranging" the events in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. Association, as being the natural form in thinking and speaking, makes the works under discussion a kind of "speaking" addressed to the reader. Frequently, the narrator addresses the reader directly and he does so not only as the narrating subject but also as a private individual, talking about his own problems, feelings, and beliefs:

Но вы, конечно, заметили, что я говорю во множественном числе «мы». (7)

Черные мысли рассеялись. Вы заметили, как легко рассеиваются черные мысли? (8)

Вы заметили, что удивление – первый шаг к любви? (9)

Я так не умею, просто не могу. Не смею! По природе я робок, хотя слышу нахалом.... Мне стыдно во всем этом признаваться, но что же делать, дороги мои, что же делать?... (10)

Как читатель, наверное уже заметил, в записках дедушки часто встречаются замечания о течении времени. (11)

Как увидит читатель в дальнейшем – если у него хватит терпения дочитать эту книгу.... (12)

Because of the presence of the implied reader to whom all such enunciations are addressed, *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* can be regarded as a specific kind of uttered monologue – though having little or nothing in common with such literary techniques as the "stream of consciousness" or "interior mono-

logue"¹³ so widely used by Western writers like James Joyce, William Faulkner, or Marcel Proust. The latter was credited by some critics with having influenced Kataev's writing of the later period.¹⁴ Kataev, when asked "whether he is not merely imitating the techniques of Western writers," replied: "...these techniques began in Russian literature as far back as Gogol and Dostoevsky, long before they were tried out in the West."¹⁵

It might be worthwhile to quote at this point the words of Polish critic Andrzej Drawicz, in whose opinion all that Kataev has in common with Proust is "the privileged role of intuition as the instrument of the most perfect form of cognition, best expressed through metaphor,"¹⁶ whilst the differences are of a fundamental nature. He concludes:

The work of Proust is subordinated to a passion for restituting biography, for re-living it afresh in order to perceive its meaning. Hence the strict consistency with which the author delves into the past, which he reconstructs 'like a cathedral'.... Kataev neither wishes nor is able to be consistent and it is only through juxtaposition, through collision with his biography, that his work gains meaning. (17)

Kataev does not reconstruct his past, but, as was stressed at the beginning of the chapter, with the help of certain autobiographical fragments constructs a new model of the world enriched by the experience of the past and by his great creative imagination. And biographical elements do play a significant part in the process of constructing the literary world of Kataev's later prose. They constitute a continuous leitmotif, linking together all his works of this period

(*Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene, Svjatoj kolodec, Trava zabven'ja, Kubik, Razbitaja Žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona, Kladbišče v Skuljanax, Almaznyj moj venec*, and even to some extent the short story *Fialka*), and creating thereby an impression of artistic unity.

Those elements, however, are manifested in a different degree in each work. In the "lyrical diary" *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene* (as one may remember) the auto-documentary element was much in prominence and played the role of an "objectifier" of events presented from the third-person narrator's point of view. It bestowed on them a sense of historical probability. It did not merge with literary fiction, but constituted a separate plane within the complexity of the reality presented.

In *Trava zabven'ja, Razbitaja Žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, the presented world is saturated with the biographical element (auto-documentation) to such an extent as to turn them into a kind of autobiographical prose.

There is no such evident prominence of the auto-documentary element in *Svjatoj kolodec, Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. Here Kataev has reduced it to a minimum and makes use of it only insofar as necessary to create an illusion of the authenticity of the events. However, the degree of reduction is so high that one is often at a loss to determine what is authentic and what is imaginary. Nor does the first-person form of narration allow us to regard all the events presented as actually having had an objective existence, and



still less does it authorize us to identify the subject with the concrete author who wrote the books.

All the same, I would like to stress again, one should not altogether preclude a possible influence of Kataev's personal experience on the shaping of the presented reality in the works under study. Evidence of this can be found in the many references to the persons dear to Kataev in his real life (e.g. the author's wife, children, and grandchildren in *Svjatoj kolodec*; the Teacher – in whom one can recognize Ivan Bunin and Kataev's brother Evgenij Petrov – in *Kubik*; grandfather, father, mother, and again brother Evgenij in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*), as well as in certain facts in the writer's biography (Kataev's travels in France, the United States, and Roumania, the realities of which provide the setting for the events taking place in the books).

The narrators of *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* are linked by the same outlook and beliefs as to human nature and the world, by their attitude toward the reality within which they exist in one form or another (as the primary narrator or his consecutive personifications). They are opposed to the crisis of consciousness and of values in the world where a man's worth is measured by the status of his possessions, by money ("uže davno mir oxvačen opasnoj žaždoj obogoščenija").¹⁸

In *Svjatoj kolodec* the first-person narrator looks at that world (the United States) from outside as a casual observer, but he is nonetheless a perspicacious observer, trying to understand the very essence of that world and the laws that govern it. Very helpful in this

connection is the hero's "magical ability" to turn for a moment into the object he is looking at:

Странная мысль, вернее ощущение, овладела мною, как только я поселился здесь, в одной из стеклянных ячеек «Sheraton Hotel».... Это было ощущение единства моего собственного тела и тела гостиницы, где меня поселили. Одновременно я был и человеком и ванием. У нас была общая структура, были общие клетки.... (19)

В течение одной поездки из Хьюстона на ранчо я последовательно превращался в разные предметы. Сначала я на некоторое время превратился в автостраду.... Затем ненадолго я был грустным зимним солнцем Техаса, а также одним из первых автомобилей второй половины XIX века.... Некоторое время я был плотью сухой тexasской земли.... (20)

This kind of "assimilation" with the reality around him, the hero's fusion with it, allows him to define man's place and role within that reality; the reality in turn becomes materialized to such a degree that lifeless objects impose their will on the man who created them and who becomes a will-less thing himself. Even the book's hero, who has found himself in that materialistic world by sheer accident (transported there in his dream), succumbs to their will, and from a "free being" turns into a "controlled being:"

О, как тягостно быть управляемым, в особенности если тобой управляет механизм! Я сделался придатком этой проклятой полупроводниковой машины.

Я был не волен даже в своих сновидениях. Чужая воля, сила извне, гоняла их вперед и назад по своему усмотрению. (21)

The hero's ability to merge with the object he sees was interpreted by American critic Alayne P. Reilly as the narrator's fascination

with the American way of life, with the country's technological and economic achievements. At one point she writes that "one usually does not project himself into things that he dislikes."²² But in the light of what has been said before, this is a rather simplified interpretation of a much more complex problem. One should not look at this particular work of Kataev's as an objective account of his journey or as a travelogue, but see it rather from the angle of its symbolic meaning. The hero travels to America in the hope of finding the "real America," that "promised land," the world-famous land of freedom and democracy. He arrives there only to realize that even Americans themselves are not sure if they live in the real America:

Тогда я понял, что ни один американец не уверен, что он живет в настоящей Америке. Он убежден, что где-то в другом штате есть какая-то настоящая, подлинная Америка, обетованная земля для американца. Ему трудно поверить, что место, где он живет, именно и есть та самая знаменитая на весь земной шар великая Америка. (23)

After his realization of how sharply the reality of America differs from the "legends" about it, the hero comes to appreciate more his own homeland, this "thrice-blessed country" which gave him as much love as hatred:

Среди полей, лугов и лесов угадывались химические заводы, космодромы и клетчатые рогатки высоковольтных передач, шагающих во все стороны единственной в мире, неповторимой, трижды благословенной страны моей души, которая дала мне столько восторгов, столько взлетов, падений, разочарований, столько кипучей радости, высоких мыслей, великих и малых дел, любви и ненависти, иногда отчаяния, поэзии музыки, грубого опьянения и божественно утонченных цветных сновид-

дней, которые так сладко и нежно снились мне на рас-
свете при робком щекаканье первых соловьев, — словом,
столько всего того, что создал меня — по своему образу
и подобию — именно тем, что я есть.... (24)

The narrator's "projection" into things while travelling in America may also be viewed as the impossibility of his adjustment to the new world, were he to emigrate there in search of a personal independence and creative freedom. For the artist to be able to create, he needs more than freedom — he needs his roots, his "soul" ("triždy blagoslovennoj strany moej dušy").²⁵ The hero's decision to remain in the Soviet Union appears to be the right one, as is evident also from the narrator's meeting with an émigrée Russian lady whom he loved as a young boy. The narrator is quite struck by the old widow's admission that despite the fact that she can live here quite comfortably, she still feels lost and alone:

— У меня здесь больше никого нет. Никого на свете.
Я могу жить вполне прилично, но я осталась совсем
одна. (26)

The theme of emigration which first appeared in the "lyrical diary" (Lenin's life as an émigré in Paris) re-appears again in *Trava zabven'ja* (Bunin's decision to leave Russia after the Revolution) and in *Kubik*. In *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* there is no direct reference to this specific question, although it does deal with the problem of one's loyalty to one's homeland in the face of political changes. The main hero of the work (the primary narrator relating in the first-person) is proud of his ancestor, great-great-grandfather Aleksej Bačej, who in

spite of the instability of his life in Zaporoz'je remains faithful to Russia his homeland:

Во всяком случае, мой прапрадед Алексей Бачей не принадлежал к тем сечевникам, которые после уничтожения Сечи бежали за Дунай и отложились от России, а остался верен своей родине. (27)

The emigration theme is covered most extensively in *Kubik*, although in slightly disguised form. This theme is reflected in the book's narrative situation which, in a sense, resembles the narrative technique employed by Kataev in *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene*. But while in the "lyrical diary" the reader was faced with two different narrators who represented two different worlds, in *Kubik* the narrating subject (who refers to himself as "I") undergoes a kind of division into an "I" and a multiple form of "he." He has the ability, as has been noted, to turn not only into things (as was the case with the narrator in *Svjatoj kolodec*) but also into people and animals. The successive impersonations of the narrator – as the boy Pčelkin, the wealthy Frenchman ("Monsieur the Former Boy") and the luxury-spoilt, highly strung and malicious miniature poodle – form the separate planes in the reality presented.

However, while turning into different characters, the primary narrator (the first-person narrator) nevertheless preserves his original personality, his original point of view. He continues to refer to himself in the first person but he acts as the third-person narrator while depicting his own consecutive impersonations (his other personæ) and the events in which these personæ take part. In this

way he becomes the central authoritative source of information about the characters and events. He sees the world from the point of view of an eye-witness who, rather than participating in the events, is content merely to describe and comment on them (a role similar to that played by the third-person narrator in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*).

Kubik begins with the sentence "...Neuželi ètot mal'čik tože ja? ..."²⁸ Two pages later the first-person narrator asks again: "Neuželi ètot mal'čik tože ja?"²⁹ and this time explains:

ЕСЛИ НЕ ВПОЛНЕ, ТО, ВО ВСЯКОМ СЛУЧАЕ, ОТЧАСТИ. НЕ ИСКЛЮЧЕНО, ЧТО ЭТО ВСЕ ТОТ ЖЕ МАЛЫЙ МОЕМУ СЕРДЦУ ПЧЕЛКИН, ТОЛЬКО СОВСЕМ МАЛЕНЬКИЙ, ЛЕТ ВОСЬМИ. (30)

The boy's name, Pčelkin, suggests that he is another autobiographical figure, resembling a similar character and namesake (Rjurik Pčelkin) in *Trava zabven'ja*. In the latter book, however, the narrator fully identifies himself with his young protagonist ("Ja dal emu svoju telesnuju oboločku i živuju dušu...")³¹ whilst in *Kubik* this identification is only partial, even uncertain in a sense ("Neuželi ètot mal'čik tože ja?" or "Neisključeno..."). The reader soon learns that the boy Pčelkin, searching for a hidden treasure to which he feels he may be led by the mysterious letters "OV," is only a prelude to a chain of changes which finally results in the little hero's turning into a rich French businessman, Monsieur the Former Boy.

The same process of change affects another character in *Kubik* — the girl San'ka who turns into Madame the Former Girl.

In the opening part of *Kubik* the girl San'ka dies of diphtheria, and the boy Pchelkin moves to his grandmother's in Ekaterinoslav. In their place another girl and another boy turn up; the latter boy soon drowns. And the chain of "replacements" continues:

Потом на смену новой девочке пришла другая – совсем новая, а на смену новому мальчику, утонувшему против Большефонтанского маяка, явился другой – совсем новый, можно сказать новейший.... Равные мальчики и равные девочки росли, вырастали, продолжая оставаться все теми же, первыми, единственными мальчиком и девочкой... мальчик и девочка... претерпев тысячи изменений – качественных и количественных, – вдруг в конце концов из бедных русских превратились в богатых пожилых – как это ни странно – французов.... (32)

At this point the motif of emigration appears. But in contrast to *Svjatoj kolodec*, where the narrator considers his eventual attempt to abandon his homeland as a search for personal and creative freedom, in *Kubik* this motif serves a different purpose – to imagine what his life would be like *if* he had decided to abandon his homeland and live abroad. In a sense the narrator creates his second biography, or rather a biography of that part of his personality which turns to the West. But there is another part which is very much opposed to the idea of leaving Russia, to the cutting off of his roots – a second self which does not allow him to identify himself fully with his consecutive impersonations (or, as the narrator himself suggests, his doubles – "Mos'é Moj Drug i Moj Dvojnik").³³

During the narrator's journey to Roumania (he follows Monsieur the Former Boy and Madame the Former Girl wherever they go – again the technique used in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v štene*),

he suddenly discovers something that saves him from making the same mistake made by an old Russian widow in *Svjatoj kolodec* (and by Bunin in *Trava zabven'ja*, one may add). It is *love* – love for his country, his homeland.

The Roumanian landscape, familiar to the narrator from his participation in the Civil War, evokes in his memory pictures of the motherland and the city of his childhood. The desire to see those loved places begins to gnaw on him. He sees himself again as a young man fighting the enemy in the Civil War, anxious to return to his own country even at the price of being wounded. He is certain that the love which awaits him there has the power to save his life:

...и так хотелось получить легкое, – о, совсем, совсем легкое! – ранение и получить Георгиевский крест и героем возвратиться домой – в страну ОВ, – в военный город, где на бульваре вокруг черноголового Пушкина уже начали желтеть клены и платаны, в цветниках горели винно-красные канны с чугунно-синими толстыми листьями, а на горизонте весь день сонно маячили серые паруса заштылевших дубков с арбузами из Голой Пристанн, и сердце мое – а может быть, это была уже не я, а ты – Мое Мой Друг и Мой Двойник – но это не имеет значения, – и сердце Мое – или Твое – неизменно в ожидании вечера, предчувствуя свидание, которое наконец успокоит душу, возбужденную жаждой любви, которая одна могла нас всех спасти от смерти, но так и не спасла; вернее сказать, спасла одного из нас.... (34)

The love to which the narrator is referring may be understood as the narrator's love for a woman who is awaiting his return from the war as a hero (such an interpretation is implied by the phrases – "v ožidanii večera," "predčuvstvuja svidanie" – which follow the two capitalized personal pronouns "Moe" and "Tvoe"). But the personal

pronoun "nas" together with the definite pronoun "vsex," both in the plural, contradict such an interpretation. It is not only "ja" and "ty" ("Moe," "Tvoe") but somebody else as well – it also implies "on," "ona," and even "oni." Thus, the word "love" must be understood in its broader meaning and not just as love for a woman. In the context of the passage just quoted the narrator's love is directed to his country ("vozvratit'sja domoj – v stranu OV"). But that is not all, as has been noted above: other recipients are also indicated and here one is reminded again of the lonely Russian widow (in *Svjatoj kolodec*), Bunin (in *Trava zabven'ja*), and many more³⁵ who had the same dilemma to solve, to decide which path to choose shortly after the Revolution and during the turbulent years of the Civil War.

Bunin and the widow had chosen emigration. The narrator in *Kubik* (or rather one part of his personality), guided by his love for his country, decided to remain in Russia, whilst his double (another part of the narrator's self) took the path followed by Bunin and the widow.

But who is the one who has been saved ("[ljubov'] spasla odnogo iz nas")? Is it the narrating "I" or his other self – Monsieur the Former Boy? The answer to this question is to be found in the section of *Kubik* where the narrator turns into a poodle named Kubik (reminiscent of the "talking cat" in *Svjatoj kolodec*, whose master was Stalin). Kubik then assumes the role of the narrator and proceeds to give an account of future events from the first-person narrator's point of view ("Pover'te mne. Ja sam odnaždy byl izbalovannoj sobakoj, pravda nedolgo").³⁶

Like the narrator, the dog Kubik sees the world from the outside, from a greater distance than his Master, Monsieur the Former Boy, who views the world from the inside -- i.e. from a closer distance which considerably restricts his vision. It is a perspective of a man living in luxury, knowing and enjoying the power of money, pre-occupied with himself and his own affairs, incapable of foreseeing imminent disaster -- bankruptcy. In this way he fails to perceive what is perfectly obvious to the neutral observer (the primary narrator), or in this case to the narrator's impersonation -- the dog Kubik:

Я внутренним чутьем понимал, что именно они когда-нибудь разорят и ограбят Моего Хозяина, пустят все его богатства под откос, доведут его до опеки и первые же будут потешаться над его крахом, предварительно хорошенько нагреть на нем руки. (37)

Я бы еще многое мог рассказать о Своем Хозяине, например, о том, как он в конце концов, вдруг, совершенно неожиданно, прогорел до тла и превратился почти в нищего, но мне больно об этом вспоминать, да и нет больше времени, так как моя душа снова вернулась в тело автора этих строк.... (38)

It is significant that the reader learns about the Master's failure ("krax") from the dog Kubik and not from the primary narrator who, as is evident from the last part of the sentence quoted above, appears to be the author of the book as well ("moja duša snova vernulas' v telo avtora etix strok"). This identification of the narrator with both the dog Kubik and the concrete author may be viewed as Kataev's way of conveying to the reader some idea of the price he had to pay in the Stalin era for his decision to remain in Russia, for his loyalty to his country and his support of its political system.

