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THE DEPICTION OF THE HERO
IN SOVIET RUSSIAN SCIENTIFIC
FANTASY

Aspects of Alienation in a Peripheral Genre

Dissertation
presented for the Degree of M.Litt.
in the University of Glasgow
by
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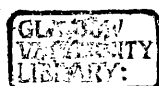
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SUMMARY

This dissertation is based on the assumption that speculative literature, specifically its Soviet Russian component, is not receiving the amount of critical attention which it deserves due to its popularity and growing literary quality.

The introduction attempts to show some of the reasons for this situation and to indicate the type of alienated hero who is the subject of this study.

The second and third chapters are devoted to the depiction of the conventional Soviet positive hero in scientific fantasy and his more unusual partner, who is here named the 'positive superhero'. They demonstrate how both characters fail to meet the requirements of a futuristic literature, although they must be regarded as superior to most heroes of Western science fiction.

Most space and consideration is given to the fourth chapter, which deals with the central figure of the dissertation. The first two sub-chapters evaluate the position of the alienated man in the history of Soviet scientific fantasy and also refer to some pre-revolutionary examples. The third sub-chapter concentrates on writers of non-fantasy and their interest in the genre as a whole and the alienated hero in particular. In the fourth and last part of this chapter the protagonists of anti-utopias are considered and the possibilities of an anti-utopia directed against the Soviet system are weighed.

The conclusion attempts to sum up the similarities between alienated heroes of scientific fantasy and 'mainstream' literature and to state the differences. It considers the political advantages that scientific fantasy,

compared to other genres, gains through its fantastic devices, especially time-travel and resulting parachronism. Finally, it defines the position of the alienated man among his more conventional counterparts.

A bibliography is given at the end.

PREFATORY NOTE

The works of Soviet Russian scientific fantasy which are dealt with in this dissertation were chosen from roughly 350 examined novels and stories. The comparatively small number of works which finally received attention indicates the rarity of alienated socialist heroes. Indeed, while alienation is the normal characteristic of the protagonist of science fiction, it proves an exception from the rule in scientific fantasy.

The transliteration system adopted is used for the formal references to Russian names and titles in the text, the footnotes and the bibliography.

In some instances English translations were used for quotational purposes. In these cases the bibliography lists the original as well as the translation.

The dates given in brackets after the titles mentioned refer to the first publication, unless stated otherwise.

I should like to express my warm thanks to Mr. Martin Dewhirst, of the University of Glasgow, and Professor Irene Nowikowa, of the University of Hamburg, for their valuable advice. Also, I wish to thank Ms. Mary McCabe and Mr. Christopher Boyce for reading the manuscript and for their comments.

I. INTRODUCTION

Definitions of speculative fiction¹⁾ (which is usually referred to as science fiction) are plentiful. As none of them is widely accepted, we are well-advised to accept the one which offers the most scope. This is Darko Suvin's formula, which defines the genre very broadly as 'all literature of cognitive wonder'.²⁾

Here we shall above all be concerned with the Soviet Russian variety of speculative fiction. For reasons of clarity it will be necessary to introduce a somewhat arbitrary, but nevertheless useful, distinction in terminology. The Soviet variety will be called 'scientific fantasy' (which is the accurate translation of the Russian nauchnaya fantastika and, incidentally, the term used to describe H. G. Wells's early works); the Western variety will be called 'science fiction', and the genre as a whole 'speculative fiction' (none of these is to be confused with 'pure fantasy' which will always be referred to as such).

The distinction is necessary as scientific fantasy purports to be scientific because of its ideological commitment to dialectical

1) The term was first used by Robert Heinlein in 1936 and is now employed by the experimental 'New Wave' of science fiction: see, for example, F. Rottensteiner, 'Erneuerung und Beharrung in der Science Fiction', E. Barmeyer (ed.), Science Fiction, Wilhelm Fink Verlag (München, 1972), p. 341.

2) 'The Utopian Tradition of Russian Science Fiction', Modern Languages Review, No. 1 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 139.

materialism.³⁾ Science fiction has no such claims; it merely derives its name from science being a central or peripheral concern of the author. Moreover, the term 'science' is supposed to guarantee authenticity.⁴⁾

This dissertation deals with a genre which has been and is still considered in many ways subliterary. There are three reasons which might account for the critics' disdain of speculative fiction, even in its better manifestations.

First, a great part of it focuses on technological development. This explains the inaccurate overall use of the term science fiction — a misnomer which none the less we have to accept for convenience's sake. Writers and critics alike are still widely under the impression that literature and science are incompatible. The 'humanists' still dominate — though to a lesser extent in the Socialist countries — and therefore a technological bent in a work of literature is often viewed with suspicion.⁵⁾

Secondly, speculative fantasy has largely catered for a juvenile audience. Often even when its intellectual appeal is adult it is emotionally

3) Communism's claim to be a science is most clearly illustrated by F. Engels, Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft, Verlag der Marxistischen Blätter (Frankfurt/M., no date) [1st publ.: 1880].

4) Compare J. Kagarlitski (Yu. Kagarlitsky), 'Realism and Fantasy', Th. D. Claeson (ed.), SF: The Other Side of Realism, Bowling Green University Press (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1971), p. 42. — For the origin and history of the term 'science fiction' see S. Moskowitz, Explorers of the Infinite, The World Publishing Company (Cleveland and New York, 1963), pp. 313-33.

5) Compare H. W. Franke, 'Literatur der technischen Welt', Science Fiction (see note 1 above).

geared to adolescents. Once intellectual and emotional content are on the same level — as they are, of course, only in a minority of works — an important step towards literary recognition will have been made.⁶⁾

Thirdly, speculative fiction has been marred by a craze for prophecy which identified the value of the genre with its capacity for scientific prediction. The writers of this kind of 'prophetic' fiction obviously ruined their own chances of literary acclaim by concentrating on non-literary issues. Science might well be a subject of literature in our time; prophecy, however, is easily confused with astrology, its illegitimate sister. Even the new discipline of futurology does not aspire to prediction, but rather to the presentation of conceivable alternatives of future development.⁷⁾ The task of a work of speculative fiction is less ambitious. It may, like futurology, attempt to show up potentialities and tendencies in science and society, but it 'can only select a certain thread out of the tangle of many equally valid possibilities'.⁸⁾ Speculative fiction may prepare the reader for technological change: as opposed to 'mainstream' literature it propagates expectations of permanent scientific flux.⁹⁾ Its main theme, however, is speculation, not accurate fact; nevertheless it should be logically consistent within its fantastic conception.