This double identification also provides the answer to the question asked earlier – who is the one who has been saved by the power of love? It is the author (and narrator of *Kubik*), who, looking back and recalling past events, regrets the fact of becoming subservient to communist authority, but does not regret his decision to remain in Russia, the "country of his soul" (to use the expression from *Svjatof kolodec*).

Kataev quite frequently expresses his emotional ties to the motherland and, as R. Russell points out, "Russia emerges as one of the most important of Kataev's values..."³⁹ It is no mere coincidence that in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* the writer turns to exploring the lives and destinies of his ancestors, for they are responsible for his character, for his inherited devotion and attachment to his homeland. Both Kataev and his forebears devoted their entire lives to serving their country despite many hardships and disappointments. Exploring the lives of his ancestors Kataev takes a close look at himself, too. It helps him understand his purpose in this world and realize that he is a link in the chain of generations, that he cannot escape his destiny which was determined long before he was born:

Он [дедушка] знал, что после смерти отца их родовое гнездо было продано. Все распалось, разрушилось... Осталась лишь таинственная связь между ним, моим дедушкой, и его предками, и его будущими потомками, историческая судьба которых заключалась в боевом служении России... (40)

The above words belong to the primary first-person narrator who appears in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* as a protagonist of the con-

crete author, and as the editor of his forebears' diaries. As we already know, these diaries are only an artistic device permitting the author to introduce secondary narrators, personal participants in those historical events which the primary narrator knows about only from books on nineteenth-century Russian history. But in view of the fact that this narrator's forebears took part in certain events not included in his historical sources, he not only turns to the diaries of his grandfather and great-grandfather for the information he needs, but even transforms himself into them and personally takes part in several of the historical events he describes. This re-incarnation in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* differs significantly in character from the narrator's re-incarnation in *Svjatoj kolodec* and *Kubik*. In the latter two works the reader is constantly aware of the distance which divides the primary narrator from his successive re-incarnations (except for the moment when the narrator in *Kubik* transforms himself into the boy Pčelkin); in fact he even feels a kind of antipathy toward them. This is especially evident in *Kubik*, as the quotation below will show. As will be remembered, the narrator in *Kubik* briefly transforms himself into a dog, who tells in the first person the "sad story" of his Master. But before long the narrator, not wishing "očelovečivat' etogo pudelja," regains "svoju živuju bessmertnuju človečeskiju dušu" and allows the dog to show a brief but unambiguous characteristic trait:

...а я [пудель], к несчастью, как был, так и остался довольно глупым и дурно воспитанным пуделем, и мой ум постепенно померк, как испорченный телевизор, и уже не способен больше ни на какие обобщения и абстракции. (41)

Of quite a different type is the interrelationship between the primary narrator and his successive re-incarnations in *Kladbišče v Skufjanax* – who at the same time act as supplementary story-tellers (in relation to the primary narrator) – not only because the primary narrator uses their diaries written in the first person, but also because they appear as hero/story-tellers outside the diaries. The primary narrator and the secondary story-tellers (as I shall describe them hereafter) are not opposed to each other; on the contrary, they co-exist in mutually complementary roles. One could even say that they form a unique kind of symbiosis, as suggested by the passages quoted on page 61 above (note 4), including the pronouncement by the secondary narrator, the great-grandfather Elisej Bačej: "Ja prevratilsja v nego, a on v menja, i oba my stali nekotorym ediny m suščestvom."⁴²

The feeling of unity with his forebears is also felt by the primary narrator, who explains the reasons for this feeling as follows:

Читая и перечитывая эти записки, я все время не только ощущал как бы свое присутствие при описанных событиях, но даже причастность к ним, личное участие в них.

Иногда мне даже кажется, что в меня вселилась душа моего прадеда и что все это происходило со мной...

(43)

In view of this kind of spiritual link between the narrator and his forebears, it is not surprising to note (as I indicated at the beginning of this chapter) that the grandfather's and great-grandfather's diaries can be considered to be personal "reminiscences" of the primary narrator about his former life, or rather the life of the soul

which has implanted itself in him and his memory, accompanied by invading fragments of his former experience in the mortal, material body of his great-grandfather. This "memory of the soul" leaves its imprint on the way the narrator perceives the world around him. Unfamiliar places, people, or names, remind him of something very familiar and near to him, though long forgotten – as, for example, the name of the historical site "Skuljany:"

Название Скуляны – самая фонетика этого слова – возбуждало в моем сознании представление о чем-то некогда хорошо мне знакомом, но забытом, как музыкальная фраза, которую иногда бывает трудно восстановить в памяти. Я готов был поручиться, что никогда не бывал в Скулянах. Тем не менее при самом звуке этого слова возникла неясная, романтическая картина, с трудом различимая в тумане прошлого. (44)

All the places associated with his forebears (for example, Skuljany, where his great-grandfather and grandfather lived), all the historical events they witnessed and which were described in documents or literary works, seem to be perceived by the narrator from a double viewpoint – from the viewpoint of his present life and from that of his former life. These two diametrically opposite points of perception result from the distance in time between the observations of a given historical event. As an example, we might look at the historical fact of the battle at Skuljany between the Greek rebels and the Turks – an event Puškin describes in his story of the Bulgarian brigand Kirdzhali. Note how this event (or rather Puškin's description of it) is perceived from the point of view of the grandson-narrator (the primary narrator) and the secondary story-teller, the great-grandfather Bačej:

Будучи правнуком своего прадеда, очевидца этих событий, я с особым удовольствием читал «Кирджали», беря на веру все, что написал Пушкин. (45)

This suggests that while from the standpoint of the present, contemporary world, the grandson-narrator is not in a position to verify the accuracy of Puškin's description, the fact that he has "dwelling" within him the soul of an eye-witness to this historical event means that he is able to see, through the "eyes" of this soul, everything that happened at this historic time. It is on this basis he points out several discrepancies between the scene described by the poet and the scene of the actual events:

Однако в качестве прадеда своего внука — то есть меня, что в сущности, по сравнению с вечностью одно и то же, — я не считал картину написанную Пушкиным, вполне достоверной: вряд ли картечь могла перелететь через очень широкую пойму Прута и вряд ли начальник карантина мог слышать ее жужжание. Сомневаюсь также, чтобы старичок, сорок лет служивший в армии, отроду не слыхивал свиста пуль, — даже если предположить, что они залетали на наш берег. Время было военное, Россия вела несколько войн; все ее офицеры были люди обстрелянные....

В остальном Пушкин был верен истории. (46)

But the problem here goes beyond the discrepancies in the perception of a few details which are essentially insignificant in view of the fact that Puškin's story is a literary masterpiece. Here, almost unnoticed by the reader, Kataev is touching on a much more substantive question, namely an author's right to literary invention and fantasy — the right to portray a phenomenon or event from his individual point of view, to enrich it with his literary imagination and let it pass

through the prism of his personal feelings and experiences. Kataev considers imagination and reality to be inseparable "elements." In *Svjatoj Kolodec*, arguing with the French writer André Maurois, he writes:

Моруа утверждает, что нельзя жить сразу в двух мирах — действительном и воображаемом. Кто хочет и того и другого — терпит фиаско. Я уверен, что Моруа ошибается: фиаско терпит тот, кто живет в каком-нибудь одном из этих двух миров; он себя обкрадывает, так как лишается ровно половины красоты и мудрости жизни.

Я всегда прежде жил в двух измерениях. Одно без другого было для меня невымыслимо. Их разделение сразу превратило бы искусство либо в абстракцию, либо в плоский протокол. Только слияние этих двух стихий может создать искусство поистине прекрасное. (47)

The role of imagination is also emphasized in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. The grandson-narrator often begins his story with the words "voobražaju," "vižu," "predstavljaju sebe." This of course reminds us of the device already used by the author in *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene*, only with the difference that in the latter work, after such an introduction, the narrative continues in the third person, from the point of view of a story-teller who does not take part in the events described, even though he remains inside the intimate circle of the book's hero (Lenin). He is simply an objective reporter of all the events of the past world; the only commentaries are given from the point of view of the first-person narrator. In *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, on the other hand, the form of the narrative does not change following the introductory words noted above. The subject continues narrating in the first person and simultaneously acts as both

a participant in and commentator on the events described. Here there is no separation of time between the narrator and the events he portrays, as there is in the case of the "lyrical diary" about Lenin. The very fact that in Lenin's "diary" all the verbs following the words "vižu," "voobražaju," "predstavljaju," are in the past tense, indicates that the events themselves precede the story about them, whereas in the "family chronicle" of Skuljany these words are followed by verbs in the present tense, thereby underscoring the simultaneity of the situation and the story. Here is an illustrative example from each of the books:

...Вижу, как Ленин нес туго затянутый ремнями дорожный портплед с подушкой, который пытались выхватить из его короткой, крепкой руки местные факино — носильщики, а он не давал. (48)

...Вижу девятилетнего мальчика в курточке, Ваню, моего дедушку, которого везут из Скулян в Одессу поступать в гимназию.

Ваня впервые расстается с отчим домом, с матерью и отцом в армейском капитанском мундире, которые стоят на крыльце, глядя на дорожную повозку с будкой — так называемой халабудой, — увозящую в клубах холодной утренней пыли их младшего сына в новую жизнь. (49)

In the latter example taken from *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, the story-teller (or primary narrator) is not talking so much about his grandfather, Ivan Bačej — the secondary narrator of this "family chronicle" — as he is about himself re-incarnated in his nine-year-old ancestor. This explains the present tense of the verbs, the lack of a temporal distance between the events and the narrator, and finally the continuation of the narrative in the first person.

And again, just as with his great-grandfather Elisej Bačej, so too with his grandfather Ivan, he perceives the world from two different positions, although in the latter case the difference in perception of the world around the main character is principally a factor of the age of the perceiving subject. The countryside along the frontier river Prut which seemed to the adult grandson-narrator "a boring flat plain" is seen through the eyes of the boy-grandfather as "a romantic locale, full of beauty and mystery."⁵⁰

The world that Kataev portrays through the eyes of children is always a veritable fairy-tale kingdom, full of beauty, aromas, vitality and mystery. It is quite differently that the world is perceived by the narrator as an adult and as a child in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* (remember the description of the French doctor Duboucher); it is quite differently that the narrator of *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* (as was noted above) sees reality around him; the way in which the world is portrayed through the eyes of the boy Pčelkin and the girl San'ka is quite different from the world seen by Monsieur the Former Boy and Madame the Former Girl in *Kubik*, as is evident from the quotation below:

...увидев со спардека туристского теплохода забытый берег своей бывшей родины, очень взволновались, глаза их наполнились слезами — может быть, впрочем, лишь потому, что в их воспоминаниях это море... и этот берег были совсем другими: неизмеримо более прекрасными, почти сказочными, полными прелестных подробностей и поразительно прозрачных, почти светящихся красок, на самом же деле все оказалось гораздо беднее и некрасивее: новороссийская степь, которую они видели в своих снах когда-то драгоценного, аметистового цвета, в лучах заходящего солнца, и резко очерченные высокие глиняные обрывы, сотни верст

песчаных пляжей и отмелей, просвечивающих сквозь малахитовую воду, воображаемые виноградники, их античные листья с бирюзовыми пятнами купороса, — все это превратилось в низкую полосу черной земли, протянувшейся над невыразительной морской водой, и бедный солнечный закат некрасивого, небогатого, какого-то ветрено-красного, степного цвета под бесцветным небом.... И не слишком длинный слуга города, некогда казавшегося лучшим в мире.... (51)

In this example from *Kubik* the discrepancy between the scene remembered from youth and the one seen through adult eyes is even more exaggerated by the longing of the emigrant heroes for their native land. Throughout the years of emigrant life the images of the sea, the seacoast, the cities where they had spent their childhood were preserved in the heroes' memory just as their child-eyes had seen them. In *Kubik* this concept of memory which is subject to neither time nor space is symbolized by the mysterious letters OV, which, as we have seen, are to lead the young heroes — the boy Pčelkin and the girl San'ka — to the treasures. Having discovered neither the treasure-trove nor the mystery of the letters they are transformed into wealthy French people.

As it turns out, however, memory is stronger than wealth. The mysterious letters OV, which simply stand for "Odesskij vodoprovod" (as Monsieur and Madame find out during their tourist trip to the land of their childhood), haunt the heroes throughout their wealthy emigrant life, "vremja ot vremeni vdrug vznikaja v voobraženii, inogda bez vsjakoj pričiny."⁵² Monsieur sees them in his "inner sight" as he ascends an old Paris staircase leading to the apartment of his "secret girlfriend" Nicole, as well as in the basement of his wealthy house,

reached by an "interminably long back staircase,"⁵³ behind the bottles of mineral water and fine red wine:

...и вдруг он почувствовал себя странно, как будто бы на него внезапно обрушилась страшная тяжесть его годов, и он увидел буквы ОВ, как бы написанные алмазной пылью на каменной стене погребя, и эти буквы завертелись вокруг него... (54)

As a symbol of memory, the letters OV which Monsieur sees with his "inner sight" (his soul), correspond to the concept of the "memory of the soul" in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*. In this interpretation memory is not subject to time, and, unlike the material world, is not affected by changes of any kind.

Valentina Žegis once asked Kataev during a conversation what his principal creative "device" was. Kataev replied: "Memory! I trust it more than all else — documents, archival statistics, testimonies of eye-witnesses, even books..."⁵⁵ But memory preserves everything — the bad as well as the good in man's life — what he wants to remember and what he wants to forget. Even death itself does not save Kataev's heroes from memory, since it is only the body that dies (changes its material form), while the soul continues to "live" its eternal life. Thus we are not surprised by the opening sentence of *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* voiced by the secondary narrator, great-grandfather Bačej:

Я умер от холеры на берегу реки Прут, в Скулянах... Но так как смерть оказалась всего лишь одной из форм жизни, то мое существование продолжалось и дальше, только в другом виде... Время окончательно потеряло надо мной свою власть. Оно потекло в разные стороны,

иногда даже в противоположном направлении, в прошлое из будущего, откуда однажды появился родной внук моего сына Вани, то есть мой собственный правнук, гораздо более старший меня по летам. (56)

In this same strange way the tale of *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* is begun by another secondary narrator, the grandfather of the primary narrator on his father's side – Vasilij Kataev, a priest from Vjatka:

...Я скончался 6 марта 1871 года в 10 часов вечера в городе Вятка после тяжелой болезни, окруженный своей семьей. (57)

and he further continues:

Мое человеческое сознание давно уже погасло, но взамен его началось новое, вечное, необъяснимое и никогда уже не угасающее сознание, как бы неподвижное, но вместе с тем охватившее весь существующий мир, все его бесконечное движение.

В нем, в этом странном нечеловеческом сознании, заключалось нескончаемое прошлое, настоящее и нескончаемое будущее. В этом мире я продолжал свое ни с чем не сравнимое, вечное существование.... (58)

The differences in the narrative situation that can be found in the three works under discussion (one first-person narrator in *Svjatoj kolodec*, two first-person narrators in *Kubik* – i.e., the primary narrator and for a short time the dog Kubik –, four first-person narrators in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*) do not affect the way in which the elements of the presented worlds in these books are depicted. In *Svjatoj kolodec*, however, description prevails over narrative, while in *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* the narrative is the dominant form of presentation. This leads to the conclusion that in *Svjatoj*

kolodec space constitutes the basic tool in creating the presented world, whereas in *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* it is time. That, however, does not preclude the presence of both these categories at once in either of the works. All that is meant here is the fact of the predominance of one category over the other.

Keeping in mind the points established at the opening of the present chapter, namely, that in all three books the reader is confronted by a subjective presentation of reality, and that the presented world is depicted in the same way, let us take a closer look at the function of space and time in *Svjatoj kolodec* with reference, where appropriate, to *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*.

The subjective nature of the presented world in *Svjatoj kolodec* is emphasized by the situation in which the narrator-hero finds himself:

- Запейте водичкой. Вот так. А теперь спите спокойно. Я вам обещаю райские сны.
 - Цветные?
 - Какне угодно, - сказала она и вышла из палаты.
- После этого начались сны. (59)

So it is the dream-state that forms the basic situation making up the presented world in the book where, in spite of the absence of a definite plot, it is possible to distinguish several spatio-temporal planes. The first plane is the one which provides the compositional framework for the book, that is, the narrator-hero's stay in hospital - or the plane of objectively existing time and space. The second plane is represented by a vision of life beyond the grave, triggered off by

the narcotic ingredient in the drug (in *Svjatoj kolodec* Kataev still needed a kind of excuse for his "journey" into the subconscious, while in *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* he demonstrates absolute creative freedom). Here, time and space acquire some qualities that are peculiar to fantasy fiction or even to fairy tales. The next or third plane (the one most extensively developed) consists of memories from the past as re-lived in the dream-state. The fourth plane might be defined as a dreams-within-a-dream plane included in the third plane (for example: Osip Mandel'stam, the southern city covered in snow, the woodpecker-man, the talking cat).

There is yet another, fifth plane — unrelated, however, to the presented world. I will call it the subject's (first-person narrator's) cultural-awareness plane. This comprises the direct allusions and notes providing information about prose-writing technique, as well as the quotations — set out in separate paragraphs and bearing no obvious relation to the events of the work — quotations from poems by Blok and Poe, as well as Puškin's poem-credo *Prorok*. (Similar quotations and allusions are found in all Kataev's works of this later period, including of course *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*.)

By immersing the narrator in a dream-state, Kataev creates unlimited possibilities for taking full advantage of the categories of time and space. There is no need for the narrator to justify any of the changes of place or time in the narrative. (This also applies to *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* where, as one remembers, the notion of the immortal human soul plays an important role in respect to both time and space.) These changes occur as a result of association — the

current mood of the narrator plunged deep in his dreams. Within the dream-awareness, the two worlds of reality and dream interpenetrate each other to form (quite outside the dreamer's will) yet another, third world, where the waking reality and the dream exist side by side and where things that had a real existence appear to him as dreams, while the dream-stuff acquires a semblance of reality:

Собственно говоря, все это мне вовсе не снилось, а было на самом деле, но так мучительно давно, что теперь предстало передо мной в форме давнего, время от времени повторяющегося сновидения.... И то, что раньше не было вполне сном, а скорее воспоминанием, теперь уже превратилось в подлинный сон, удивительный своим сходством с действительностью. (60)

In this way the reader receives pictures which are detached from real space and time. Everything is reduced (as it was in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*) to the *here* and *now* of the dreaming narrator-hero. Whereas *space* is presented according to the plane in which the narrator happens to find himself, *time*, on the other hand, loses its fundamental qualities and again, as in the "lyrical diary" about Lenin, has no *present*, *past*, or *future* in the usual sense of the words. There is only the "actual now"⁶¹ (to borrow a term from the phenomenologist Kockelmans), irrespective of when the particular episodes happen to be taking place in objective reality. That could equally well be the 1920s as the 1960s. The hero seems to be present at different points simultaneously in the stream of time. That accounts for the restricted role played by the category of time in *Svjatoj kolodec*. It is closely bound with the category of space,

without constituting an independent plane. The passage of time may be observed only as it accompanies the hero's passing from one space to another, or when time itself becomes the focus of his attention:

Время — странная субстанция, которая даже в философских словарях не имеет самостоятельной рубрики, а ходит в одной упряжке с пространством.... (62)

Невозможно определить, сколько времени прошло, если неизвестно, что из себя представляет само время.
(63)

One finds a similar contemplation of the category of time in all Kataev's books of the 1960s and 1970s. By eliminating time, or rather by depriving it of its fundamental qualities (continuity and irreversibility) and thereby of functional independence, Kataev focusses attention on the element of space. Space in *Svjatoj kolodec* is not only the arena where the events — whether of reality, dreams, or memories — take place, but also a specific mode of expressing the hero's outlook on life, his beliefs, and his interests; in other words, space reflects the intended message of the work.

The narrator-hero in *Svjatoj kolodec* is afraid of space that is cramped, closed-in. Closed places are always associated with imminent danger or trouble. For example, on the first, or real plane, the narrator finds himself in an isolation ward, within the four walls of a closed hospital room, waiting for an operation (life-threatening). This association of closed space with the sense of imminent danger is transferred from the real plane to other planes where it assumes various forms.

Thus, on the plane of dreams within-a-dream, where most of the action takes place in a closed room (the drawing-room), the narrator is haunted by the nightmare of the woodpecker-man, who – in the hero's own words – is but a prelude to the still more frightful dream of the talking cat. Similarly, a troubled feeling steals over him as he approaches the goal of his wanderings (the plane of dream memories), a vast but closed-in area with a maze of streets leading to a trap:

При этом во мне продолжало непрерывно усиливаться и нарастать предчувствие колоссальной неприятности, к которой я приближаюсь. (64)

...я шел вперед из улицы в улицу, пересекая узкие скверы, прямо в мышеловку, поставленную для меня в одном из закоулков этого, в основном кирпичного, довольно старого города. Здесь меня на каждом шагу подстерегали явления и картины, которые я ощущал как сигналы бедствия. (65)

Only on the plane of eternity (a vision of the world beyond the grave) is the hero liberated from every kind of threat, danger, and trouble. This plane is marked by peace, serene spirituality, and a deep sense of union with nature. Descriptions of nature in this plane (open space) are distinguished by a wealth of metaphor and a graphic quality of presentation, a rich variety of colours, all combining to form pictures of a univocally positive tone and pitch. Everything here has its shape, smell, and colour:

Возле дома, как и подобает в цветных сновидениях, росло также несколько кустов породистой сирени, цветущей поразительно щедро, крупно и красиво. Мы не уставая восхищались оттенками ее кистей: густо-

-фиолетовыми, почти синими, лилово-розовыми, воздушными и вместе с тем такими грубо материальными, осязаемыми, плотными, что их хотелось взять в руку и подержать, как гроздь винограда или даже, может быть, как кусок какого-то удивительного строительного материала. (66)

What draws the reader's particular attention in this description is not only the vividness of the presentation but also the rich multi-dimensionality, achieved by such devices as likening a spray of lilac to a cluster of grapes, or to the "clay" out of which the artist moulds his sculptures. Here multi-dimensionality is a characteristic not only of the raceme of the lilac but also of a very beautiful sunset which, besides colour, also has shape, volume, and weight, as though it had been cast in plaster. On this plane the narrator-hero perceives everything as having definite shape and volume — "telo dorogi, telo klenovogo lista, mnogočislennye tel'ca peska (ibo každyja pesčinka est' telo), daže telo tumana...."⁶⁷

Colours, too, have an extraordinary quality here — they are condensed, bright, very sharp and distinct. One remembers, for example, the description of lilac in bloom. The author uses various shades of the one violet colour: it is never just violet, but almost dark blue, or a purple pink. The hero is also charmed by the hue of the foliage of distant groves which are mist-blue, with large clusters of rippling trees, softly rounded like painted clouds, with the beauty of fields covered with bright yellow strips of charlock, and with the sight of ripe barley, each ear of which is heavy, faceted, and well-painted.

Descriptions of this kind are imbued with the joy of life, reflecting the narrator-hero's own inner need of life full of peace and beauty

✓ and free of the hardships typical of earthly life. Liberated from those passions the hero feels his long-lost days have now returned to him, letting him re-live the same moments once again – this time, however, more calmly, without the earthly rush:

Мы опять любили друг друга, но теперь эта любовь была как бы отражением в зеркале нашей земной любви. Она была молчалива и бесстрастна. (68)

У меня уже не болело плечо. Никогда не кружилась голова, не ломило затылок.
Жену тоже ничего не терзало. Мы почти никогда не спали, ни днем ни ночью.... (69)

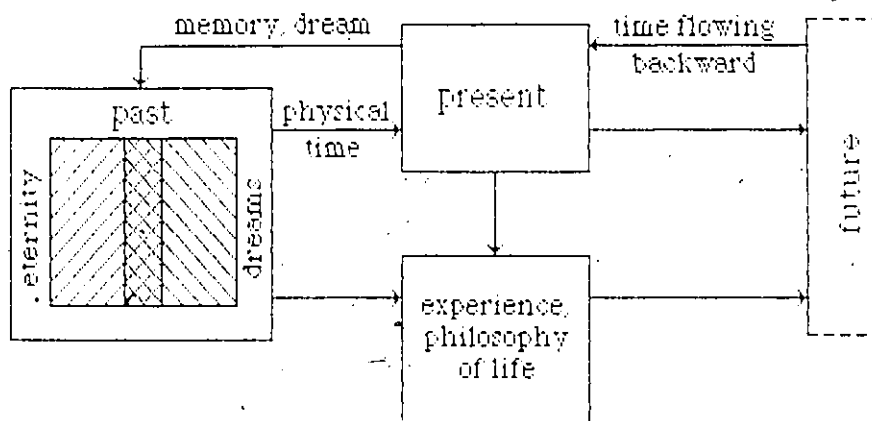
Within the vast expanse of that mythically utopian space, time appears to have stopped. The narrator-hero hardly even notices the sun-dial standing in the middle of the lawn. Everything is still, lingering in a permanent state of being. The weather is always good and bracing, always sunny, warm and mild; likewise, the horse-chestnut growing by the small "gingerbread" cottage is always in bloom.

The passage of time is registered by the hero only while moving through space. But even then time does not function in its usual way – it does not measure the passage of physical moments in accordance with its normal direction, from past to future, but just the reverse: from the future back toward the present, that present which is early on defined as the "actual now."

Since time as the "strange substance" is not materialistic, palpable substance and hence not perceptible to man, it sends out warning signals from the future by means of road signs, i.e., spatial figures. To illustrate the phenomenon, here is a concrete example from the text:

Почти каждый день мы садилась в небольшую машину и мчались по шоссе мимо странной живописи и графки дорожных знаков, которые, подобно работам абстракционистов, хотя и не имели ничего общего с живописью, но тем не менее руководили нашим движением, предупреждая и давая понять условным языком своих ломаных линий, зигзагов, крючков, треугольников, разноцветных кружков и полосок обо всем, что подстерегает нас впереди, то есть в самом недалеком будущем.... Сигналы из будущего неслись нам навстречу, предостерегая и предотвращая опасности, подстергавшие нас за каждым поворотом времени. (70)

The concept of time flowing backward is a characteristic feature of all of Kataev's later prose. Perhaps it can be better comprehended from the following diagram:



This circular structure of time clearly noticeable in Kataev's works of the 1960s and 1970s (in this case, *Svjatoj kolodec*) once again shows that the category of time is reduced to the ever-present *now*, for time flowing in opposite directions (from past to future and from future to past) "collides" at the temporal point of the present which, in the case of *Svjatoj kolodec*, is a real situation in a hospital. But at this point the question arises: just what is "the present"? — is it a second, a minute, an hour, a day, or an unmeasured moment?

It is to the indivisible moment that Stanisław Poreba⁷¹ reduces the concept of time in *Svjatoj kolodec*. He bases his opinion on the fact that the story begins and ends with one particular scene at a little water-spring, where the story-teller first thought of the book and reminisced about his life. In my opinion the setting which frames the story is not the scene at the well, which relates only to the dream-world, but rather the real situation in the hospital. Thus time in the narrative is not a "moment;" it is equivalent to the objective time the hero spends under the influence of the narcotic.

It should be added here that the time of the real situation in the hospital is to be considered simultaneously as the plane of narrative time — the plane which exists outside the consciousness of the "sleeping" hero/story-teller. Thus time here is subject to calendar measurement; it is physical time flowing in the usual direction, from the past to the future. At the moment of awakening from his narcotic sleep the hero quite consciously feels the passage of time which his life depends on. Realizing the danger threatening him, he impatiently awaits the end of the operation — "Xot' by etu opuxol' skoree vyrezalil"⁷² — and even complains that the operation necessary to save his life compels him to spend time in the world of dreams, wherein time "bezysxodno dlitsja... celuju večnost'."⁷³

In real earthly life, time, in its inexorable forward flight, constitutes a form of a threat to man, a threat to his existence. Here in the plane beyond the grave, on the other hand, it serves as a kind of protective shield, protecting him from impending surprises of a more or less unpleasant nature. What still remains inexorable, even in this

"paradise" beyond the grave, is human memory (one recalls the letters OV, symbol of memory, in *Kubik*, and the "memory of the soul" in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*). Memories triggered off by the sight of his children (daughter Giena and son Šakal) and granddaughter translate the narrator into a different plane, that of dreams-within-a-dream, to the legendary city of carpets where the nice militiamen stand at the crossroads directing the disorderly fall of snowflakes resembling huge wads of cotton-wool – in other words, to a closed space wherein the narrator, deprived of the shield of protective signals from the future, is being pushed mercilessly forward by his importunate companion, the woodpecker-man:

...Мы были как два каторжника, прикованные к одному ядру. Я умирал, я падал, а он – мой тягостный спутник – безжалостно толкал меня куда-то все дальше и дальше. (74)

Even movement through space is not associated here with the passage of time but with continual imminent danger – a struggle against death:

...мы летели в столицу нашей родины на содрогающемся от обледенения пассажирском самолете, и смерть летела рядом с нами, каждый миг готовая расстроить все наши планы.... В течение часа мы избежали тысячу смертей.... (75)

Under the impact of the narrator's memories and dream hallucinations, the peaceful serenity of the world around him on the plane of eternity is lost. Everything has drastically changed. There is no more

fairy-tale garden with its "free" pine, lonely and beautiful in its independence, with its blossoming lilacs. There is only the dark garden, the broken fence beyond which "sprava nalevo tjanulsja kanal, po kotoromu bessumno, na urovne ploskoj zemli, s pogašennymi signalami, kak by tekli nizkie motornye barži, napolnennye očen' važnym i očen' tjaželym gruzom,"⁷⁶ there is also a square which is engulfed "moroznym tumanom, tak čto nel'zja bylo ponjat' – čto èto za ploščad'."⁷⁷

The world becomes increasingly more natural, earthly, dull. The natural hues grow pale. Incidentally, this is very similar to the way in which the narrator perceives the world around him during his tourist trip to the United States in search of "the real America." The few descriptions of nature in this latter account are devoid of any bright colours and form. Everything is presented in dark, cold tones. The sky is of a nondescript colour ("odnoobrazno goluboe nebo"),⁷⁸ polished by the Mexican wind "ostrym, kak naždak, xolodnym, bespoščadnym"⁷⁹ which drives the long, flat Pacific waves onto the California beaches. These waves are just as wild and hostile "vsemu živomu, kak i te zlye čajki, kotorye na raskinutyx kryl'jax nosjatsja nad nimi, oglašaja okrestnosti ubijstvenno mexaničeski košač'imi krikami."⁸⁰

A similar hostility and unapproachability characterizes the landscape of American cities with their empty, brick-built streets and their black stone staircases leading straight from the street to separate front doors on the first floor.

That sense of alienation, coldness, and unapproachability typifies all of America – the land of "novyx cezarej v demokratičeskix pidžakax,"⁸¹ a land where a man's worth is determined by things.

When comparing the presented world as delineated in its respective planes, one cannot fail to conclude that Kataev's objective was to present a set of extreme opposites. This is particularly true of the setting of those worlds within which the narrator is living and which determines the scope of his activity. Especially striking are the differences between the two planes presented — the plane of eternity and the plane of dream-memories of the trip to the United States. While in the former case the narrator did not register ~~any~~ presence of earthly civilization, in the latter case he begins to notice problems associated with that civilization — problems resulting from human passions and wrongly set goals. This world of earthly civilization is presented as a closed world, not only because most of the various episodes take place within a city setting, but more significantly because after his fruitless search for the "real America," all America appears to him as a closed world, a beautiful artificial country — like Disneyland — a country that seems to have lost its soul:

Теперь Америка почти совсем потеряла для меня интерес, она как бы лишилась души, напоминая преле-стную искусственную страну вроде Диснейланда. За-чем я сюда так страстно стремился? (82)

For all her vastness, America with her swelling problems has become too cramped a place to live for all her inhabitants; though vast, it is still a closed space:

...Я увидел двух молчаливых попутчиков в противо-положных концах пустого салона первого класса. Один был черный, другой белый.... Эти два гражданина Соединенных Штатов, столь чуждые друг другу по всему

своему человеческому облику и вместе с тем скованные между собой нерасторжимыми узами древнего преступления, в котором ни один из них не был повинен, были соединены всей мощью американской государственности еще более прочно, чем звезды земных суток, когда на нашей планете одновременно существуют, преследуя друг друга по пятам, белый день и черная ночь со всеми ее безумными сновидениями и подавленными желаниями. (83)

But despite the swelling race problem which has its roots in the past ("drevnee prestuplenie"), there is a hope that America will solve this problem in the future, and this hope lies in the young generation of Americans, the young school-boys and -girls, who watching a love-story movie are not ashamed to weep over the broken love of the white Romeo and the black Juliet.

The same may be said about all Kataev's works under discussion in this study. While they indeed seem to be pessimistic about the world of adults, they are saturated with the younger generation's optimism for the world of tomorrow. The passages dedicated to children and young people are the brightest spots not only in Kataev's later prose but in his writings of the previous decades as well. Three of his later works in particular – *Trava zabven'ja*; *Razbitaja Žizn', ili volšebnyj rož Oberona*; and *Almaznyj moj venec* – deal mainly with the world of the young, and these will be discussed in the following chapter.

NOTES

¹Kataev, *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, *Novyj mir*, 10 (1975), p. 164. All further references to *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* are to this source.

²*Ibid.*, p. 34.

³*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵R. Russell, "Oberon's Magic Horn: The Later Works of Valentin Kataev," in *Russian Literature and Criticism. Selected Papers from the Second World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*. Ed. Evelyn Bristol. (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1982), p. 182.

⁶*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 341.

⁷*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 163.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁹Kataev, *Kubik*, in his *Sobranie sočinenij v devjati tomax* (Moscow: Xudožestvennaja Literatura, 1968), vol. 9, p. 450. All further references to *Kubik* are to this edition.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 454.

¹¹*Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 60.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹³Terms used by Melvin Friedman in his book *Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955). See also Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955).

¹⁴See for example R. Russell, "Oberon's Magic Horn..." *op. cit.*, p. 183; also B. Sarnov, "Ugl' pylajuščij i kimval brjacajuščij," *Voprosy literatury*, 1 (1968), p. 21.

¹⁵R. Daglish, "Kataev and his Critics," in Kataev, *The Grass of Oblivion* (London: Macmillan, 1969), Introduction, p. iv.

¹⁶A. Drawicz, "Walentyń Kataev, pisarz najmłodszy" in his *Zaproszenie do podróży. Szkice o literaturze rosyjskiej XX wieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1974), p. 223. (My translation.)

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Kubik*, p. 469.

¹⁹*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 218.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 219, 220.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 227.

²²A. P. Reilly, *America in Contemporary Soviet Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 137.

²³*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 201.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 235.

²⁵On this subject one remembers the words of Sinjavskij and Solženicyn quoted in the Introduction (notes 16 and 17).

²⁶*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 241.

²⁷ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 170.

²⁸ *Kubik*, p. 449.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 344.

³² *Kubik*, pp. 468, 469.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Many eminent representatives of Russian literature and culture found their place in communist Russia only after passing through a stage of agonizing doubts and harrowing soul-searching – Valerij Brjusov, Osip Mandel'stam, Andrej Belyj, Anna Axmatova, to name only a few.

³⁶ *Kubik*, p. 506.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 147.

⁴⁰ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 91.

⁴¹ *Kubik*, pp. 507–508.

⁴² *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁷ *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 204.