6) See A. & C. Panshin, 'SF in Dimension', fantastic (Oakland, Flushing, July 1973).

7) See J. A. Dator, 'Political Futuristics: Toward the Study of Alternative Political Futures', D. W. Plath (ed.), Aware of Utopia, Univ. of Illinois Press (Urbana, Chicago, London, 1971).

8) O. Stapledon, 'Preface' to 'Last and First Men', Last and First Men and Last Men in London, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1972), p. 11.

9) See J. Blish, 'Nachruf auf die Prophetie', Science Fiction, p. 127 (see note 1 above).

The course that speculative fiction is on today will eventually bring it wider appreciation. The signs are evident even now, when more and more works of criticism on the genre are appearing. Not science itself, but its psychological and sociological consequences are the centre of interest. This means that the emphasis of speculative fiction has been shifted from the machines to man. Therefore the investigation of its protagonists, especially of such an unorthodox figure as the socialist alienated hero of scientific fantasy, has now become worthwhile.

The term 'alienation', in its literary sense,¹⁰⁾ is sometimes used with slight variations by different critics. R. L. Jackson employs it to characterise the 'Underground Man' (whose prototype appears in Dostoyevsky's Zapiski iz podpol'ya [Notes from the Underground], 1864): 'In the figure of the Underground Man, alienated consciousness becomes aware of its alienation and adopts a consciously belligerent posture.'¹¹⁾

Rebellion is, indeed, the overwhelming consequence of alienation for the Underground Man, as Jackson shows in the following passage:

Alone in his solitude, an outcast, rejecting the blind commonplace 'man of action', the Underground Man faces the 'last wall'; he is no longer seduced by idealistic, romantic or humanistic faith in man, reason or socialism; he is painfully conscious of the senselessness of history, of the unreasonable nature of the world for man. Yet he maintains a rebellious posture before the 'stone wall' and the 'laws of nature'; he transforms his humiliation into 'perpetual

10) For an original discussion of the Marxist connotation of the term see M. Dzhilas (Djilas), 'Otchuzhdeniye - v prirode cheloveka', Grani (Frankfurt/M., 1972), No. 83 and M. Mikhaylov (Mihajlov), 'Dzhilas protiv Marksa', ibid.

11) Dostoyevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature, Mouton & Co. (S'Gravenhage, 1958), p. 14.

malice', the crisis of his existence into a permanent crisis. He is in permanent rebellion. This is his tragic status — his metaphysical misery and his metaphysical freedom.¹²⁾

While Jackson thus attempts to see the moderately positive side of alienation as well as its predominant misery, E. Fischer links alienation and decadence, for both are typified by 'loss of reality, indifference, lack of social ties, irresponsibility'.¹³⁾ According to Fischer the most significant component of alienation resulting in decadence is 'the feeling of powerlessness, the incredulity at the possibility of free, reasonable and socially relevant decisions of the individual'.¹⁴⁾ Clearly, in his opinion 'metaphysical freedom' offers no comfort which could compensate for the gloomy consequences of alienation.

A slightly more positive interpretation of alienation is given by C. Wilson. For him the alienated man is the eternal outsider: 'The Outsider is not sure who he is. "He has found an 'I', but it is not his true 'I'." His main business is to find his way back to himself.'¹⁵⁾ On the other hand, the alienated man, according to Wilson, is not socially displaced: 'The Outsider has his proper place in the Order of Society, as the impractical dreamer.'¹⁶⁾

12) Ibid., p. 15.

13) 'Entfremdung, Dekadenz, Realismus', F. Raddatz (ed.), Marxismus und Literatur, Bd. III, Rowohlt (Hamburg, 1969), p. 56.

14) Ibid., p. 59.

15) The Outsider, Victor Gollancz Ltd. (London, 1956), p. 147.

16) Ibid., p. 48.

Jackson differentiates between the Underground Man and the 'superfluous man' of 19th century Russian literature. Though he considers them historically linked, he thinks it necessary to keep them separate because of their different social status: the Underground Man 'is the first, fully conscious representative of a line of little men, clerks, dreamers, poor folk'.¹⁷⁾

As opposed to Jackson, T. Rogers identifies alienation and superfluousness.¹⁸⁾ To him the Underground Man and the Outsider are at best subcategories in the list of 'superfluous people'. A similar approach is suited to our treatment of alienated heroes in scientific fantasy. This type comprises some of the particulars mentioned above, but, due to the specific genre in which he occurs, cannot be completely equated with any of the given characterisations. Contrary to the Outsider, the alienated hero of scientific fantasy, generally speaking, does have faith in human ideals, with socialism usually being the prevalent one among them. He may be rebellious but his rebellion is expressed not in terms of 'perpetual malice', but in terms of a perpetual longing for political (sometimes even violent) activity. In accordance with Fischer's definition, he may feel powerless. But this feeling indicates only the decadence of his surroundings, of which he is no part. Like the Outsider, he may search for his true identity, but unlike the Outsider he does this in an environment which is not always native to him. He has no doubts about his 'I' in his own native environment.

17) Dostoyevsky's Underground Man..., p. 26.

18) 'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin 'Thaw', Mouton (The Hague, Paris, 1972), passim.

If this seems enigmatic it should be remembered that speculative fiction with its manipulations of time and space has its own characteristic ways of creating alienation. Summarily, the hero with whom we are dealing is an active and idealistic man, but he finds himself in a world which does not want, or has no need for, his activity and idealism. Indeed, his alienation is, as a rule, caused by his superfluosity.

While the theme of alienation is the very heart of contemporary science fiction, where many writers would agree with H. Ellison in 'that we have created for ourselves a madhouse of irrationality and despair',¹⁹⁾ it is discovered far more rarely within the framework of optimism that surrounds scientific fantasy. Nevertheless, the alienated hero does exist even here. — It is the purpose of this dissertation to define his standpoint among his more 'positive' counterparts.