⁴⁸ *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Kubik*, p. 469.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 473.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 535.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ V. Žegis, "Goluboj fonar' večnoj vesny," *Sovetskaja kul'tura*, 4 August (1978), p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, pp. 30, 32-33.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 145.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁶¹ J. Kockelmans, *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation* (Garden City: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1967), p. 132.

⁶² *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 179.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 150.

⁷¹ S. Poręba, "Współczesna proza liryczna Walentyna Katajewa" (Wokół problematyki czasu)," *Slavia Orientalis* 1 (1974), p. 69.

⁷² *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 169.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

CHAPTER III

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATOR-HERO IN *TRAVA ZABVEN'JA*, *RAZBITAJA ŽIZN'*, *ILI VOLŠEBNYJ ROG OBERONA*, *ALMAZNYJ* *MOJ VENEC*

In Kataev's next three books, which will be examined in this chapter – namely *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec* – as in his previous works, a significant role in their internal structure is played by a type of narrative, which (in Iosif Grinberg's words) is "emphatically autobiographical and in 'Trava zabven'ja' even partly historical."¹ The Soviet critic's observation is true, but even in these "autobiographical" works one cannot completely identify the hero/story-teller with the "concrete author" of these books, since the hero, in my view, is merely close to the author and can be considered his double only to a certain degree.

While many events, facts, and details of Kataev's own biography co-incide with those described in his novels (especially in *Malen'ka-ja železnaja dver' v stene*, *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*), the three works now under consideration are far less biographical than they may seem at first glance. It may seem that the writer is creating "novels" from his own life and putting himself in the place of his lyric heroes, but it is not the writer himself (even though in each of his lyric heroes there is a "part of the author's

heart and soul.")² And this is much more significant than the coincidence of the novels' events, facts and biographical details with those of the concrete author's own life. While the lyric heroes who simultaneously act as narrators in *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*, appear under the name of Valentin Kataev, the "biographical" aspect of these books is more artistic and literary than it is factual. In *Almaznyj moj venec* Kataev writes:

Умоляю читателей не воспринимать мою работу как мемуары. Терпеть не могу мемуаров. Повторяю. Это свободный полет моей фантазии, основанный на истинных происшествиях, быть может, и не совсем точно сохранившихся в моей памяти. (3)

This applies, moreover, to the other works examined in this chapter, wherein the writer does not so much re-construct his biography as much as he shares with us his complex feelings and reflections, which inevitably awaken certain personal recollections in one's soul. Kataev in his reminiscences forges a unity of two radically different fictional worlds – the subjective world of the lyrical ego and the objective world of surrounding phenomena which blend into an organic whole; complementing each other in a single structural pattern. Description goes hand in hand with reflection, events with the feelings they evoke.

Kataev writes down his reminiscences, following Lev. Tolstoj, "bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja"⁴ ("with no [particular] order, but as they come [to mind]") disregarding not only chronology, but even

physical time. Kataev had already noted in *Kubik* that chronology "only harms true art," and that time is "the artist's chief enemy."⁵ In *Razbitaja Žizn'* the writer once again points to this characteristic quality of his later works:

Попробую заняться воспоминаниями именно так, как советует Толстой: без порядка, а как придется, как вспомнится, не забывая при этом, что искусство не терпит сознательности.

Пускай мною руководит отныне воображение и чувство. (6)

Kataev returns to this concern in *Almaznyj moj venec* and calls his book a "composition" ("sočinenie") and even a "lecture" having "neither definite form nor chronological structure."⁷ In this way the writer also touches on the problem of the genre of his new works. However, just as in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v' stene*, here too he is unable to find the precise term to describe the genre characteristics of *Razbitaja Žizn'*, *Trava zabven'ja*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*. Discussing his work on a new book in an interview with L. Antopol'skij, Kataev refers to *Razbitaja Žizn'* as a "series of childhood stories,"⁸ and further notes:

В моей книге я хотел бы объединить приблизительно двести пятьдесят таких историй. Написано пока шестьдесят. Закончу сперва вчерне, а потом год, наверное, буду переписывать набело, и, наверное, получится нечто вроде романа в рассказах. (9)

Note that it is not a "novel," but "something like a novel." Such a rough description of the genre of *Razbitaja Žizn'* is not surprising if

one takes into account the writer's later remark on this point in *Almaznyj moj venec*, where he notes, among other things, his refusal to recognize the "division of prose into genres."¹⁰ In the same book the author offers a simple acknowledgement that *Almaznyj moj venec* is

Не роман, не рассказ, не повесть, не поэма, не воспоминания, не мемуары, не лирический дневник...
Но что же? Не знаю! (11)

This acknowledgement in *Almaznyj moj venec* reminds one of a similar passage in *Trava zabven'ja*:

...Если не мемуары, не роман, то что же я сейчас пишу? Отрывки, воспоминания, куски, мысли, сюжеты, очерки, заметки, цитаты... (12)

By not lending themselves to classification by genre, Kataev's books demonstrate that artistic freedom of the writer he was striving for in his articles of the 1950s (see Introduction) – the freedom characterizing the genre of "lyric prose" to which Kataev's later works may be said to belong. This genre has its own kind of life. Not only does it reflect surrounding reality, but one of the objects it directly portrays is the inner, spiritual world of the narrator himself, his consciousness. The artistic interpretation of this world requires a different structural pattern, in which plot, chronology, and objective causal relationships become an obstacle for the creative freedom of the artist. Here the foreground is taken over by association, mood, feelings, lack of continuity in the development of thought, fantasy, and imagination.

The above-mentioned characteristics (as we already know from the two preceding chapters) also belong to Kataev's new style of writing, which the writer himself called "mauvism" (*movizm*) – from the French word *mauvais* (bad) – in order to distinguish it from his "good" prose of socialist realism. I will not dwell at length on this problem for two reasons: first, I do not believe this term is worth treating seriously (as some critics have done in discussing Kataev's "new" prose),¹³ and second, the characteristics of this new "literary school" which the writer "invented" become self-explanatory as one analyses Kataev's works of the 1960s and 1970s.

As was mentioned above, *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja Žizn'* and *Almaznyj moj venec* may bear a resemblance at first glance to autobiographical reminiscences. The writer takes the reader back to the time of his childhood (*Razbitaja Žizn' ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*) and youth (*Trava zabven'ja*, *Almaznyj moj venec*), focusing on himself, his inner world, his feelings and moods, as his major theme. As the writer emphasizes, however, he is not writing memoirs but rather artistic prose, in which specific facts recede into the background as they are passed through the prism of personal experiences.

All three books are characterized by a masterful description of heroes and facts, both fictitious and real. As he moves from reminiscences to fantasy and invention (for which the reminiscences provide only the initial impetus) the reader barely notices the transition and is ready to accept not only fiction as fact – but also, by the same token, the lyric hero as the concrete author. The first-person narration is especially deceiving, as is the profession of the subject-narrator – in all

three books he appears as a poet or writer (thereby co-inciding with the profession of the concrete author):

The three books discussed in this chapter may be considered a kind of trilogy, although the individual works were not written in chronological order. As was noted in the Introduction, *Trava zabven'ja* was written in 1967, *Razbitaja Žizn'* in 1972 and *Almaznyj moj venec* in 1978. But from the point of view of the events portrayed in these books *Razbitaja Žizn'* should be considered the first "novel" in the trilogy. Here the narrator talks about his childhood and early youth (in this case to a specific listener – his granddaughter).

Almost as a direct continuation of this story, the events described in *Trava zabven'ja* concern the first literary ventures of the not-yet-established young poet in Odessa both before and after the revolution, along with his friendship with Bunin and his acquaintance-ship with Majakovskij in Moscow during the NEP period. *Almaznyj moj venec* carries on the narrative of *Trava zabven'ja*, especially the part devoted to the Moscow period in the narrator's literary life.

The focal point of the story – a story rather disorganized, and written "bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja" – is none other than the reader-listener, the direct addressee of the narrator's story. As indicated, in *Razbitaja Žizn'* the narrator shares his reminiscences with his granddaughter:

Итак, дорогая внучка, хочешь, я расскажу тебе без порядка, а как придется про одного маленького мальчика с круглым простодушным лицом, узкими глазками, одетого, как девочка, в платьице с широко наглаженными плечеными складками...

Самое удивительное, что этот мальчик был не кто иной, как я сам, твой старший-престарый дедушка с сухими руками, покрытыми коричневыми пятнами, так называемой гречкой... (14)

Such an immediate listener is absent in *Trava zabuŋ'ja*, but the narrator addresses the reader in his lyrical digressions, as was the case with the books analysed in the preceding chapters. The listener appears again in *Almazny moj venec*, and this time it is not just one listener, but a whole classroom of students studying Russian language and literature. These students constantly change: they are students at English, French, and Italian universities – countries where the narrator travels to lecture on Russian literature. Thus, for example, in Italy:

Сейчас я вам, синьеры, расскажу, каким образом появился на свет этот роман. (15)

In England:

Роман «Двенадцать стульев», надеюсь все из вас читали, и я не буду, леди и гамилътоны, (16) его подробно разбирать. (17)

In France:

Вы хотите еще что-нибудь узнать о мулате? Я устал. Да и время лекции исчерпано. Впрочем, если угодно, несколько слов. (18)

The presence of listeners in the writer's "novels," especially active listeners like those in *Almaznyj moj venec* who ask questions

and demand clarifications from the narrator, or supplementary information, or simply a continuation of the topic, help pave the way for a freer structure of these works, a freer transition from one topic to another, and even for frequent repetitions of the same topic or successive descriptions of the same character from different angles, in different lights.

The listener appears in only two of Kataev's three books under discussion, but this only re-inforces a particular trait of Kataev as a writer: while maintaining a sense of continuity in once-established topics, characters, and patterns, he simultaneously makes constant variations in his means of expressions, trying new ones, experimenting. Like the artist who returns many times to the same person, landscape, or still-life, and paints them at different times of the day or year, under different lights, chooses different perspectives, and each time in people's faces, flowers, trees, and other objects discovers for himself something new, something he has not seen before, Kataev returns to people and events which have caught his attention before, so as to look upon them from the distance of time, to imbue his picture or portrait with new meaning, a new significance, a new authenticity.

A good example of these constant returnings for such a purpose is his story *Zolotoe pero* (The Gold Nib) written in 1920, in which Kataev draws a satiric portrait of the academician Ševelev – a character representing Bunin. Bunin is seen altogether differently by the lyrical hero of *Trava zabven'ja*, a book written some fifty years later. A similar example may be found in the character of Pčelkin, the implied author's hero-protagonist who appears in *Kubik, Trava za-*

bven'ja, and in the 1980s work *Junošeskij roman*.¹⁹ Examples are endless.

It is interesting to note that it is not only the concrete author of *Trava zabven'ja*, *Kubik*, *Svjatoj kolodec* etc. who keeps returning to old topics, characters, motifs, and situations. This returning is also a characteristic trait of his lyric heroes appearing on the pages of these novels.

This is especially true of the three books examined in the present chapter. The world they portray is inconsistent, in a state of flux. Everything floats in an unsteady equilibrium. Every object, every person, every situation, can disappear, vanish, or be transformed at any moment. The dynamism and instability of images is fully defined by the lyric hero's train of thought: in resurrecting the days of his youth, he unceremoniously mixes together events, years, places, and experiences.²⁰ As in the books discussed earlier, plot lines yield to "associative" relationships and specific information about the novels' heroes tends to be scattered throughout the whole narrative. Everything becomes subordinate to the subjective perception of the narrator. The reader (or listener) recognizes people and periods not on the basis of chronological order but by virtue of his participation in the narrator's own experiences (on the role of the reader-listener see pp. 112-113 above).

The world portrayed in *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja Žizn'* and *Almaznyj moj venec* is a world re-constructed in the memory of the implied author. This re-construction of events of the past as well as of the participants in these events is brought about largely

through the device of retrospection. A particular period in the narrator's life is illuminated twice, as it were — both at the moment the event actually occurs and from the perspective of years gone by. Writing from the point of view of the "present," the narrator reflects on his experience of the past and gazes intently into the future. It is as if he is subjecting himself to a peculiar kind of "split personality:" on the pages of these three books (as earlier in *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene*) he appears as both hero and an ordinary character as well as in the role of implied author.

Along with this "split personality" of the narrator, it is possible to distinguish in these works two different planes of narration — the plane of the described world and the plane of the narrative situation. The first of these belongs to the narrator-hero. The second includes the numerous digressions of the implied author which are a direct manifestation of both his attitude to the described world and his remarks to the reader, the latter indicating the "genre" of the work and the transitions from one theme to another. These two themes together make up a rather fragmented picture of the described world and its inhabitants.

The most vivid example of this dichotomy is the title of one of the three books under consideration (or rather the first part of its title), namely *Razbitaja Žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*.²¹ And not only the title. In two of the stories which make up this rather unique "novel in stories" the implied author returns to this problem in his lyrical digressions, emphasizing the interrelatedness of man, time, and their role in artistic creation:

Время разбило мои воспоминания, как мраморную могильную плиту, лишило их связи и последовательности, но вместе с тем сохранило их подробности, неис-
требимые никакими силами... (22)

Comparing his life with a Byzantine mosaic, which he describes as a "collection of skilfully laid out fragments of smalt" (*naboc iskusno vyložennyx kubikov, nakolotyx iz smal'ty*),²³ he notes:

...Может быть, из подобия наколотых кубиков какой-то светящейся смальты была выложена тяжелая разноцветная доска моей жизни со всеми ее живописными подробностями, сначала кем-то превращенная в отдельные разноцветные стекловидные кубики, потом собранная в одну картину и в конце концов раздробленная временем — потерявшая форму, но не потерявшая цвета, — с тем чтобы снова быть превращенной в одно-единое, прекрасное целое... (24)

But in order to gather again this "lost form" or time-fragmented "mosaic of life" into one unified whole, a "magnificent whole," one must possess the magic power of the legendary Oberon's horn, which appears here (as it did in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*) as a symbol of art:

Если это лишь куски разбитой временем на части картины моей жизни, то, может быть, рог Оберона обладает волшебной силой не только вызывать эльфов, то также соединять разъединенные и разбросанные в беспорядке осколки в единое целое, прекрасное, как византийская мозаика? (25)

As was already mentioned above, the fragmentation or mosaic-like quality of the described world is also characteristic of the other two books of the "trilogy" — *Trava zabven'ja* and *Almaznyj moj*

venec. These books present a unique kind of challenge to the reader: the challenge to re-construct the narrator's "shattered life" (*razbita-ja žizn'*), to gather it together into a unified whole – like the multi-coloured mosaic, in which the individual "fragments" (*oskolki*) may be laid out in various combinations without detriment to the final over-all picture. This is what permits the multiplicity of pictures, whose final effect will depend on the particular approach of individual readers, on their power of imagination and their skill in using that imagination – an imagination which (as is shown by the works under consideration) can replace the magic power of Oberon's horn.²⁶

In talking about the fragmentation of the narrator's life, however, we must consider not only the physical and spatial dimension but also the temporal. Each individual "fragment" (*oskolok*) of this life has a different position in the flow of time. Like the whole described world in these three books, time is obedient to memory, to the imagination of the narrator. It does not flow by hours and days; rather it is an interlacing of various points of time brought together by the personality of the narrator, telling his story from the point of view of the present. Points of time in the past and future are all joined to and interwoven with the present. What is important to the narrator of these books is the "moment at hand" (*dannyj mig*) – the moment at which he finds himself and from which he directs his story to his readers and listeners. Note the narrator's own words in the form of a lyrical digression following his presentation in front of the English students' class in *Almaznyj moj venec*:

Я говорю довольно связно, повторяя уже много раз говоренное, а в это же самое время, как бы пересекая друг друга по разным направлениям и в разных плоскостях, передо мной появляются цветные изображения, таинственным образом возникающие из прошлого, из настоящего, даже из будущего, — порождение еще не разгаданной работы множества механизмов моего сознания...

Говорю одно, вижу другое, представляю третье, чувствую четвертое, не могу вспомнить пятое, и все это совмещается с тем материальным миром, в сфере которого я нахожусь в данный миг... (27)

And here is yet another interesting observation by this same narrator from *Almaznyj moj venec* which touches not only the question of time but also another point we have been examining in this chapter — the problem of the hero:

...в хорошем романе (хотя и не признаю деление прозы на жанры) герой должен быть неподвижен, а обращаться вокруг него должен весь физический мир, что и составит если не галактику, то, во всяком случае, солнечную систему художественного произведения. (28)

The centre of this "galaxy" in the works under consideration is none other than the narrator himself, situated in the fixed present, around which revolve the novels' other heroes — father, mother, brother Ženja in *Razbitaja Žizn'*; Bunin and Majakovskij in *Trava zabven'ja*, and a whole gallery of characters in *Almaznyj moj venec* — characters who appear not under their own names but rather nicknames: *ključik* (Oleša), *konarmec* (Babel'), *pticelov* (Bagrickij), *Komandor* (Majakovskij — note the capitalization of the nickname), *ščelkunčik* (Mandelštam), *soratnik* (Aseev), *korolevič* (Esenin), *mulat* (Pasternak), *kolčenogij* (Narbut), *sineglazyj* (Bulgašov),

drug (Il'f), *brat* (Petrov), *budetljanin* (Xlebnikov), *arlekin* (Gumilev), *štabs-kapitan* (Zoščenko).

Inasmuch as the narrator is situated at the fixed centre of the "solar system," he is in fact the main hero, subordinating to himself (i.e., to his subjective perception) everything else: time, space, characters (including the narrator's other ego — see pp. 113–114 above).

From this central vantage-point in the fixed present, the narrator looks into the past, recollects his childhood, his youth, the people and paths which crossed his own life-route. He uses the present to explain unclear situations or unfamiliar words used by the young hero (in *Razbitaja Žizn'*), or to expound with commentaries or philosophical digressions. This technique was introduced earlier in *Malen'kaja Železnaja dver' v stene*, where the same situation was described from two different points of view — the adult narrator and the child.

These descriptions are completely antithetical. In *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja Žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*, the adult narrator (the implied author) puts himself as it were in the place of the child or teen-age hero; he filters their acts, thoughts, and feelings through his own soul, (thereby achieving a greater degree of authenticity in portraying the young hero's inner quality), and introduces his own voice only at the moment when additional explanation is required from the point of view of the more experienced adult. Thus two time-flows — the past and the present — are superimposed on each other.

An example of this kind of superimposition or interweaving of different temporal planes may be observed right in the first story of *Razbitaja Žizn'*, entitled *Skvoz' son*. Reminiscences from little

three- or four-year-old Valjuša's trip to Ekaterinoslav are interwoven with the implied author's commentary. What was not understood by the child becomes clear for the adult: "Togda ja ne ponimal, čto èto takoe, a teper' ponimaju."²⁹

The word *togda* means the past, the narrator's childhood, when little Valjuša was frightened and repulsed by something. *Teper'* means the present, when it has become clearer that "èto pugajuščeèe byl deduška – mamin papa, muž babuški, – otstavnoj general-major..."³⁰

The interweaving of the past and present is fleeting and elusive, since the narrative is told from the point of view of the adult recalling his childhood; for the adult the two temporal planes have merged into a single present. The planes can be distinguished only by the use of the adverbs *togda* and *teper'*, and by the tense of the verbs (*ponimal* and *ponimaju*).

A clear manifestation of the past may be observed in the descriptions from the child's viewpoint:

Теперь же, в Екатеринославе, поминутно засыпая, я сидел в бабушкиной и дедушкиной квартире, в столовой, и еле держался на неудобном высоком стуле, с резной спинкой, украшенной двумя точеными шишечками, что представлялось мне верхом роскоши и богатства. Передо мной простирался большой обеденный стол мореного дуба. Этот прямоугольный стол без скатерти был какого-то зловещего цвета, настолько темного, что его никак не могла хорошо осветить лампа с белым абажуром, висящая на бронзовых цепях, тоже очень мрачных. (31)

and also in dialogues such as the following:

- Чего мы ждем? — спросил я, собираясь вахныкать.
 — Не торопись, сейчас узнаешь, сказала веселая тетя
 Маргарита, таинственно блеснув глазами.
 — А что?
 — Сюрприз. (32)

In these examples it may be noted that time is deliberately slowed down. It is broken down through the prism of feelings of a three- or four-year-old boy, waiting for the moment of the train's departure for Odessa at ten o'clock at night. In the first example the little hero through sleepy eyes sees all sorts of ominous objects around him; they frighten him and slow down the passage of time. This slowing reaches the point where it seems unbearable to the hero and he attempts to break through this condition with the question "Чего мы ждем?" (in the second example), whereupon the action suddenly picks up speed:

Тут же раздался звонок и вошла еще одна тетя — Люда — а вслед за ней дворник внес нечто довольно большое, упакованное в магазинную бумагу. И сразу все выяснилось. (33)

The little hero was presented with a toy horse, which he right away dubbed "Limončik":

Не теряя времени я начал играть с Лимончиком и возить его за клеенчатую узду по команатам, но именно тут-то и наступило время ехать на вокзал. (34)

It may be seen that everything is permeated with a subjectivity of time-perception. To the hero's sense time is either drawn out, slowing down, or rushing along. It manifests itself at different paces

depending on the child's psychological state. A sleepy, static state makes time slow down, while action (dynamism), on the other hand, speeds it up. This latter phenomenon is indicated by such words and expressions as "tut že," "srazu," "ne terjaja vremeni," "tut-to." The objective time of the adult narrator, situated in the fixed present, is interwoven with the subjective time of the child. The adult feels the need of explaining to the reader (or, in this case, to his granddaughter-listener) whatever might be, in his opinion, difficult to understand. Thus, before the departure from Ekaterinoslav to Odessa, the toy-horse present must be sewn into the hopsack. But in the child's understanding the horse had to be fed and watered along the way:

— Мамочка! Бабушка! Как же я его буду по дороге кормить овсом и сеном и поить ключевой водой? Не зашивайте его всего. Пусть хоть морда черчит! (35)

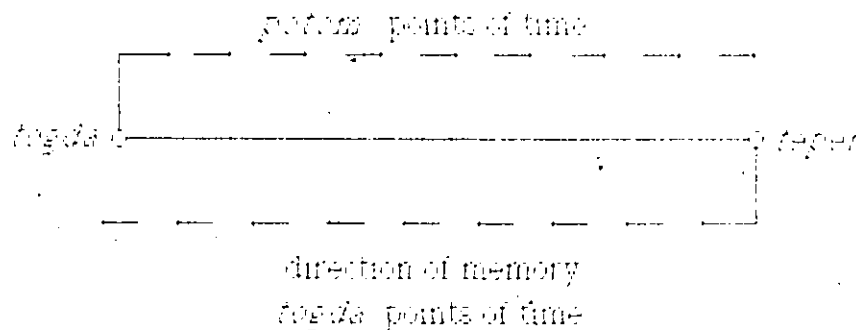
The word "čerčit," mispronounced by the child, is explained by the adult, for whom the incomprehensible has finally become clear some seven decades later. He interrupts the narrative of the past and introduces his own voice from the standpoint of the present:

Я еще плохо говорил, и вместо "торчит" у меня получилось "черчит", что всех умилило и насмешило. (36)

It is interesting to note that while the present remains fixed, the past is movable. It can move forward and backward, all the time however obeying the narrator's memory, who recalls everything "bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja." The flexibility of the point of time labelled

togda (the past) is occasioned by the memory of the narrator, situated at the point in time of *teper'* (the present). *Togda* may move backwards as far as the narrator's memory will allow; the story begins when he is three or four years old. His memory, apparently, is not capable of grasping events earlier than this. The movement of *togda* forward is not limited, except by the point of contact with the present *teper'*. This peculiar quality of *togda* permits the narrator to combine and intersperse references to the distant past – times of childhood or youth – with the present experience of the adult.

A movable third point which may be distinguished in *Razbitaja Žizn'* as lying somewhere between the past and present is designated *potom* ("then"), which is aimed in only one direction, toward the present. This means that a movement from *togda* into *teper'* forms the point *potom*, but not in the other direction. A movement from *teper'* into the past forms only *togda* points. The following graphic illustration may give us a better understanding:



Не знаю, когда именно, тогда или потом, но я со смутным беспокойством чувствовал, что и этот чистенький батистовый платочек, и мокрые мамини ресницы, и ее смугловатая щека, и траурная вуаль имеют какое-то отношение к дедушке, которого мы видели в последний раз. (37)

In this example we see a combination of the three points of time indicated above. The expression "I don't know" (*не знаю*) suggests that the narrator, from his position in the present, is incapable of determining the precise time of the events arising in his memory, and thus uses more general terms such as *тепер'*, *тогда*, and *потом*, which obviate this necessity.

This indicates that the concept of historical time is completely lacking in *Razbitaja žizn'*. Time here is subjective, nesting in the depths of the narrator's inner consciousness.

Time is structured along similar lines in the other two books of the trilogy – *Trava zabven'ja* and *Almaznyj moj venec*, only with the difference that here the points of time *тогда* and *потом* are located in a more specifically defined past – a past we can call, following Grinberg (see page 106 above), at least partly historical. While Grinberg writes only about *Trava zabven'ja*, his remarks can also apply to *Almaznyj moj venec*. In both these works the "past" is subjected to a kind of selection process. That not all the possible facts and events are broken down through the prism of the narrator's subjectivity is indicated by the narrator's remark in *Trava zabven'ja*: "Ne sleduet zabyvat', što ja zapisyvaju zdes' liš' to, što soxranila mne pamjat'..."³⁸ – as well as by the admission in *Almaznyj moj venec*: "Verojatno, očen' mnogo vypalo iz moej pamjati."³⁹

In other words, not all the points of time in the past (*tогда* and *потом*) can be illuminated from the point of view of the present, but this is of little concern to the narrator, for whom the past and present merge into a single *теперь*. Turning to the reader as if in expectation of a confirming response, he asks:

Или «теперь» — это то же самое, что «тогда»? (40)

This explains why Grinberg considers the *Trava zabven'ja* narration only "partly historical," inasmuch as the events which took place in 1914, 1918, or 1930, are shifted forward through the power of the narrator's imagination to the point of *теперь*, to the present of the reminiscing narrator. In this *теперь* ("now") we come upon the narrator's conversations and meetings with his Teacher Bunin (in the first section of *Trava zabven'ja*); it is *теперь* that the young writer Pčelkin falls into various peripeteias (in the second section); *теперь* Majakovskij pays a visit to the narrator (in the third section):

— Ну так что же, — сказал *теперь* Маяковский, усаживаясь на диван, — вы хозяин. Я гость. Занимайте. (41)

In each of the sections mentioned events are structured (as in all of Kataev's "new" prose) not along lines of cause-and-effect but rather according to the principle of association. All of these sections are unified not just by the narrator's personality but also by historical time specifically mentioned. In the view of the Polish critic Poreba, recollections of Bunin are placed within the time-frame of 1914–1918:

the action of the Pčelkin story takes place in 1922, the Majakovskij section in 1922–1930.⁴²

In *Almaznyj moj venec* even this primitive sense of chronology is lacking and historical time is more veiled, since its heroes, unlike those of *Trava zabven'ja*, do not (as was indicated earlier) appear under their real names. Also missing are precise dates which could help pinpoint the time-frame of one or more of the situations described. Temporal indications here take on a more general character:

Раз уж я заговорил о птицелове, то не могу не вспомнить тот день, когда я познакомил его с королевичем.
Москва. Двадцатые годы. Тверская. (43)

And here is how time is referred to in connection with the events described in *Trava zabven'ja*:

Тем, чем для Блока был 1910 год, тем для нас, молодых провинциалов, были 1913 и 1914 годы... (44)

or:

— Когда же мы с вами виделись в последний раз?
— спросил Бунин.
— В июле четырнадцатого.
— Июль четырнадцатого, — задумчиво сказал он.
— Четыре года. Война. Революция. Целая вечность. (45)

The fragmentary nature of the later works of Kataev, the associative quality of the narration, the significant intervals in time (sometimes quite objective, as is evident from the dialogue quoted above

between the narrator-hero of *Trava zabven'ja* and Bunin), their premeditated subjectivity – all of these exerted a significant influence on his techniques of portraying the world around him, both nature and people.

A rich and multi-coloured world view characterized Kataev's whole career right from the 1920s on; in his later works, however, he reached a climax of expressiveness and capacity for detail, as well as an exemplary conciseness of description.

Kataev's masterful description of nature was already noted in Chapter II in connection with the analysis of *Svjatoj kolodec* (see pages 91–92 above). Here is another example, this time from *Trava zabven'ja*:

Редкие звезды, ослабленные желтоватым светом луны. Теплый степной ветерок. Силуэт акаций. Ограды дач. Звуки перепелов. Тишина. Далекий лай собак. Время от времени крик ослика. Серебристо-пыльная полынь, ее неповторимый ночной запах. Блеск трамвайных рельсов, как бы скользящий вдаль и там поворачивающийся и гаснущий среди угольной темноты. Шорох кошки, а может быть, и ежика в пыльных кустах шиповника. Погашенный маяк. (46)

This description includes everything: colours, aromas, sounds, the feeling of warmth and night-time silence. And all these are expressed at one stroke, in one word. Here a series of verbal brush-strokes (instead of a multitude of external accessories) give the overall impression of the atmosphere of that night. Here the writer's literary miserliness is accepted not as poverty or limitation, but as a treasure. A particularly innovative feature is the author's avoidance

of metaphors and analogies in favour of simple descriptive phrases alone.

This is only one example illustrating the consistently high degree of versatility in Kataev's art. The reader may find such brevity and preciseness of description on page after page of *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*. But this example reminds us of Bunin's verse, from which the young Kataev learned to discern in the material world that which is magnificent, blossoming, and radiant. It is lessons like these that the young hero learns from Bunin in *Trava zabven'ja*:

Прислушивайтесь к своим чувствам, наблюдайте окружающий вас мир и пишите. Но пишите так, как вы чувствуете и так как вы видите, а не так как видели другие поэты, пусть даже самые гениальные. Будьте в искусстве независимы. (47)

And the hero-narrator of *Trava zabven'ja* obeys his Teacher's instruction and throughout the book – as indeed in the other two parts of this unique trilogy – the reader notices a tendency toward the creation of a holistic subjective impression of people and objects. This tendency arises from the basic literary premise of the works – to pass all objects, people, and events, through the prism of the central hero's experiences. In everything described in these books we may see transitions from the objective to the subjective, from the thing or person to the impression of it. Thus the way the outer world is described, the hero's relationship to it, depends (as was also shown in the example of *Svjatoj kolodec*) on what is being described or written about at the

moment in question. The descriptions reflect the emotional relationship of the hero to what is being portrayed.

Again I should like to cite an example from *Neava zabven'ja*, inasmuch as it contains the key to the other works. The hero is describing the winter landscape of Magnitogorsk — a city of "dreams fulfilled," a city of recollections. This description unfolds a picture of Russian nature before the reader's gaze:

...нарядный январский день горел вокруг, и на фоне густой лапис-лазури неба, над низкими узорчатыми оградками, отлитыми из магнитогорского чугуна, отчетливо выступали сады и аллеи, обросшие толстым слоем инея. Каждое дерево и каждый куст — каркгач, сирень, тополь, липа, — которые я видел еще саженцами, теперь представляли чудо зимней красоты: иные из них напоминали волшебные изделия русских кружевниц, иные стояли вдоль палевых и розовых многоэтажных жилых корпусов, как некие белокаменные скульптуры, иные были разительно схожи с хрупкими кустами известковых кораллов синеватого подводного царства... (48)

In this light, fleeting sketch of the winter landscape there is no outwardly broken-down, objectively rich picture of nature, no sharp or distinct contours, no actual drawing of any kind. But there is a kind of impetus which arouses the reader's imagination to see this "marvel of winter beauty."

The charm of this description among other things lies in the magical power of the writer to create the entire scene in just a stroke or two of his pen. The ermine-like decoration of the city, the comparison of the trees with "artifacts of Russian lace" or "fragile clumps of lime corals" — these are sources of exceptional aesthetic effect. There

must be a certain magical feeling in this description to hold the reader's attention so forcefully. It is not simply an objective description of what is there to be seen, or, for that matter, an "imagined"⁴⁹ landscape (to use the hero's own word), but a poetic description, filtered through the prism of his own personal feelings and experiences. In descriptions like these which may be encountered throughout all of Kataev's "new" prose, there is evident, according to Vladimir Gusev, "živopisnaja sila, smak i vkus k žiznennym sokam, k askam," as well as "nравstvennost' xudožnika, nesmotrja ni na čto proslavljajuščego žizn'."⁵⁰

It may be remembered from *Svjatoj kolodec* that everything the hero didn't like he deprived of form and colour (cf. his description of the Texas landscape quoted on page 67 above). Here in *Trava zabven'ja* even a winter landscape is imbued with colour and vitality. And all because the landscape described (Magnitogorsk) was associated with a beloved person and his memory – the poet-futurist Majakovskij – from whom, as from Bunin, the hero of *Trava zabven'ja* learns conciseness and brevity of description:

У НИХ У ОБОИХ УЧИЛСЯ Я ВИДЕТЬ МИР – У БУНИНА И У
МАЯКОВСКОГО... Но мир-то был разный. (51)

On the pages of *Trava zabven'ja* the names of the hero's literary mentors constantly meet, collide, and criss-cross each other. They are like two poles, two extremes of a single historical period. Two different artists so unlike each other in their lives, their careers, their destinies. But while Bunin and Majakovskij perceived and described two different worlds (each of them had his own distinctly

expressed artistic and political individuality), they both helped Kataev's hero formulate his own unique pattern of thinking.

Bunin was always interested in the question of the meaning of life, the meaning of human existence. He sought the answer to this question (as David J. Richards notes) "in Tolstoyanism, in Orthodox Christianity, in Eastern religions and philosophy, in love and in art."⁵² Bunin also paid considerable attention to past memories; as Richards tells us:

...he was fascinated by...Russian history, the remains of ancient civilizations, the lives of his ancestors, and his own earlier years - and never doubted the value of attempting to overcome some of the ravages of time by preserving records of the past, in - artistic or non-artistic form. (53)

In contrast to Bunin, Majakovskij was always looking ahead, gazing into the future. As Professor R.D.B. Thompson aptly points out:

...he almost always distinguishes sharply between time past and time future: he makes a moral distinction between the two: time past is invariably bad, while time future is almost always good. (54)

Majakovskij's world outlook was closer than Bunin's to that of the young narrator-hero of *Trava zabven'ja* - a hero infected with revolutionary romanticism, drawn toward a new and uncertain future. Bunin, by contrast, hated revolution and all the new changes that came with it.

It was Majakovskij that suggested to the hero the topic and title of the latter's forthcoming book *Vremja, vpered!* - a book about industrial construction in Magnitogorsk:

— Вот вы его и напишите, этот роман. Хотя бы о Магнитострое. Название «Время, вперед!» дарю, — великодушно сказал Маяковский, посмотрев на меня строгими, оценивающими глазами. (55)

Bunin in turn taught the young poet-hero (Valentin Kataev) to describe the material world around him, to notice its minutest details and to define them with a single stroke:

Он и меня учил этому. «Опишите воробья. Опишите девочку». Но что же получилось? Я описал девочку, а она оказалась «девушкой из совпартшколы», героиней Революции. А Революции меня учил Маяковский. (56)

The story of the girl from the "sovpartškola" who betrays a loved one — a White officer involved in the counter-revolutionary conspiracy — into the hands of revolutionary justice, serves to join together not only the three constituent sections of *Trava zabven'ja* noted above, but also the persons of Bunin and Majakovskij — despite their antithetical real-life personalities portrayed so vividly in the book.