19) 'Introduction: The Song of the Soul', All the Sounds of Fear, Panther Books Ltd. (St. Albans, Herts, 1973), p. 9. — Critics of this trend in science fiction maintain that 'the Gloom Story is the curse of the modern science fiction periodical: P. Moore, Science and Fiction, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. (London, Sidney, 1957), p. 87. Others, such as B. W. Aldiss, hold on the contrary that the Gothic novel represents the origin of science fiction: Billion Year Spree, Weidenfeld & Nicolson (London, 1973), pp. 7-36.

II. THE POSITIVE HERO

The writer of speculative fiction is faced with problems that the 'realist' does not encounter. One of these problems applies especially to the futuristic kind of fiction. How can the author portray characters who may live ten or ten thousand years in the future?

He could, of course, show the man of the future as identical with our contemporaries. This practice is often — or mostly — used in the West. In countless works of science fiction we find a hero who is surrounded by miraculous gadgets of all sorts, but who lives in a society basically unchanged from ours or even similar to some earlier stage of human history. This doubtful presentation is based on one or other of two erroneous assumptions: either man does not change, and so society remains the same as well; or the known forms of society are more or less permanent, and so man cannot much digress from his established contemporary existence.

Considering that the vast majority of science-fiction writers are anything but communists, there would be no point in criticising them for having a poor grasp of Marxist conceptions. They can, however, be accused of disregarding all the evidence of human and social evolution, which is all the more deplorable as many of them pride themselves on being writers and scientists. Their treatment of the matter is particularly surprising, as even rather inept — but supposedly sensational — guesses at man's future appearance sometimes receive undeserved attention by the press.¹⁾

1) See, among others, R. Chapman, 'Would You Really Like to Be Around in 11,973?', Scottish Sunday Express, 11 March 1973.

Also, the interdependence of socio-technological and individual development has been emphasised by quite a few outstanding members of the 'trade', H. G. Wells being the most notable of them. In his The Man of the Year Million²⁾ (1893) he gives an estimate of the rather unattractive appearance that our descendants might acquire in time, as a result of technological progress. This estimate — that man will be a large-brained, hairless, toothless, unemotional creature retreating to the bowels of the Earth³⁾ — is only supplemented, but never surpassed, by the aforementioned 'sensational new discoveries'.

Even more serious, because not only of literary and scientific but also of political import, is the omission of new human qualities in scientific fantasy. After all, dialectical principles apply not only to man's social environment but to himself as well. It would, therefore, hardly do, to equip the housewife of 2478 A.D. with a more sophisticated vacuum cleaner, but to leave her the same sort of person with the same sort of problems.

This exaggerated fictitious example makes obvious the oversight of authors, who fail to see a link between technological evolution and individual and social development.⁴⁾ There are frequent situations and

2) Leon E. Stover, Harry Harrison (ed.), Apeman, Spaceman, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1972).

3) Wells later applied this idea in the depiction of the aliens in The War of the Worlds (1898) and The First Men in the Moon (1902): compare Yu. Kagarlitsky, 'Dva voprosa Gerbertu Uellsu', Fantastika 72, Mol. gv. (M., 1972), 282. — R. Podol'ny parodied Wells's forecast in his short story 'Potomki delayut vyvody', Fantastika 1966, vyp. 1, Mol. gv. (M., 1966): here our remote descendants have progressed physically as well as mentally. Their favourite pastime is now wrestling with bears.

4) Marxist theory takes this link for granted: see for example B.

occurrences in scientific fantasy whose one and only striking quality is their incredibility. In, for example, A. Belyayev's Zvezda KETs⁵⁾ (The Star of KETs, 1936) men have settled down in space-stations constructed according to the ideas of the great scientist and writer K. E. Tsiolkovsky. The people and their conflicts do not differ from contemporary ones at all, although their complex environment is totally different. (They even need 'wings' to move about in the weightlessness of the station.) The absurdity of the contrast between scientific advancement and man's social and moral stagnation is epitomised in the coexistence of a speaking dog and a negro servant who might have escaped straight from Uncle Tom's Cabin. - Similar oversights are often to be found in detective-cum-fantasy stories, which constitute a great portion of non-literary fantasy.

Fortunately there are many writers who try to tackle the problem of the future man more thoroughly. In fact, they, as well as a number of critics, take this to be the main task of the genre:

What will the future do to man: will human personality be levelled, will its importance drop to zero, or will it grow and become of inestimable value?⁶⁾

Kedrov, S. Mikulinsky, I. Frolov, 'Filosofsko-sotsiologicheskiye problemy nauchno-tehnicheskoy revolyutsii', Nauchno-tehnicheskaya revolyutsiya i sotsial'ny progress, Izd. pol. lit. (M., 1972). - For a non-Marxist view of the social impact of science see J. Merrill, 'What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?', Th. D. Claeson (ed.), SF: The Other Side of Realism, Bowling Green University Popular Press (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1971), p. 58.

5) V mire fantastiki i priklyucheniy, Lenizdat (L., 1958).

6) Yu. Ryurikov, 'Cherez sto i tysyachu let', Literatura i sovremenost', stat'i 1959-1960 godov, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1960), p. 366.

Yu. Ryurikov considers this question to be the touchstone of Eastern and Western ideology, naturally attributing the infinite development of personality to communism. Staunch supporters of the gospel of Western individualism and liberty might regard this idea as surprising. Indeed, Ryurikov takes frightening Western anti-utopias, such as Brave New World and 1984, with their elimination of individuality, at their face value, as extrapolations of the expected rather than a potential future.⁷⁾ Soviet critics are prone to interpret Western anti-utopias as logical reflections of the writer's socio-economic situation (which is an oversimplification of Marxist theory), while they take a more lenient view of Soviet 'warning literature' (roman-preduprezhdeniye), thus recognising Marx's and Engels's concept of the interdependence of ideology and economic basis, which they deny Western authors.

Nevertheless, Ryurikov has a point when we compare pictures of the future man in science fiction and scientific fantasy. Undoubtedly scientific fantasy is far more prolific in its attempts to grasp the idea of human physical and psychological progress than science fiction ever was. The reason for this is not only ideological necessity, but also the acute awareness of many Soviet writers, who see a chance to improve or vary the rather rigid traditional 'positive hero'.

More and more authors of fantasy are realising the fact that fantastic dimensions can also be new psychological ones. For example,

7) This is not so astonishing when we consider that a Western critic like P. Bloomfield (Imaginary Worlds, Hamish Hamilton (London, 1932), p. 274) makes the reverse error of taking Brave New World for a utopia.

time travel has become an established device of both science fiction and scientific fantasy; the invention of a time machine is 'old hat' (while the description of the destination in the past or future is not likely to lose its attractions). However, man's relationship to time — as opposed to his relationship to the time machine as a means to an end — is only beginning to be explored and provides new psychological scope. Examples in science fiction are I. Asimov's The End of Eternity (1955) and P. Anderson's The Corridors of Time (1965), and in scientific fantasy many of G. Gor's works and O. Larionova's Leopard s vershiny Kiliman-dzharo (A Leopard from the Summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, 1965). — Other subjects enriching the author's opportunities to indulge in psychoanalysis are, according to G. Chernysheva, contact with superior aliens (this theme, however, has been exploited by so many incompetent writers that the reader tends to get weary before the more psychologically perceptive writer can make his point), the shift from planetary to universal thought, and biological changes in man himself.⁸⁾

The Soviet writer cannot content himself with confronting man with separate phenomena of the future: his task is far more comprehensive:

Armed with scientific vision, social experience and knowledge, man must also build a new psyche, find a new Weltanschauung, a complex, demanding and, in the final analysis, difficult life.⁹⁾

Obviously, different writers have varying ideas concerning the new hero. Can they get away very much from the positive hero demanded by

8) 'Chelovek i sreda v sovremennoy nauchnoy fantastike', Fantastika 68, Mol. gv. (M., 1968), pp. 311-312.

9) I. Yefremov, quoted from A. Chemesova, 'Pri chem tut kommunizm?', Posev (Frankfurt/M.), 23 June 1963.

socialist realism? The traditional hero of this kind is a 'virtuous fighter for the good cause of socialism',¹⁰⁾ 'he harmoniously combines intellectual richness, moral purity and physical perfection'.¹¹⁾ This new man is, on the one hand, supposed to embody the best qualities already to be found in our Soviet contemporaries. On the other hand he is clearly an ideal which the majority of citizens can only look up to. The struggle of creating 'a new, fine, vigorous man'¹²⁾ has not nearly come to an end.

The characters in A. and B. Strugatsky's trilogy Strana bagrovykh tuch (Country of Crimson Clouds, 1959), Put' na Amal'teyu (Destination: Amaltheia, 1960), and Stazhery (The Apprentices, 1962) may be regarded as fairly representative of positive heroes in scientific fantasy. The main reason for this is that the plot is set only a few decades from now. Space travel has been developed further, but is still limited to our solar system. Thus the general scene is rather clear-cut.

The first novel¹³⁾ deals with the exploration of Venus for minerals and ores. The conditions on Venus, because of various dangers, are a good testing ground for the crew's characters. - The central figures are Bykov, the engineer, and Yurkovsky, the geologist of the expedition.

10) Einführung in den dialektischen und historischen Materialismus, Verlag Marxistische Blätter GmbH (Frankfurt/M., 1971), p. 442.

11) M. Gor'ky, Sobraniye sochineniy v tridtsati tomakh, tom 24, Gospolitizdat (M., 1955), p. 30.

12) A. Fadeyev, The Nineteen (Razgrom, written 1925/26), translated from the Russian by R. D. Charques, Martin Lawrence Ltd. (London, no year), p. 206.

13) Strana bagrovykh tuch, Gos. izd. det. lit. (M., 1959).

Bykov is reserved, slightly self-conscious but highly efficient in his job; Yurkovsky is a famous specialist, extrovert and rather arrogant. No wonder that their relationship is somewhat cool at first.

In the course of their adventures on Venus they have to cope with dangerous swamps, tornados, deserts, monsters, deadly bacteria, radio-activity etc. A few of their companions are killed, but the heroes survive, gradually grow to respect each other, and finally become friends.

Bykov and Yurkovsky are definitely positive heroes. Their respective faults are merely thin layers on the surface of extreme inner nobility. The message is that stress and danger show the real value and reliability of a man, regardless of what he may seem superficially.

National states are still supposed to exist on Earth when the journey takes place. There is, however, an allusion to the heroes' being models of conduct for the whole world of the future, when the captain claims Venus for all humanity, not just for the Soviet Union (a similar way of thinking must be inherent in the Americans' conquest of the moon on behalf of all mankind).

In the next two novels the heroes are older, hold even more responsible jobs and set still more of an example, especially for young people. In Put' na Amal'teyu¹⁴⁾ Yurkovsky has cultivated an almost English brand of nonsense humour; Bykov seems more sturdy now, and remains as sober and stubborn as before. These qualities may not appear very commendable, but in the end it is Bykov's obstinacy which sees the space ship through a meteorite storm and helps to rescue the people in a space station near

14) V mire fantastiki i priklyucheniyy, Lenizdat (L., 1964).

Jupiter. Even more than the first work, Put' na Amal'teyu emphasises the socialist heroes' unyielding courage in the face of death.

In Stazhery,¹⁵⁾ Yurkovsky, who is now the 'General Inspector for the International Administration of Cosmic Communications', Bykov and their crew make an inspection tour around space-stations all over the solar system. This time the moral lessons and the idealised picture of future man are rendered more explicit, partly because Yura Borodino, an eighteen-year-old novice has to be instructed, partly because the crew contact people in the stations who represent the remnants of dying capitalism and the flaws of still maturing socialism. The following ideas are instilled into Yura:

A real man...is characterised by a generous outlook....

A real man is formed only by real people, i.e. workers, and only by a real life, which is full-blooded and complex.¹⁶⁾

Moreover, a young man should

learn not to bow to authority...not to take the experience of his elders for granted and to despise philistine wisdom...

learn that scepticism and cynicism count for little in life...learn to trust his neighbour...learn that it is better to misjudge somebody twenty times than to distrust everybody... that it is less important how others influence you than how you influence others...that one man alone is not worth a farthing.¹⁷⁾

The Strugatsky brothers, like many writers of Soviet scientific fantasy,¹⁸⁾ here and in other works¹⁹⁾ emphasise what they call the problem

15) Molodaya gvardiya (M., 1962).

16) Ibid., p. 129.

17) Ibid., p. 188.

18) E.g. I.Yefremov in Chas Byka.