The story is recorded not in full detail, but sporadically, in fragments. It is like an unrealized plan for a separate novel which the hero of *Trava zabven'ja* dreams of writing, following the instructions given him by Bunin and Majakovskij. In this way the book also serves as a literary laboratory, a story of how artistic designs are created, how artistic images come into being.

Just as with his descriptions of nature, Kataev fleshes out his human portraits with neat and precise details. Again he presents a subjective evaluation, a subjective attitude to the characters he de-

scribes. Benedikt Sarnov, writing about *Svjatoj kolodec* and *Trava zabven'ja*, offers the following comment:

...любое описание, любой словесный портрет становится художественным в тот момент, когда объективное сливается с субъективным, когда, соприкасаясь с предметом, художник не только рисует предмет, но и... изводит из своей внутренней глубины все те ощущения, которые пробудило в нем столкновение с предметом.
(57)

Sarnov's comment is significant and can also be applied to the described world in *Razbitaja žizn'* and *Almaznyj moj venec*, since in all three books the reader finds descriptions in which the narrator does not restrict himself to the description of outward personality traits but tries to grasp the substance of his inner experiences, his character.

This kind of subjectivity is apparent not only in the portrayal of the characters of these books (see list on pp. 118–119 above) but also in the description of the narrator himself. This is especially evident in *Trava zabven'ja*, where – as was already noted in Chapter II in connection with the various transformations of the narrator in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* (see page 71 above) – the hero/story-teller is re-incarnated in the character of Rjurik Pčelkin and tells about him in the third person. Even though the form of narration changes from the first to the third person, Pčelkin is still identical with the narrator, the narrator's lyrical self. Pčelkin is an Odessa high-school student, a poet young and industrious (as is suggested by his last name), who travels for days on end through

the remote corners of the Odeśsa district recruiting rural correspondents for the revolutionary committee; not only does he lose track of time, but also finds himself changed by time. His life is not a simple one. Nor is his world view a simple or unambiguous construction, formulated as it is under the influence of two such mutually exclusive poets as Bunin and Majakovskij.

The portraits of the characters of *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja žizn'* and *Almaznyj moj venec* are not unfolded all of a sudden or even in all their potential detail. Their gradual, bit-by-bit appearance is related to the fragmentary conception of these books, their mosaic quality. Their lack of full development is explained by the fact that the main focus of interest here is not the characters themselves so much as the narrator's relationship to them – how they are reflected in the soul of this narrator from the perspective of passing years – and, most importantly, the narrator himself.⁵⁸

Kataev comes back again and again to the portrayals of his characters, each time superimposing one portrait on another. In *Trava zabven'ja* all sorts of personages (excepting Bunin and Majakovskij)* simply flash by, appear and disappear – Oleša, Bulgakov and Mandel'stam, for example. To the degree that Bunin and Majakovskij occupy the centre of the narrator's attention, to that degree do the other characters recede into the background, only to re-appear, this time as central figures, in *Almaznyj moj venec*.

Only Majakovskij remains on equal footing in both books. In *Trava zabven'ja* Majakovskij is portrayed on the eve of the poet's suicide (14 April 1930). In *Almaznyj moj venec* new details be-

come apparent — or, as N. Krymova notes, "dobavočnye akcenty"⁵⁹ from an earlier period of Majakovskij's acquaintanceship with the story's hero.⁶⁰ But these "additional accents" (I again wish to emphasize) pertain not so much to Majakovskij himself as to the relationship of the hero to Majakovskij-Komandor. And nowhere could this relationship be more strikingly expressed (even with the most vivid verbal portrait) than by the simple spelling of the poet's alias with a capital letter:

Не могу взять грех на душу и назвать их подлинными именами. Лучше всего дам им всем прозвища, которые буду писать с маленькой буквы, как обыкновенные слова... Исключение сделаю для одного лишь Командора. Его буду писать с большой буквы, потому что он уже памятник и возвышается над Парижем поэзии Эйфелевой башней, представляющей собой как бы некое (заглавное печатное А. Высокая буква над мелким шрифтом вечного города. (61)

Here is told all: the recognition of Majakovskij as the greatest poet of the 20th century ("vozvyšaetsja nad Parižem poëzii Ejfelevoj bašnej"), his unmistakable tendency toward the future (the Eiffel tower was then considered a technological achievement in advance of its time), and the immortality of his name and his poetry which had already become monuments on a par with Paris, the "eternal city," Paris the monument of human achievements in art and technology and at the same time the city of the future.⁶²

Note how Majakovskij is described in *Trava zabven'ja*:

На Маяковском было темное-серое, зимнее, короткое, до колен, полупальто с черным каракулевым воротником и такая же черная — но не шапка, а скорее

круглая неглубокая шапочка... несколько сдвинута на затылок, открывая весь лоб и часть остриженной под машинку головы. (63)

This is one of the fragments in Kataev's work which bears re-reading a number of times – which can be looked at like one of Serov's portraits. Here Kataev, like Serov, shuns bright colours – his colour is restrained, composed of combinations of black and grey – but the conciseness and precision of the description gives the picture fullness and vitality.

And here is a more detailed description of Majakovskij's external appearance:

В углу его крупного, хорошо разработанного рта опытного оратора, эстрадного чтеца с прекрасной артикуляцией и доходчивой дикцией, как всегда, торчал окурок толстой папиросы высшего сорта, и он жевал его, точнее сказать, перетирал синеватыми искусственными зубами, причем механически двигались туда и сюда энергичные губы и мощный подбородок боксера. В его темных бровях, в меру густых... было нечто женское, а лоб, мощно собранный над широкой переносицей, был как бы рассечен короткой вертикальной морщиной, глубоко черневшей треугольной зарубкой. (64)

Kataev's extraordinary capacity for detail in human portraiture is very evident in this description: The reader is immediately reminded of Majakovskij's eyes – "po-ukrainski temno-karie... ženskie,"⁶⁵ his "energetic lips" and "strong boxer's chin." But all of these are merely the poet's outward features, without any reference to his inner world. Kataev himself asks the question: what is the essence of Majakovskij? His response:

Он всегда оставался только человеком — великим художником слова, новатором-революционером с очень сложным, противоречивым характером и нежной, легко ранимой душой... (66)

This whole "complex and contradictory" character is revealed in Majakovskij's works (since "stixi poëta est' nekotoroë podobie ego duši"),⁶⁷ as quoted in the pages of *Trava zabven'ja*:

«Вот иду я, заморский страус... Я не твой, снеговая уродина. Глубже в перья, душа, уложилась! И иная окажется родина, вижу — выжжена южная жизнь. Остров зноя. В пальмы овазился... Ржут этажня. Улицы плятятся. Обдают водой холода. Весь истыканный в дымы и в пальцы, переваливаю года» (68)

Thus are presented all the other characters of *Trava zabven'ja*, *Razbitaja Žizn'*, and *Almaznyj moj venec*. Naturally, from the point of view of the traditional novel with its full-scale plot and chronological sequence of events, Kataev's characters may seem "flat."⁶⁹ Looking at his final works, however — works which do not lend themselves to a specific genre classification — where the foreground is taken up not by characters but only by the narrator, one may conclude that Kataev stands before the reader not only as a painter of outward forms, but also as a psychologist who has reached into the very depths of his own soul and drawn out of it everything he holds most dear — reflections on those close to him, reflections filtered through the prism of the experiences of the narrator-hero, the protagonist of the concrete author.

NOTES

¹I. Grinberg, "Nabljudatel'nost' ili licezrenie?," *Voprosy literatury*, 1 (1968), p. 62.

²Boris Galanov, *Valentin Kataev. Očerki tvorčestva* (Moscow: Detskaja literatura, 1982), p. 12.

³Kataev, *Almaznyj moj venec* (Moscow: Sovetskij Pisatel', 1979), p. 67. All further references to *Almaznyj moj venec* are to this edition.

⁴Kataev, *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona* (Moscow: Detskaja literatura, 1967), p.15. All further references to *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona* are to this edition.

⁵*Kubik*, p. 481.

⁶*Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*, p. 15.

⁷*Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 145.

⁸L. Antopol'skij, "Obnovlenie prozy," *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1971), p. 131.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 159.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 379.

¹³See, for example, V. Iverni, "Socrealizm s človečeskim licom," *Kontinent*, 7 (1976), pp. 410–412; R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), pp. 113–117; R. Daglish, "Kataev and His Critics" in *The Grass of Oblivion* (London: Macmillan, 1979), Foreword, p. iii.

¹⁴*Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*, p. 15.

¹⁵*Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 158.

¹⁶A page earlier Kataev explains his use of the word "gamil'tony" instead of "džentl'meny" (*ibid.*, p. 164):

– Леди и гамильтоны, – торжественно сказал я словами известного нашего вратаря, который будучи на приеме в Англии, обратился к собравшимся со спичем и вместо традиционного «леди и джентльмены» начал его восклицанием «леди и гамильтоны», будучи введен в заблуждение нашумевшей картиной «Леди Гамильтон»...

This is a clear example of Kataev's characteristic sense of humour.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁹The full title of this book, published for the first time in *Novyj Mir*, 10 (1982), pp. 9–105, and 11 (1982), pp. 162–227, was *Junošeskij roman moego starogo druga Saši Pčelkina, ras-skazannyj im samim*. The title has been shortened in the book edition to *Junošeskij roman* (Moscow: Sovetskij Pisatel', 1983).

²⁰I. Grinberg, "Nabljudatel'nost' ili licezrenie?," *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²¹See P. Johnson, *Struggle with Death: The Theme of Death in the Major Prose Works of Ju. Olesha and of V. Kataev*. Ph.D. dissertation (Cornell University, 1977).

²²*Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*, p. 295.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 477

²⁶ On this problem see also Chapter I of this study (page 43).

²⁷ *Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 152.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁹ *Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*, p. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸ *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 313.

³⁹ *Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 393. In the text the words "teper'" and "togda" are in italics.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* "Teper'" in italics.

⁴²S. Poręba, "Współczesna proza liryczna Walentyna Katajewa. (Wokół problematyki czasu)," *Slavia Orientalis*, 1 (1974), p. 70.

⁴³*Almaznyj moj venec*, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 273.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 441.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁵⁰V. Gusev, "Dve storony medali," *Voprosy literatury*, 1 (1968), p. 58.

⁵¹*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 433.

⁵²D.J. Richards, "Bunin's Conception of the Meaning of Life," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 119 (1972), p. 153.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁵⁴R.D.B. Thomson, "Mayakovsky and His Time Imagery," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 111 (1970), p. 182.

⁵⁵*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 412.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 432.

⁵⁷B. Sarnov, "Ugl' pylajuščij i kimval brjacajuščij," *Voprosy literatury*, 1 (1968), p. 47.

⁵⁸Compare R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev*, p. 127.

⁵⁹N. Krymova, "Ne svjatoj kolodec," *Družba narodov*, 9 (1979), p. 237.

⁶⁰As was noted earlier, historical time in *Almaznyj moj venec* is disguised and therefore it is difficult to determine the exact time of these meetings. It may be said roughly that they took place in the mid-1920s.

⁶¹*Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 18.

⁶²R.D.B. Thomson in his article "Mayakovsky and His Time Imagery" (*op. cit.*, p. 198) wrote that Majakovskij "had always hoped for miracles from technology (not just an acceleration of the coming of Utopia, but also a solution to the problem of immortality)."

⁶³*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 401.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 398.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 287. These words were written about Bunin but they are equally applicable to every "podlinnyj" poet — in this case to Majakovskij.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 387.

⁶⁹R. Russell comes to such a conclusion in his monograph *Valentin Kataev*, p. 146.

CHAPTER IV

KATAEV'S "NEW" PROSE AND THE SHORT STORY *FIALKA*

In the books of Kataev hitherto examined, a characteristic trait has been the evident tendency of the narrator, in telling his story in the first person,¹ to look back into the past and see it through the prism of personal reflections and experiences from the standpoint of the present. But this present, it must be emphasized, has not been directly described. In general terms one can say that in most cases the narrator-hero returns in his dreams (or even in his reminiscences) to the early part of this century, focussing mainly on the 1920s. In those cases where an earlier or more modern period is referred to, the events are set, as a rule, either in Tsarist Russia (as in *Kladbišče v Škuljanax*) or abroad (America in *Svjatoj kolodec*, France and Roumania in *Kubik*).

It appears as though Kataev deliberately avoided contemporary Soviet themes and problems connected with modern Soviet life.² For him the modern world was, as it were, simply a reflection in the mirror of the past and was the direct result of past experience. Without a deep historical and personal knowledge of the past, the writer seems to be saying, man cannot truly evaluate the present, let alone avoid mistakes in the future. It is only in a roundabout way that he speaks about contemporary reality, the world around him.

A good example of this is *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, a book which basically talks about the past but at the same time contains many hints of the contemporary world and the analogical character of situations and destinies.

Thus, sympathizing with the suffering of the mountain-dwellers which had revolted under the leadership of Šamil' (during the 19th-century Caucasian wars), the grandson-narrator exclaims:

Подлинная ужасная война, грабительская, колони-
альная война. Удивительно, как хладнокровно пишет
об этом дедушка....

Ужасно, ужасно! (3)

And on the same page he offers his next commentary, this time referring to the present day, which he sees as the result of that "predatory" and "colonial" war:

Но кто знает, какова была бы судьба России, каковы
были бы границы Советского Союза, если бы тогдашняя
Россия не победила в этой войне с восставшими племе-
нами, руководимыми знаменитым Шамилем. (4)

The reference to the present-day borders of the Soviet Union here cannot by any means be considered accidental, especially in view of the epithets "predatory" and "colonial" introduced just a few lines earlier to describe the war in the Caucasus. This is a clear hint at the contemporary policy of the Soviet Union. Equally deliberate was the reference in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* to the 1863 Polish uprising, particularly as the narrator himself relates it to the revolt of the Caucasian mountain-dwellers:

...ВОССТАНИЕ ПОЛЯКОВ БЫЛО НЕЧТО ВРОДЕ ВОССТАНИЯ ШАМНЯЯ...

Чтобы покончить с восстанием, понадобилась армия в 200 тысяч человек и военная диктатура. Генералы Берг в Варшаве и Муравьев в Вильно, облеченные всей полнотой власти, расправлялись с диким произволом, поддержанные консервативным русским общественным мнением. (5)

In speaking about both the "colonial" war in the Caucasus and the cruel oppression of the Polish insurrectionists (which naturally served "colonial" purposes), Kataev was likely thinking of the present day, in which "colonialism" had given way to "neo-colonialism." This latter word was not entirely new in Kataev's prose of the 1960s and 1970s. In *Svjatoj kolodec* it causes the death of the talking cat, which could say the word "mama" in perfect Russian as well as "maman" in perfect French, but was unable to pronounce the word "neo-colonialism."⁶

Thus the past serves as a means of depicting the present in Kataev's prose of the later period. Hence the writer's time shifts – his glances into the past and tendencies toward the future – all for the purpose of grasping and investigating the parameters of the world around him. To this end he turns his "malen'kie zvukouloviteli v mirovoe prostranstvo,"⁷ and transforms himself, as he notes in *Trava zabven'ja*, "ne tol'ko v samyx raznyx ljudej, no takže v životnyx, rastenija, kamni, predmety domašnego obixoda, daže v abstraktnye ponjatija."⁸ In this way the writer emphasizes the subjectiveness of his perception of reality, as well as the subjectiveness with which he describes the world in the books of his later period.

This deliberate subjectivity, this probing into the depths of the

human soul, disappears in the story entitled *Fialka*,⁹ in which Kataev unexpectedly returns to a more traditional writing style, as well as to an objective description of reality – a reality perceptible to the human eye as well as the ear without resorting to the “little sound-sensors” (“malen'kie zvukouloviteli”) or transformations so indispensable in his subjective prose.

Fialka is characterized not only by a traditional style but also by a traditional plot and positive hero (Ekaterina Gerasimovna Novoselova), as well as an opposing “negative” (“black”) counter-hero (Ivan Nikolaevič Novoselov, her husband). The history of marital love, disaffection and hatred is told by a third-person narrator whose identity remains a secret throughout the story. He not only narrates, but offers evaluation and judgement. In Kardin's words, “zdes' sobljudena tradicija, predpisyvajuščaja neumolimo karat' zlo i vosslavljat' dobrodetel'.”¹⁰ Such a quality is completely lacking in Kataev's works described in the preceding three chapters. In *Trava zabven'ja*, for example, the narrating “I” utters the following words about Bunin, who had refused to recognize the Revolution and had emigrated to France:

Я понял: Бунин променял две самые драгоценные вещи – Родину и Революцию – на чечевичную похлебку так называемой свободы и так называемой независимости, которых он всю жизнь добивался, в чем я убедился, получив от него уже после войны, в 1946 году, одну из лучших его книг – «Лику», где прочел следующие, глубоко меня потрясшие места: (11)

These words are far from “condemning”¹² the Bunin who fled the Motherland, even though they are imbued with bitterness and

disapproval of the writer's action. They reflect in large measure the inner feelings of the narrator-hero — feelings called forth by the words of Bunin himself which the narrator had read in *Lika* (the fifth section of *Žizn' Arsen'eva*).¹³ This was a bitterness expressed by a pupil over the loss of his first literary mentor — a pupil who did not understand (or did not want to understand) the objective factors behind the writer's "exchanging" of the Motherland for "so-called freedom and independence." It is in fact this "lack of understanding" which explains his subjective perception of events and phenomena, his subjective evaluation of everyday situations.

The subjective nature of Kataev's works is seen in his resorting to *memory* for the description of individual scenes and a whole host of different characters. Memory was a mechanism operating on principles not fully studied,¹⁴ and gave the writer the opportunity to move about more freely in time without regard to chronological considerations, without the obligation to dot every "i" or bring every scene or thought to a neat conclusion.