19) Especially in Khishchnyye veshchi veka (1965).

of 'philistinism' (meshchanstvo): the remnants of desire for profit, alcoholism, violence, stupidity, envy, hate, and false ambition. The people of capitalist countries are especially afflicted by these vices, but socialist states also have their moderate share of them. The only remedy is in educational measures:

Convince him [man] from his early youth that the most important things in life are friendship and knowledge, that, beyond his cradle, there is a huge wide world, which he and his friends are to conquer — then you shall have a real man.²⁰⁾

The heroes, Bykov and Yurkovsky, correspond totally to the maxims quoted above: they are 'real men'. - The trilogy deals with the transitional period between socialism and communism, and depicts the gradual disintegration of national states in favour of a Leninist world state. Most works concentrating on this period usually reflect the desired political situation in their psychological characterisations: socialist heroes are generally superior, victorious, noble; their counterparts are painted in blackest black. Although his heroism is shifted from a terrestrial to a cosmic scale, the protagonist is essentially the same as the contemporary positive hero.

However, even the superficial blemishes which the Strugatsky brothers' heroes do have, and which are so clearly necessary for the conveyance of the message, are bitterly resented by some critics. I. Yefremov refers obliquely to characters such as Bykov and Yurkovsky when he says that the unbalanced, impolite, talkative, and sarcastic heroes of some works of fantasy are more similar to badly educated good-for-nothings of our time than to the ideal that they stand for.²¹⁾ A. F.

20) Stazhery, p. 151.

21) 'Ot avtora', Chas Byka, Mol. gv. (M., 1970), p. 1.

Britikov reproaches the Strugatskys for attributing too many contemporary — therefore psychologically untenable — faults to these heroes.²²⁾

However, Britikov has mild praise for another of the Strugatskys' cosmonauts: for Gorbovsky, the 'most modest' of them, who appears in several novels and stories, but features most prominently in Dalekaya Raduga (Far Rainbow, 1963), Gorbovsky is a quiet, reticent man, but at times of crises his commonsense, courage and knowledge prove more valuable than the qualities of seemingly more spectacular personalities.

The planet Raduga, which is colonised by Earth people, serves as a gigantic laboratory, in which the possibilities of 'null-transport' are investigated. However, an important experiment fails and causes a vast deluge that threatens to extinguish all life on the planet. Unfortunately, the complete evacuation of Raduga is impossible, as only one small spaceship, piloted by Gorbovsky, is available. Thus only children and a few women can be rescued. In spite of this hopeless situation not a single one of the colonists and scientists, who are all doomed, is driven into selfish panic. Many of them beg Gorbovsky to grant them the very smallest bit of space in the ship. But their heroism is documented by the fact that they all beg for the sake of others or for the rescue of their scientific or artistic works.

At the end, just before the take-off, Gorbovsky and his navigator surpass everybody's heroism by giving up their own undisputed seats in favour of two others.

22) Russky sovetsky nauchno-fantastichesky roman, Nauka (L., 1970), pp. 336-337. One of the most negative criticisms (particularly of the characters in Stazhery) is given by A. Meleus, 'Zaporozhtsy v kosmose', Molodoy kommunist (M., 1962), No. 8.

The novel would be too sugary for many tastes if it rested on the idea of heroic sacrifice alone. But the Strugatskys avoid this danger by creating the tragic character of Kamill,²³⁾ who is half man, half robot, and by discussing many controversial ideas. The most interesting topic is the rôle of the artist in the society of the future. A physicist, Al'pa, says:

...I'm still convinced that scientific knowledge is the purpose of human life. And to tell the truth, it sickens me to see thousands of people these days steering clear of science and finding their vocation in a sentimental relationship with nature; art, they call it. They are content to skim over the surface of things, calling that aesthetic appreciation. To my way of thinking history herself has divided mankind into three groups: soldiers of science, educators and doctors; incidentally, they're soldiers of science as well. Science is just getting over the period of material shortage and yet you find thousands of people drawing pictures, rhyming words...composing impressions. There's a lot of potential workers among them too. Energy, intelligence and fantastic application.'

...

'Let me take your argument a bit further, if I may,' said Gorbovsky. 'I see you haven't the courage.'

'Have a try then.'

'All these artists and writers want putting in special camps, their pens and brushes should be taken away and they should be put through a short course and set to turning out new U-conveyers, tantractors and ertochronic prisms for the soldiers of science....'

23) Compare p. 115.

'Rubbish!' said the disappointed Banin.

'Yes, it's rubbish,' agreed Alpa. 'But our ideas don't depend on our likes and dislikes. That idea is deeply repugnant to me, it even frightens me, but it's been mentioned and not only by me.'²⁴⁾

The implication is obvious: the Strugatskys warn of the simple identification of art and its propaganda functions. For under such a premise art, divested of these functions — which it eventually will be, according to socialist opinion — would have no right to exist.

Al'pa is by no means a negative character. He is quite typical of the pleasant scientists of the planet. His ideas do not discredit him. They demonstrate above all that the ordinary positive socialist hero is not up to the problems which may confront him in the future.

This ineptitude of the positive hero does not come as a surprise, if we go along with Mathewson, who holds that even the protagonist of non-fantastic Soviet literature is a frustrated, 'incomplete' figure. While the incompleteness of the 'superfluous man' resulted from society's rejection of him, the Soviet hero participates in all social activities, but loses out through his very conformity:

He is...entirely politicalized, with his needs and aspirations defined by his political allegiance. Although he is expected to respond with inner enthusiasm to grandiose public goals, the real locus of judgment in these matters is outside his own conscience. He makes decisions, so to speak, but no choices. He lives in a world of rationalized deprivation, subsisting on reduced rations of love, friendship, and family happiness because, he is always told, of the terrible urgencies besetting his community.²⁵⁾

24) A./B. Strugatsky, Far Rainbow, translated from the Russian by A. G. Myers, Mir Publishers (M., 1967), p. 68.

25) R. W. Mathewson, The Positive Hero in Russian Literature, Columbia

Naturally, if the Soviet hero of novels dealing with the present appears incomplete because of his exclusively political commitments, his shortcomings will be all the more evident when he appears in a futuristic setting which is imagined as relatively free from political 'urgencies'.

However, the Soviet criticism which is levelled at the characters of the Strugatsky brothers starts out from a different angle: Total political commitment, of course, is not condemned, but rather encouraged, if not taken for granted, anyway. What some reviewers take exception to is the Strugatskys' alleged lack of 'literary morals and decorum',²⁶⁾ which expresses itself in the (refreshingly unpriggish) language and manners of their characters.

Even though the Strugatsky brothers cannot convince all critics of the model qualities of the heroes mentioned above they still have the excuse that the characters are not very remote from us in time, and therefore not very remote in their general attitudes, either. Let us now look at a novel which is typical of the works set in the more distant future.

The action of S. Snegov's Lyudi kak bogi²⁷⁾ (Men like Gods, 1966) takes place in the year 563 of the communist era which began in the year 2001. Man has now penetrated far beyond his own solar system; he has contacted many kinds of intelligent aliens, among them thinking mosses,

University Press (New York, 1958), p. 321. - Mathewson goes as far as to characterise the positive hero as an alienated man. His idea of the term does not, however, coincide with the definition used here.

26) D. Suvin, 'Criticism of the Strugatskii Brother's [sic!] Work', Canadian-American Slavic Studies, VI, 2 (Summer 1972), p. 297.

27) Ellinsky sekret, Lenizdat (L., 1966).

snake-like creatures and beings whose appearance corresponds to that of angels, though they turn out to be far more militant. However, none of the many creatures whom man has encountered has proved superior to him. Thus he has confirmed his belief in his own uniqueness. Paradoxically, it is man's weaknesses which constitute his strength; his imperfection is the key to success. One of the aliens explains: man cannot resist extreme temperatures, therefore he invented clothes, houses, generators; he depends on oxygen, therefore he constructed space-suits; his memory is weak, so he built machines to assist it; he is comparatively immobile, so he invented spaceships, etc. In this way man's original drawbacks are really incentives to further progress.²⁸⁾

Again, although man's technology changes considerably, he remains more or less the same. Everybody is linked to a gigantic computer, which protects him from dangers and diseases, prevents rashness, and acts as a sort of mentor and psychiatrist to the whole of mankind. People are now peaceful among themselves; their life is pervaded by an atmosphere of good humour. This is not surprising, since in this era of communism come true, practically everybody has attained the standard of the contemporary positive hero (the computer makes sure of that). The trouble is: now that everybody is near-perfect, characters can hardly be distinguished any more in the general homogeneity of virtues. Snegov sees the positive hero as the final stage of human development. Therefore the advancement of mankind consists for him of the generalisation of virtues rather than of a qualitative change in the virtues themselves.

28) Ibid., pp. 126-127.

Since the positive hero has not been replaced by another superior ideal, man need not be concerned with his own perfection any more. Is he perhaps now the model for the universe in the same way that the positive hero used to be the model for the world?

This suspicion is not unfounded. When we look at the cosmic scene a little more closely, we find a grotesque resemblance to our own time. - Humans, to be sure, follow not only the slogan 'Man is man's friend, comrade, and brother',²⁹⁾ but even the principle 'Man is the friend of all intelligent and good beings in the universe'.³⁰⁾ The catch is obvious: intelligent beings are not necessarily 'good'. In Snegov's cosmos there are 'invisible evildoers' to whom man has to apply a tougher rule: 'To be bad to the bad is also goodness.'³¹⁾ In other words, the antagonistic differences of our time are projected into the universe.

The Soviet writer of fantasy has to avoid the reproach of creating a mindless communist paradise, in which notorious 'conflictlessness' prevails. If he levels all the characters, as Snegov does, there is obviously little room for conflict. Snegov chooses a way out which results in a badly disguised repetition of today's tensions. He makes the same assumption which Soviet critics resent so much in science fiction: he perpetuates present conflicts eternally.

Considering the heroes' dependence on the computer, the author displays some involuntary irony when describing the 'evil-doers' as

29) Ibid., p. 137.

30) Ibid.

31) Ibid., p. 156.

'biocybernetic' creatures. In spite of all their perfection, the characters are clearly dominated by a machine themselves. Actually, at this stage, if anything continues its evolution, it is the computer, not man. It is rather mystifying that V. Dmitrevsky regards the novel as an answer to Wells's 'pessimistic [sic!] view of the future of mankind'³²⁾ in Men like Gods (1923).

Snegov shows up the dilemma of many writers who are able to think up a vastly changed technological background but are unable to present convincing characters who harmonise with the general picture. The conventional positive hero obviously cannot fill this gap.

Even in works set in the not-too-distant future — though after the period of the Strugatskys' trilogy — the presentation of the positive hero may create considerable problems. This is exemplified by Ya. Larri's utopian novel Strana schastlivykh³³⁾ (The Country of the Happy, 1931).

The author of the introduction denies that the work is a utopia in the classic sense, because Larri only develops what is already incipient in the Soviet Union.³⁴⁾ This is much to the book's disadvantage, because one of the central themes, speculation about landing on the moon in the 21st century, is obviously rather inadequate.

Larri describes a society whose functioning is largely modelled on the formula given in A. Bogdanov's Krasnaya zvezda (The Red Star, 1908).

32) 'Za gorizontami vremeni', Pravda, 31 July 1970.

33) Leningradskoye obl. izd. (L., 1931).

34) Glebov-Putilovsky, 'Predisloviye', Strana schastlivykh, p. IV.

People can be up to 300 years old. All that is required of them as 'socially necessary work' is five hours of operating automata per week. Professions do not exist any longer; there are still engineers, physicians, poets, composers etc., but their occupation is considered a hobby or a passion.

Presumably, people who have so much leisure and are so free from any political force³⁵⁾ will develop new moral concepts and modes of individual conduct. Larri is aware of that, but, unfortunately, he does not try to show the change in character through people's actions and behaviour. Certainly, that would have been the most credible method. The author, however, puts the most important concepts into footnotes, thus separating them from the actual plot, as for instance:

On love. First, this is not what we in our time conventionally call love. It is not the shameful blundering of people who are poisoned by alcohol, nicotine, depressed by trivial worries. The love of the future is a powerful human feeling which unites equals.... Genuine, worthy love is a cheerful bond between a man and a woman of the socialist society.³⁶⁾

As this idea does not come across in the plot itself, it must remain a mere declaration, a lifeless postulate.

According to Soviet criticism it is 'communist man' who will discover new perspectives in the future.³⁷⁾ Before dealing with these new perspectives, however, it will be necessary to characterise their

35) Incidentally, the lack of political power is surprising as Larri limits his model society to the Soviet Union, one state among many.