The situation is quite different, however, in *Fialka*, where the writer not only observes the chronology of events, but dots his "i's" and condemns Novoselov who dies poor and alone, not even having received forgiveness from his former wife for his betrayal of her, for making a false report on her in order to release himself from her and marry a prettier and younger girl.

By the "chronology of events" I mean the events occurring from the moment Novoselov arrives at the retirement home to ask his wife's forgiveness before his death up to the day of his funeral, which

his insulted and betrayed wife refuses to attend. Interspersed with these events (described by the narrator in the third person) are the heroes' (Novoselov's and his wife's) reminiscences about their past which help the reader understand the reasons for the disaffection between them. It is in these reminiscences interwoven with the main plot that we perceive the interdependence of the past and present which we have already noted as a characteristic feature of Kataev's subjective prose.

We cannot however say that this problem is handled in the same way in the objective story *Fialka* as in the more subjective works we looked at earlier. In the latter the reminiscences were those of the narrator or implied author, whereas in *Fialka* they come from the story's heroes. Another significant difference: the reminiscences in *Fialka* are presented in chronological order, only on a different temporal plane – the past. The chronology of events on both the present (the main plot) and past plane (the reminiscences) is explained by the narrator's omniscience and his movable position. He is always present in the heroes' situation and action. Just as chronology per se was insignificant in the earlier works and "was only damaging to true art"¹⁵ (as Kataev had written in *Kubik*), so in *Fialka* it is a contributing factor in the unfolding of the heroes' character.

This is particularly true of Novoselov, whose conduct and attitude to his environment keeps shifting in accord with his changing position in society. The character of his wife Ekaterina, by contrast, remains constant throughout the story: she is steadfast and proud, passionate and strong – embodying, in a word, all the qualities of the

positive hero so typical of the prose of socialist realism. She sees only the positive side of people, and upon discovering something out of line with her ideas and her view of the world, she declines to condemn, attributing the anomaly instead to "the inheritance of the cursed past."¹⁶

Such was her attitude to her future husband, described as a "prostekij derevenskij paren",¹⁷ who turned up one day at the group sessions she was conducting to prepare young people entering the rabfak. While noting that academics did not come to him easily, she finally managed to drag him through to graduation. Explaining Novoselov's dim-wittedness as an "inheritance of the cursed past" (he had by this time become her husband), she helped establish him in a party career as the director of the same institute he had graduated from with so much difficulty:

В сущности, она была по-детски простодушна и, несмотря на суровую школу революционерки-подпольщицы, а может быть благодаря ей, привыкла видеть в людях гораздо больше хорошего, чем плохого. Перед ней всегда стоял образ простого человека из народа, труженика и героя. (13)

Ekaterina Novoselova's dramatic interest lies in her initial failure to discern her husband's true nature: he uses her position in the party, her naivete and trust in him, to move quickly and resolutely up the party hierarchy step by step and gain a position which does not rightfully belong to him. Not right at the top of the party ladder, perhaps, but fairly high up, he looks only to his own benefit and not to that of society at large, thus severely damaging the cause for which Ekaterina has struggled all her life. Finally she sees her mistake and

realizes that she herself was a party to the rise of this "country lad," that she was the one who helped him reach his lofty position and satisfy his lower impulses. Ekaterina Gerasimovna is now forced to pay for her past mistakes, her temporary character weakness. Even after the break with her husband she is unable to release herself from the thought of her own role in promoting the career of the man who deceived her, slandered her, and betrayed their marriage:

Было бы неверно думать, что она совсем забыла о его существовании. Иногда во время бессонницы, перед рассветом, когда черные мысли одолевают стариков, она вспоминала свою жизнь с Новоселовым, всю историю их отношений... Она испытала все муки оскорбленной, обманутой и оклеветанной женщины. Но еще больше причиняло страданий сознание, что она не сумела своевременно понять Новоселова, разгадать в нем самого обыкновенного пройдоху, примазавшегося, сделавшего карьеру при помощи полюбившей его женщины, не подозревавшей, какую роль она при этом играет. (19)

The description of Ekaterina reminds us somewhat of that of Klavdija Zarembo in *Трава забвен'я*. Both heroines are "devuški iz sovpártškoly," both are committed to the cause of the Revolution, and both are faced with a choice between personal love and devotion to the cause of society. But in spite of these surface similarities, the reader familiar with both stories will have no trouble spotting the differences between the two heroines. While (as was mentioned) both are committed to the Revolution and both are in love, the choice is resolved quite differently in each case.

Klavdija puts her service to society's cause ahead of her personal happiness: she is an active and conscious party to the arrest and

execution of her lover, Petja Solov'ev, by the Čeka as a White Guard and counter-revolutionary. In this case her personal feelings give way to her duty to her country. Her inner torments notwithstanding, her conscience remains clean before the Revolution and before herself — as she acknowledges in a letter she writes to the narrator hero of *Trava zabven'ja*:

Одному тебе признаюсь перед смертью: я любила его и не забывала ни на минуту всю свою жизнь. Ты знаешь кого. Но моя совесть перед нашей Революцией и перед собой чиста, не я его предала, а он предал Родину. И мы его казнили. Это только справедливо. Я не жалею. Он заслужил смерть. Но я его все-таки любила. Хочешь знать правду — и сейчас люблю, пишу это перед смертью. (20)

In Ekaterina's case, on the other hand, it is her personal feelings that win out. The social cause — the Revolution — virtually fades into a shadow. She consciously aids a man who in the final analysis turns out to be just another opportunist and to whom concepts such as revolution, the common good, and the sacred cause, are not only foreign but utterly incomprehensible. And how could he understand, when Ekaterina's own theoretical doctrines of her study sessions were at such variance with their practical realization? Not only did he need her help to graduate from the institute, but even the speeches he made were written by her. He only had to hold out his hand and take everything that was handed to him in order to benefit from all the opportunities that government service brought his way. And, clever administrator that he was, he knew how to use these opportunities for his personal ends. Not satisfied with the directorship of the institute,

he knew how to "pridat' sebe takže nekotoryj čisto akademičeskij blesk,"²¹ even without the necessary qualifications:

Он сидит рядом с известными учеными как равный среди равных, и никого это не удивляет, и никто понятия не имеет о том, что до сих пор Новоселов даже не совсем грамотно пишет и недавно машинистке, перепечатывавшей его статью, пришлось исправить две орфографические ошибки, так как вместо слова «майор» он написал «маеор», а вместо «сметана» — «смитана». (22)

And all this takes place not only under the very eyes of Ekaterina Gerasimovna but with her active participation (she is the one who writes his reports). Even after many years she still cannot forgive her husband and refuses to take the hand he extends to her just before his death. She cannot forgive him, but why? The story is not clear on this point, although in one place just near the end the narrator describes Ekaterina's thoughts in the following way:

По-человечески ей, конечно, было его жалко, но это была жалость какая-то не настоящая, поверхностная. В глубине души она оставалась холодной и равнодушной к смерти этого человека, некогда ей близкого, а теперь такого чужого, даже больше чем чужого: врага. Да, врага. Но не личного, а врага того святого дела, которому отдала она всю свою жизнь. (23)

From this quotation it seems as if the cause of the disaffection and hatred — indeed, enmity — between the husband and wife is ideological disagreement. Such an interpretation, however, would contradict everything said earlier; indeed, it is not supported by a reading of the earlier part of the text, which suggests rather that the direct cause of Ekaterina's disaffection is her husband's marital betrayal and not the

ideological argument, the damage he does to the "sacred cause." The damage is done by the heroine herself – she is the one personally responsible for her husband's "successes." Her eyes are opened only when she recognizes that another woman, much younger and prettier than she, has stepped into her husband's life. When she decided to break with her husband, she knew nothing of his false report on her:

Он просто любыми средствами хотел тогда устранить со своего пути женщину, которая, как ему казалось, может помешать жениться на другой. Впрочем, он напрасно пошел на подлость. Она устранилась сама.
(24)

And here the reader is confronted by a "psychological paradox"²⁵ in that Ekaterina accuses her husband of the very thing she herself is a party to, but the accusations come only after she is beset by a personal misfortune (her husband's betrayal). Up to this point she either did not notice or quietly tolerated all her husband's shortcomings. Furthermore, it is difficult to find any consistency in Ekaterina's reasonings about her marital life. On the one hand she sees (as she saw earlier) how Novoselov behaved himself, the means he used to achieve his ends, how he treated both his subordinates and the authorities. In a word she sees, as Kardin writes in his article; "nazojlivo bivšie v glaza simptomu xamstva, grubogo podxalimaža, kar'erizma."²⁶ On the other hand, as if to justify herself before herself, she says:

Он был хитер. Расскусить его было не так-то легко. Но ведь Ленин еще в самом начале революции неоднократно предупреждал, что партии, ставшей у власти, партии государственной, нужно всячески опасаться примававшихся. (27)

This sort of justification or explanation does not convince the reader. On the contrary, it simply casts doubt on Ekaterina Gerasimovna's sincerity. Why call Novoselov a "hanger-on" ("primazavšijsja") if he is simply the result of her own creation? It was she who created out of this "country lad" ("derevenskij paren" – in other words, out of one of the people in whose name the revolution was staged) a "monster of the latest style" ("monstr novejšej formacii"), to use Violetta Iverni's term:²⁸

Увидев, кем оказался новый человек, она ужаснулась и оскорбленно отвернулась от него, его не желая простить за то, что он – монстр. Непостижимая логика! – не себя обвинять в калечении человеческой психики, в обмане, в создании и применении варварской теории, по которой нравственные качества являются следствием социального происхождения, а обманутого винить, подопытного кролика... (29)

Ivan Novoselov may be thought of as his wife's conscience, tormenting her not only during sleepless nights, but also during her walks around the grounds of the retirement home. Ekaterina Gerasimovna Novoselova cannot say of herself what Klavdija Zarembo said in *Trava zabven'ja* ("moja sovest' pered Revoljuciej i pered soboj čistá" – see page 151 above, note 20), since she has not fulfilled her duty to the Revolution, has not observed its leader's command to "beware of all sorts of hangers-on" ("vsjačeski opasat'sja primazavšijsja").

It is interesting to note that the narrator, who condemns Novoselov, takes a more positive attitude toward the "monster's" creator, Ekaterina Gerasimovna. He even sympathizes with her and seems to

understand the discrepancy between her reasonings and her deeds. Her shortcomings (a new and unusual character trait for a positive hero) seem to fade by comparison with the abundant vices of her husband. But this does not mean that the story-teller is justifying his heroine, absolving her of past sins. The concept of a positive hero with shortcomings in *Fialka* is a unique artistic device whereby to portray both Soviet reality during the Stalin era (this was roughly the time referred to in the reminiscences) and present-day Soviet reality (the events of the main plot take place during the 1970s). But even as in Kataev's earlier books (as was mentioned above) the past was the focal point for the representation of the present, in *Fialka* it is the other way round: the present serves as a basis for portraying the past.

The past is associated to a significant extent with the person of Ivan Novoselov. One can even say that he is a symbol of the negative aspects of the past. The present, associated with Ekaterina Gerasimovna Novoselova, is characterized by the interweaving of both positive and negative traits (which may help explain the narrator's ambiguous and confused attitude toward her), but with a distinct emphasis on the positive. Hence one may draw the simple conclusion: the personality cult, a phenomenon of the past, is seen by the narrator as a nightmare, a disease or tumour which must be eradicated (the unsuccessful operation performed on Ivan Novoselov may even be considered an attempt to restore the laws of the Stalin period), while the present in turn is portrayed as a dynamic, changing, and developing world.

And this changing world is seen through the eyes of Ekaterina Gerasimovna, who unites, as it were, two different worlds in *Fialka* – the old and the new – but greets the new life unfolding around her with ecstasy and does not regret the passing of the old. Her walk about the grounds of the retirement home on the day of her former husband's funeral is significant in this regard. On her walk she notices nature springing into new life after the long winter; she sees new apartment blocks apparently growing right out of the ground, she watches new gas pipelines being laid, and before her very eyes "izmenjaetsja forma obščestvennoj žizni."³⁰ But along with this she beholds of the image of her late husband (a symbol of the past):

Она вспомнила, что вчера умер Новоселов, и представила его в гробу, в красном уголке домоуправления: лысая голова на подушке, набитой стружками, обесцвеченные худые руки, выпуклые веки навсегда закрытых глаз... (31)

The narrator uses this striking juxtaposing of two opposite images – life (nature's awakening out of its winter sleep) and death (her husband's eyes closed forever) – to explain and justify Ekaterina's decision not to go to her former husband's funeral. Her thoughts and actions are always directed toward the future. Even Novoselov was in her eyes "a man of the future," a representative of the new age approaching:

Она видела в нем представителя того нового поколения, которое со славой завершит дело, начатое его отцами и дедами. Она полюбила в нем человека будущего. (32)

But in the case of Ivan Novoselov she suffered a defeat, because of her inability to look deeper not only into the future, but also into her own soul and that of her husband. Now, under the influence of eternally living nature, she categorically breaks with the past (cf. her unwillingness to go to Novoselov's funeral) and looks with eager eyes at the new life seething all around her – present-day life, in which the old continually gives place to the new. The description of her view of the brook is interesting in this regard – the brook winding its way among the collective-farm fields and the thickets of cherry trees and pussy-willows. The picture first described is the one appearing in the heroine's imagination – a picture from the distant, indeterminate past. This indeterminacy is underscored by the adverb *nekogda*:

Некогда она была большой судоходной рекой, о ней упоминалось в летописях, по ней плыли торговые корабли на веслах или под крутогрудыми парусами, бурлаки тащили глубоко осевшие баржи с рожью, пенькой, сырыми кожами; с течением времен река обмелела, осела... (33)

Then the mentally drawn picture gives way to a picture of the objective present – *teper'*:

Через эту речку теперь прокладывался газопровод, и громадные трубы, обмотанные просмоленными лентами бумажной изоляции, во множестве были накинаны вдоль берега, среди железных бочек с битумом, под которыми тлели и дымились костры. (34)

Both these quotations clearly emphasize the incessant flow of time, bringing with it changes not only in man's life, but in that of

nature ("s tečením vremeni reka obmelela, osela"). The image of the river is not accidental in *Fialka*. Rivers in general symbolize human life, and in this instance the river which has "grown shallow" ("obmelela") symbolizes the life of Ivan Novoselov. Time has overcome both the river and Novoselov. The once broad and turbulent river has now "subsided" ("osela"), its flow is "barely noticeable" ("ele zametnaja")³⁵ The picture immediately reminds us of Ivan Novoselov, once a high official living in prosperity, now finding himself in a wretched position on the borderline of poverty. Note how Novoselov's outward appearance is described right at the beginning of the story. In this description special attention should be paid to the two adverbs *nekogda* and *teper'*, which also appear at the end of the story in connection with the description of the river mentioned above:

Пальто с крупными костяными пуговицами, перешитое из военной шинели, слишком широкие брюки, болтающиеся вокруг худых ног желтые не раз чиненные ботинки на шнурках с узелками, а главное, все его *некогда* массивное, а *теперь* заметно уменьшившееся в объеме тело и похудевшее, высохшее лицо с хрящеватым носиком, который был довольно красивым, мясистым носом, и серой нездоровой кожей висящей складками вокруг бритого, почти беззубого рта. (36)

As is evident in *Fialka*, Kataev often resorts to the devices of contrast and symbolism, which enable him to give a fuller expression to the basic idea of this brief, twenty-page work — the idea of the constant struggle of the old with the new, the good with the bad, the personal with the social — as has already been detailed in the current chapter.

One more important image-symbol must be mentioned, one closely connected with the underlying motif of the story and one that contributes to the full revelation of Ivan Novoselov's character, which until now has been discussed only in connection with the destiny of his wife Ekaterina. The image-symbol I have in mind is the replacement of the old wooden railway ties by new concrete ones. This is introduced right at the beginning of the story – significantly so, for the image sums up the motif of the whole story; it is further associated with the character of Ivan Novoselov described earlier as a symbol of the past. The wooden ties, like Novoselov, are shown here as a symbol of the old and fleeting, yielding to the new and more solid (the concrete ties):

Девчата в больших, как лопаты, брезентовых
варежках под наблюдением прораба с желтым
сигнальным флажком под мышкой только что при-
ступили к замене старых, деревянных шпал новыми,
бетонными... (37)

I have introduced this citation not only as an illustration of what I said above, but also to draw attention to the colour yellow, which plays a significant role in the development of Ivan Novoselov's character. The colour yellow accompanies Ivan Novoselov at almost every step, from the moment of his first appearance on the station platform (note here again the reference to "novaja vysokaja betonnaja platforma")³⁸ to his last scene in the main plot at the same station, where "jarko želteli signal'nye specovki devčat, ukladyvajuščix novye betonnye špaly."³⁹

When the luminous overalls were first mentioned in the text, they were not yellow, just orange, but now they have "yellowed brightly." Thus all the hues of yellow, or rather, all the colours in the yellow family,⁴⁰ are given the same symbolic significance – along with the yellow signal flag, the yellow acacia bushes, yellow boots, a yellow building, we find the bright orange colour of the luminous vests, the oranges Novoselov brings as a gift to his wife, the gift of the bronze candlesticks, the copper door handles. Such an accumulation of reference to yellow and its various hues on just two pages cannot be accidental, especially since it is here associated with the description of Novoselov's appearance and the circumstances he currently finds himself in.