36) Strana schastliivykh, p. 172.

37) Ye. Brandis, V. Dmitrevsky, Mir budushchego v nauchnoy fantastike, Znaniye (M., 1965), p. 4.

explorer. This is especially difficult, as, obviously, in scientific fantasy the positive hero of today must either improve still further or undergo a total qualitative change (with the latter being officially out of the question) if he wants to be more than an insignificant accessory in a technology-dominated world.

Despite all the shortcomings which scientific fantasy displays when trying to find a suitable place for the contemporary positive hero, it must not be overlooked that it is at least aware of a problem which science fiction — with a few exceptions³⁸⁾ — hardly ever touches: man's rôle in the future.

So far we have been describing a character who might be labelled the 'normal' positive hero, i.e., a hero who stands head and shoulders above the average contemporary, but who strikes us as an unexciting, if not inadequate, prospect when transported to an idealised future. Also, the hero has not undergone any physical changes, which is acceptable when the near future is concerned, for short-term changes in education, information, nature, etc., are more likely than physical ones.³⁹⁾ However, there are attempts to supersede, to an extent, the customary positive hero in some works concerned with the rather more remote future: 'a new man within a new world'⁴⁰⁾ is created. The following chapter will be devoted to these attempts.

38) The usual experiments with telepathy and 'group minds' may be disregarded here, as they are seldom treated seriously. — The most comprehensive and thoughtful imaginary account of human evolution is still O. Stapledon's Last and First Men (1930).

39) A. Petrovsky, 'Chelovek ostayetsya chelovekom', Literaturnaya gazeta, 1973, No. 18.

40) K. Fedin, 'Speech at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU', June 18-21, 1963, Socialist Realism in Literature and Art, translated from the Russian by C. V. James, Progress Publishers (M., 1971), p. 84.

III. THE 'POSITIVE SUPERHERO'

When we dream of the man of the future, the first thing that comes to our minds is usually not a great physical change, a considerable enhancement (or deterioration) of his appearance. Physical differences are rather negligible, as a glance at the people of centuries or even millennia ago makes clear.

What really counts is the complete revolution in moral attitudes and sets of values that appears sometimes in as little as a few years. These moral changes are usually dependent on corresponding social changes. Here we have an explanation of why the heroes of science fiction are so static: as their society is equally static or even retrogressive, new ideas would have to appear out of the blue. I. Yefremov, in Tumannost' Andromedy (Andromeda, 1957) voices his criticism through one of his heroines:

[Veda] was annoyed at the absurd self-confidence of the ancients who believed that their idea of values and their tastes would continue unchanged for dozens of centuries and would be accepted as canons by their descendants.¹⁾

It is, however, debatable whether 'the ancients' (us) are really so self-confident. An obvious reason why future values are often identified with our own lies in the limitations of the writer, who, after

1) I. Yefremov, Andromeda, translated from the Russian by G. Hanna, Foreign Languages Publishing House (M., 1959), p. 343.

all, finds himself on rather slippery ground when he abandons the security of present-day standards in order to set up imaginary new ones. It can be suspected that Western authors display self-consciousness rather than self-confidence by adhering to long-established conventions. A non-Marxist is practically confined to extrapolations of the present which tend to perpetuate old values, or he can 'invent' new ones which give his work a touch of arbitrariness, making it unconvincing from an 'objective' point of view.

Theoretically, the author of scientific fantasy has no problem of this sort. In dialectical materialism he has an instrument which should enable him to start his work unflinchingly. He knows that, by virtue of his ideological position, his work is not going to be dismissed as 'pure fantasy', whereas 'the logic of history' reveals that a utopia other than communism is impossible.²⁾

This concept sounds much more encouraging than it is, for the existence of a tool does not yet guarantee its proper use. Therefore Soviet writers are more careful about far-reaching computations than might be assumed after a superficial look at their theoretical equipment. After all, even Marx and Engels shied away from detailed descriptions of tomorrow.³⁾

I. Yefremov is the chief figure among the few who have ventured into

2) E. Brandis, V. Dmitrevsky, Mir budushchego v nauchnoy fantastike, Znaniye (M., 1965), p. 7.

3) Compare N. Meshcheryakov, 'Nauchny sotsializm o tipe poseleniy budushchego obshchestva', Krasnaya nov', No. 3 (M., 1931), p. 122.

the sphere of really penetrating, comprehensive visions of the future. He tries to show how the law of dialectical contradictions continues to operate even in a communist society, thus preventing the stagnation typical of conventional utopias. His view of the future hero is particularly significant, as he is an outstanding representative of anthropocentrism, which accounts for the uniqueness of his characters.

Tumannost' Andromedy is, on the one hand, an answer to all the science-fiction works which deal with the subject of alien contact in rather antagonistic terms and, on the other hand, a bold attempt to present the future new man.⁴⁾ The picture of this new man rests on the following assumptions:

The man of the future will be even more physically hardened than Siberians or Scandinavians. He will be bold and decisive, but will not know rudeness and lack of self-control. Females will be completely emancipated members of society; their freedom also applies to the emotional sphere. None of these people will ever be plagued by boredom or idleness. In fact, they will never have enough time because their immense creativity drives them to ever new feats.⁵⁾

It is remarkable that Yefremov leaves the well-worn path of conventional utopias in not trying to describe the world of the future through the eyes of a 'go-between', the usual traveller or time-traveller. He attempts to show the model society 'from the inside'⁶⁾.

4) I. Yefremov, 'Na puti k romanu "Tumannost' Andromedy"', Voprosy literatury, No. 4 (M., 1961), pp. 146-147.

5) Ibid., pp. 147-148.

6) I. Yefremov, 'Naklonny gorizont', Voprosy literatury, 8/1962, pp. 62-63.

(Ironically, this is exactly the method chosen in the modern anti-utopias.)

The author demands that man abandons his striving for merely individual perfection. His qualities will be different from the ones perpetuated for so long. Characteristically, Dar Veter, one of the heroes of Tumannost' Andromedy, which is set thousands of years in the future, for six years does a job 'requiring superhuman effort'.⁷⁾ He is the 'Director of the Outer Stations of the Great Circle', the cosmic bond which unites the planets of intelligent beings throughout the universe. This bond, which gives its name to the epoch, the 'Era of the Great Circle', is not based on physical contact but merely on an advanced communication system.