In view of Novoselov's betrayal and his false report on his wife, the simple conclusion is evident that Kataev is using the colour yellow as an artistic device for the presentation of those aspects of his hero's character that will later be manifest in his action and behaviour. When the hero first appears, the reader knows literally nothing about him – who he is, whence and why he has appeared on the small station platform in a Moscow suburb. This also explains the narrator's hesitation in directly describing the character of this "thin old man" in the "worn-out deerskin cap."⁴¹ But he manages to express his negative feelings toward him through the symbolic significance of the colour yellow, which (according to the Polish writer on aesthetics Maria Rzepińska), has been considered from roughly the twelfth century as the colour of betrayal, treachery, forgery and falsehood.⁴²

Earlier in this chapter it was brought out that Ivan Novoselov

represents – yea, symbolizes – the negative aspects of the past, the Stalin era (see page 155 above). This association is supported by the fact that the events on the plane of reminiscences are described as taking place during the period of the personality cult as well as by subtle hints at such an association in the text itself.

At first glance it is difficult to perceive the writer's thinly veiled hints at Novoselov's association with Stalin's accomplices and even with Stalin himself. But one may note the direct connection of Novoselov's name with that of Ivan the Terrible. In talking with his wife, Novoselov speaks approvingly about Ivan the Terrible's methods of rule, which he accepts as something quite progressive:

Однажды, перечитывая доклад, приготовленный для него женой, он сказал ей с мягким упором: – Вот ты пишешь тут, Катя: «опричники самодержавия». А я с этой твоей формулировкой не совсем согласен, так как она не соответствует историческому значению явления опричнины. Ведь кто такие были опричники? Они были опорой централизованной государственной власти в лице царя Ивана Грозного, боровшегося с реакционным боярством. Стало быть опричнина была явлением для своего времени прогрессивным и нам нет никакой необходимости дискредитировать ее в глазах нашего народа... Лично для меня, например, он не грозный. (43)

Bearing in mind certain facts – that by the 1930s Ivan the Terrible was being re-habilitated as a precursor of Stalin; that official propaganda ranked Stalin with the tsar Ivan (note that Novoselov's first name is also Ivan), and that even after the denunciation of the personality cult Stalinism was still regarded by some as a brutal but necessary phase of Soviet socialist development – one must inevitably

conclude that the passage quoted above indeed refers to Stalin, who like his precursor Ivan the Terrible left a bloody imprint on his "reign." Note also the telling phrase in the story set off by triple-dots:

..Никого не щадил царь Иван... (44)

which plays a not insignificant role in developing the connection between Novoselov and Stalin, along with his Stalin-era "opričniki." It is, as it were, a continuation of Ekaterina Gerasimovna's thought about the sixteen Kolyčev boyars executed by Ivan the Terrible. This sentence takes on added significance in connection with Ekaterina and her destiny. Tsar Ivan (read Stalin) spared no-one, just as Ekaterina Novoselova spared not her own husband, Ivan, who resorted to a false report to get her out of the way – a not uncommon and effective device of the period of the Stalin era.

In his later-period prose Kataev often resorts to image-symbols to express his attitude toward the Stalin era. In *Fialka* he uses the symbol of Ivan Novoselov whose conduct and character bring to mind one of the heroes of *Svjatoj kolodec* – namely, the woodpecker-man with the strange "vaudevillian"⁴⁵ name of Proxindejkin. The woodpecker-man, like Novoselov, dreams of a scholarly career, dreams of becoming a "doktorom nauk gonoris kljauze,"⁴⁶ but not through honest labour or his own academic achievements. He intends to reach this goal using others' achievements, through grovelling, reporting, treachery – in other words by the same means Novoselov uses to achieve his own selfish ends.

Just as Novoselov is the embodiment of all the negative aspects of the period of the personality cult, so Proxindejkin (as R. Russell points out) may "represent a writer turned informer for the secret police" or even "conformism of terrified writers during the Stalin era."⁴⁷ The suggestion is quite legitimate, since in the words of the narrator-hero of *Svjatoj kolodec*, his "tjagostnyj sputnik" is none other than a "modifikacija Faddeja Bulgarina,"⁴⁸ (the latter being a well-known informer and traitor in Puškin's time).

These kinds of image-symbols turn up in two other Kataev works of the later period – *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* – but in a less obvious form. In *Kubik*, for example, the first-person narrator describes his fight with a wasp whose stubborn maliciousness brings to mind the woodpecker-man Proxindejkin travelling together with the hero through the dimensions of his dream-visions, which transport him to the Georgian capital of Tiflis (Tbilisi). Unable to free himself from the wasp, exhausted by his hopeless efforts to kill it with an "open book,"⁴⁹ the hero falls asleep and beholds

свой постоянный, единственный, никогда не прекращающийся сон: человека с узкими глазами убийцы. (50)

The narrator's dream is interrupted by the sound of the wasp trying to get into his ear. He attacks the wasp and kills it. He hears "the crunch of its wretched body,"⁵¹

неповторимый звук, в котором как бы заключалось все: подбородок, крашенные усы, багровая индюшечья кожа его шеи, прищемленная стоячим воротником императорского мундира... (52)

I should like to draw attention here to one almost imperceptible detail. Earlier the wasp was described using the feminine pronoun "ee" (as the Russian word "osa" is feminine). But in this particular quotation the masculine pronoun "ego" is used by the narrator in describing the image evoked by the sound of the wasp being crushed. He also describes the "painted moustache" and the "imperial uniform" — which are not normally associated with the female sex. Thus one is led directly to the *symbolic* meaning of the wasp-image as representing Stalin: as Russell notes, "the struggle with the wasp represents yet another attempt by Kataev (following those in *The Holy Well*) to exorcise the spirit of Stalinism."⁵³

As was mentioned earlier, the image-symbol associated with Stalin's personality also appears in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, a work related not to the contemporary world but to the distant past — to the life and destinies of the primary narrator's grandfather and great-grandfather. Just as in Kataev's previous works (except for *Fialka* where Novoselov is most definitely a real person), here too this image appears in the dream of the grandfather-narrator, Ivan Bačej. Suffering from malaria, he finds himself in a state of unconsciousness in which "smešivalos' prošloe, nastojaščee i buduščee."⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that it is the primary narrator who recounts his grandfather's strange visions, the chaotic scenes from the past and the "distant future," as if he himself were present in his grandfather's dreams, acting as an intermediary between the reader and the events "taking place" in the dreams.

At one point the grandfather is tormented by thirst. He spies a

narrow-necked Georgian pitcher on the shoulder of one of the mountain girls. Suddenly the pitcher of water appears on the table in the middle of the "saklja" (hut), next to a glass mug. But he has not even the strength to get up and fetch himself a cool drink. Then all at once he hears the squeak of a wooden board under someone's heavy footstep and

в саклю входил как бы из непомерно далекого будущего человек в странной одежде, с головой, повязанной аджарским башлыком... его взгляд оставался на кувшине с холодной водой. Его глаза светились неполным светом, как ущербный, умирающий месяц. Он наливал из кувшина воду в стеклянную кружку, и струя воды зловеще краснела, превращаясь в вино. Как бы совершая некий таинственный ужасный обряд прощания со своим прошлым, человек не торопясь пил из кружка, и пока он пил, вино превращалось в кровь, и человек вытирал серповидные, мокрые от крови усы рукавом своей странной тужурки. (55)

Here, as with the wasp incident in *Kubik*, there is an indirect reference to Stalin. It is for this reason that the grandfather's dreams are recounted by the grandson-narrator whose base is in the present. In relation to the past, the present is, of course, the future, and it is from this future that the man appears who changes the water into blood, with eyes like a "dying moon" and a moustache wet with blood.

It was mentioned during the discussion of the autobiographical narrator-hero in the preceding chapter that Kataev often returns in his works to old topics, characters, and motifs. The same is true here. With an almost maniacal stubbornness Kataev turns again and again to the motif of the Stalin personality cult in works which do not seem to be thematically connected with this particular problem concerning

him (such as *Kubik* or *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*). This deliberate insistence on the personality motif not only helps Kataev more fully express his hatred of Stalin but also serves as a warning against any possible resurrection of the ideas or spirit of Stalinism. The latter purpose is particularly evident in *Fialka*, where the main focus is on the present day, the new reality – but a reality over which still hovers the shadow of the past, embodied in the person of Ivan Novoselov.

In concluding this chapter we may say that while *Fialka* is quite different in many respects from Kataev's other works of the same period (especially in its highly traditional form), in many respects it is also similar. The similarities may be seen in the common motifs it shares with the other works discussed in this thesis. Along with *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* it serves as a bridge between the earlier and later periods of Kataev's literary career.

NOTES

¹With the partial exception of *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* and *Trava zabven'ja*, where, it will be remembered, a third narrator also appeared; cf. also *Kubik*, where the first-person narrator recounted his successive transformations in third-person form.

²I have in mind here the period of the 1960s and 1970s when Kataev's later works were written.

³*Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 66.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶See *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 171.

⁷*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 243.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Fialka* was turned into a play and successfully produced on Soviet television. See V. Žegis, "Goluboj fonar' večnoj vesny," *Sovetskaja kul'tura*, 4 August 1978, p. 4.

¹⁰V. Kardin, "Sjužet dlja nebol'šoj stat'i," *Voprosy literatury*, 5 (1974), p. 73.

¹¹*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 431.

¹²Kardin's words in "Sjužet dlja nebol'šoj stat'i," *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹³Bunin took more than a decade to write *Žizn' Arsen'eva* which contains five books. The first four books were written from 1927 to 1929, and the fifth ("Lika") in 1938. The first four books were published in English in a volume entitled *The Well of Days* – translated by G. Struve and H. Miles (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934.)

¹⁴See *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 225.

¹⁵See Chapter III, note 5.

¹⁶Kataev, *Fialka*, *Novyj Mir*, 8 (1973), p. 83. All further references to *Fialka* are to this source.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Trava zabven'ja*, p. 441.

²¹*Fialka*, p. 83.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 85.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁵Kardin's words, "Sjužet dlja nebol'šoj stat'i," *op. cit.*, p. 89.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁷*Fialka*, p. 94.

²⁸V. Ivěrni, "Socrealizm s čelovečeskim licom," *Kontinent*, 7 (1976), p. 405.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰ *Fialka*, p. 92.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75. (My italics.)

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁰On this subject see Maria Rzepińska, *Historia koloru w dziejach malarstwa europejskiego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973), pp. 101–160.

⁴¹ *Fialka*, p. 74.

⁴²M. Rzepińska, *Historia koloru*, p. 121. The author illustrates her point by giving several examples from the mediæval and later periods in painting. One of them and the most striking is Giotto's fresco in the Arena Chapel in Padua. In the centre of the fresco there appears the figure of Judas, covering Jesus with his yellow coat.

⁴³ *Fialka*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁵ *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 169.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168. Note the play on words: In the Russian rendering of the phrase *honoris causæ*, the word *kljauze* (a form of the Russian word for "slander") is substituted for Latin *causæ*.

⁴⁷ R. Russell, *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 121.

⁴⁸ *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 169.

⁴⁹ *Kubik*, p. 497.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ R. Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

CONCLUSION

As has been shown, the prose of Valentin Kataev's later period shows a distinctive style which contrasts sharply not only with traditional socialist-realist prose but also with Kataev's own writing of previous decades. Some readers and critics are tempted to dismiss *Svjatoj kolodec, Kubik, Kladbišče v Skuljanax* et al. as "boring writing," looking back nostalgically to the Kataev of well-spun chronological plots. The author's own awareness of such a potential reaction is evident in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, where, following a quotation from Puškin, he notes:

The more tedious a book, the more it is to be preferred. An entertaining book you swallow at a gulp and it etches itself on your memory and imagination so that you need never re-read it. A dull book, on the contrary, makes for slow and thoughtful reading; you pause and let your imagination roam freely; then you take up the book again and re-read places that you have passed without noticing.... Boredom is a very relative notion. (1)

It is true that one can re-read Kataev's later prose endlessly, finding new things every time which make one wonder why one did not notice it before. And what seem to be deficiencies of the associative method lose this appearance upon closer inspection.

It is apparent from this later prose that for Kataev himself nothing could be more boring than a strict adherence to chronology. He deliberately ignored the bounds of time and space to give freer

rein to his fantasy and so attain a greater depth of thought and inner penetration of his subject: This meant he would simply start telling about himself in any possible way — so launching a new chapter, story, paragraph, or sentence. It also meant starting a story of himself at any moment in time — today, yesterday or a hundred years ago — and the story of himself would be the story of his hero, for the writer made no real distinction between the two.

In organizing the events and characters of his later prose, Kataev's two most important principles were *association* and *memory*. Human memory is a curious thing. It quite easily takes in the events of one's own life and those of hundreds of other people, familiar and unfamiliar, near and distant.

For Kataev at this period the most retentive and faithful memory was the memory of the soul, which easily controls time and space, rather than being controlled by them. Such a concept enabled the writer to assume the identity of the objects he described, both human and non-human — a facility accessible only to writers endowed with an extremely precise perception of the world around them. And Valentin Kataev is such a writer. That is why he was able to "become" not only an old American car (in *Svjatoj kolodec*) or the little boy Pčelkin (*Kubik*), but even his own great-grandfather (*Kladbišče v Skv'janax*). This important feature of Kataev's later works is not only a literary device; it is a fundamental artistic position. For Kataev the only possible reality is a work of art — not a mere reproduction of the objective world, but rather the artistic reality of a work screened through the "soul" of the writer.

"I am the founder of a new literary school of *Mauvistes*, from the French word *mauvais* (bad)," Kataev writes in *Svjatoj kolodec*, "the essence of which is that since everyone today writes very well, it is necessary to do it badly, as badly as possible, and then people will sit up and take notice of you."² This surprising statement of Kataev's is not, of course, without purpose. His works discussed in this study (even the objective *Fjal'ka*) have in many ways violated accustomed, canonical conceptions of socialist-realist writing, proving that the author was persistently seeking new artistic forms capable of conveying more fully both the world of an increasingly complex reality and the inner world of the artist.

The form employed by Kataev enables him to veil certain ideas and on occasion leave them open to more than one interpretation. His works are rather complex not only in what they say, but also in how they say it. They are most definitely intended for a small group of readers, as is suggested by one of the titles the narrator in *Svjatoj kolodec* jots down for a book he is writing — "Kniga dlja nemnogix."³ They are by no means didactic in nature, and they point to a personal and philosophical truth rather than historical or social truth. While Kataev does indeed touch on social problems, they are ones of a more general or universal nature, not those raised by the Party.

Another distinctive feature of Kataev's later works is what might be termed their "lofty independence," as seen in their subjective treatment of time and space — a far cry indeed from typical socialist-realist prose with its linear plot progression. For Kataev, independence — i.e. personal and creative freedom — was one of the most fun-

damental aspects of creativity; hence his pre-occupation with wide open spaces and his rejection of those which are cramped or closed-in. This feeling was inherited, no doubt, from Russian cultural traditions (manifest in folklore, chronicles, paintings, etc.) which regarded freedom of movement and open spaces as one of the greatest æsthetic and ethical endowments of mankind. The greatest form of oppression for his heroes was to be deprived of space.

It would be difficult, almost impossible perhaps, to exhaust the wealth of devices Kataev employed in his later prose, but on the basis of what has been brought to light in this study it is clear that Kataev could never be accused of conservatism of form. On the contrary, he was seeking a form of artistic expression which would allow him to write as he pleased, to reveal to the reader the immense – indeed, infinite – inner world of the individual, and in as broad a way as possible. He rejected historical panorama – mere history – in favour of a fuller picture of the *inner* world of his characters. Whereas the composition of his earlier writings was largely dictated by history, in the writings we have discussed here this role has been taken over by the individual.

We may conclude, then, that these "mauvistic" works enabled Kataev to conquer new inner subjects and master new methodological means. Indeed, his literary "laboratory" has contributed a great deal to the advancement of Soviet prose-writing, for "mauvism" itself stands for freedom, imagination, and private art.

NOTES

¹ *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 50. (My translation.)

² *Švjatoj kolodec*, p. 223. (My translation.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

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ABSTRACT

Valentin Kataev's literary career spanned some eighty years. Writing in many genres – poetry, drama, prose – for decades he confined his output to the usual types of Soviet literature, including children's books. In the middle of the 1960s, however, his works took on a radically new style, a style which he himself called *mauvism*.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Kataev's mauvistic writing of the 1960s and 1970s from the point of view of their poetics (narrator, time, space).

Literary devices, which were subsequently to appear in more developed form, were first introduced in a "lyrical diary" about Lenin entitled *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* (1964) – a turning point in Kataev's career as a writer, discussed in the first chapter of the thesis. It was indeed a novel approach to the Lenin theme, mixing historical facts with pure fiction, challenging both traditional Soviet Leniniana and fossilized principles of socialist realism.

The latter challenge is even more evident in three of Kataev's works discussed in the second chapter – *Svjatoj kolodec* (1966), *Kubik* (1967), and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* (1975) – where the main features are the narrator's self-exploration, associations, fantasy, imagination, and lack of chronology. Here the reader finds a model of the world only indirectly related to objective reality, one expressing

the author's specific viewpoint on life, death, and the place of an individual in the world (a world which controls time and not vice-versa).

A common theme linking all the works of this period is a biographical leitmotif, which is especially prominent in *Trava zabvenaja* (1967), *Razbitaja žizn* (1972), and *Almaznyj moj venec* (1978) – works which form a kind of autobiographical trilogy. The lyric narrator-heroes appear under the name of Valentin Kataev, yet it must be said that the biographical aspect of these books is more artistic and literary than it is factual. The main focus of interest here is not so much on the characters themselves (which appear in a wide variety) as on the narrator's relationship to them – his reflections on those close to him from the perspective of passing years.

In all his longer prose works, Kataev deliberately avoided contemporary Soviet themes and problems. Even in the short story discussed in the fourth chapter – *Ejalka* (1973) – where the focus is on the present-day reality, the present is still haunted by the shadow of the past. While in this case the soul-probing subjectivity of Kataev's other later works yields to a more conventional approach, it may be seen to share a number of common motifs with them. Like *Malenkaja železnaja dver v stene*, it too serves as a bridge between the earlier and later periods of Kataev's literary career.