People in general live up to 300 years now, but there are many (including all the heroes) whose life-span is only half as long because of the demanding job they have chosen, e.g. cosmonauts, technicians etc. This incredible fact is easily dismissed by one of the persons concerned, who thinks that it is the price to be paid for more interesting work.

But the new man is not only unselfish; his qualities have a wide range:

Man needed to work to the full measure of his strength, but his labour had to be creative and in accordance with his natural talents and inclinations.... The development of cybernetics, the technique of automatic control, a comprehensive education and the development of intellectual abilities coupled with the finest physical training of each individual, made it possible for a person to change his

7) Andromeda, p. 47.

profession frequently, learn another easily and bring endless variety into his work so that it became more and more satisfying. Progressively expanding science embraced all aspects of life and a growing number of people came to know the joy of the creator, the discoverer of new secrets of nature. Art played a great part in social education and in forming the new way of life.⁸⁾

Yefremov's endeavour to link man's new intellectual power with corresponding beauty makes him sometimes overreach his goal. He is obviously unaware of the comic effect produced by Dar Veter's comparison of an old fossil and his beloved Veda:

Dar Veter looked at the excrescence over the brows of the Permian reptile that betrayed its stupid ferocity, and compared it with lithe, supple Veda with such bright eyes in her intelligent, lively face. What a tremendous difference in the organization of living matter!⁹⁾

This rather unromantic statement seems to belie Yefremov's assumption that the future society will be extremely emotional as well as intellectually advanced.¹⁰⁾ But the emotionalism is brought out in other instances, such as a return to ancient Grecian ideals: thus adolescents, before graduating from school, have to perform the twelve 'labours of Hercules'.

Although the emancipation of women is one of the declared results in Yefremov's utopia, we find quite a few remnants of the old (our) times, which the author does not think incompatible with the idea of equality:

8) Ibid., p. 53.

9) Ibid., pp. 124-125.

10) 'Na puti...', p. 148.

'Veter, you don't know how to pay compliments to the ladies,' said Veda, coyly holding her head on one side.

'Does one have to know the deception that is no longer needed?'

'One does,' Evda Nahl put in, 'and the need for it will never die out!'¹¹⁾

Art, which is of great importance in the Great Circle era, has acquired a new dimension (outside the educational function given to it by socialist realism). Instead of depicting greatness, its primary function has become the development of man's emotions, in order to attune his psyche to understanding more complicated impressions.¹²⁾ However, Yefremov thinks that this function can be fulfilled only by realist art. He condemns abstract art as an obsolete 'imitation of the intellect that had gained priority over everything else'.¹³⁾

Yefremov's heroes combine the strength and beauty of the ancients with a highly advanced intellect and ideal communist unselfishness, sincerity and trust. In fact, as in V. Mayakovsky's ironic poem Letayushchy proletariy (The Flying Proletarian, 1925), they are all geniuses:

Heroic deeds had grown to countless numbers amongst the bold and energetic population of the planet. A tremendous capacity for work, possessed in the past only by those few people who were known as geniuses, depended entirely on the physical strength of the body and an abundance of hormone stimulators. Correct physical

11) Andromeda, p. 139.

12) Ibid., p. 177.

13) Ibid., p. 210.

training for thousands of years had made the average person on the planet the equal of the heroes of antiquity, insatiable in his desire for heroic deeds, love and knowledge.¹⁴⁾

The main protagonists of the novel are not 'average people', as has been pointed out; they are outstanding personalities even in their time. In relation to their own society they have the same standing as contemporary positive heroes in Soviet society. This fact does indeed transform them into veritable superheroes by present standards.

It seems unconvincing when Yefremov presumes that the future level of human perfection will be basically achieved by training; eugenic control, or 'genetic engineering', a favourite of science fiction, is mentioned as the 'cybernetics of heredity', but it is not yet in its practical stages. This seems a typically communist stress on the influence of environment and training, which for a long time prevented genetics from being recognised as a serious science. By now, however, Yefremov is clearly more strongly in favour of genetic control; in an interview he suggested the institution of a 'gene fund' even in our time.¹⁵⁾

The author emphasises the Marxist maxim that history is made not by great men but by the masses. Naturally, leadership is not invested in individuals but in various Soviets, which are all equally important. Thus the most relevant factor of the social structure is no particular person or even Soviet but — rather vaguely — 'its forward movement'.

14) Ibid., p. 235.

15) I. Yefremov, 'Velikoye Kol'tso budushchego', Fantastika 69/70, Mol. gv. (M., 1970), p. 266.

Obviously, Yefremov had difficulty in finding an adequate substitute for class struggle as the driving force of the masses.

Telepathy, another pet of science fiction which in scientific fantasy was, until the fifties, branded as non-materialistic, is only touched on by Yefremov. He calls it 'man's third system of signals' and praises its communicative values. It is, however, not widely developed because of the great expenditure of energy required and its bad effect on the nervous system.

We have now looked at a few characteristics of the new man which strongly distinguish him from the Wellsian vision mentioned at the beginning:

There was a time when our ancestors in their novels about the future imagined us as weakly, rickety beings with overgrown skulls.... We now know that strong intellectual activity requires a powerful body, full of vital energy and that that body will produce strong emotions that we have so far learned only to suppress and, by suppressing them, have made ourselves the poorer.¹⁶⁾

But man does not only acquire new emotions, he also loses dispensable ones, such as 'that insane maternal love of the past'.¹⁷⁾ Children are brought up collectively, their mothers know that they are in good care, that the world is kind to them. Therefore the instinctive protective love of the animals is not necessary any longer.

This idea has met with a lot of disapproval. For instance, Yu. Ryurikov thinks that the disappearance of the family and of maternal

16) Andromeda, p. 282.

17) Ibid., p. 324.

instincts does not harmonise with Yefremov's other hypotheses, which especially underline the togetherness of all mankind. In this context, a mother's and a child's love as the greatest human feelings would be indispensable.¹⁸⁾

Possibly this reproach is without basis. Yefremov does emphasise the love of one of the heroines for her daughter; what he wants to rule out is overprotective, possessive love as a form of selfishness. Moreover, Yefremov is in better accord with the classics of Marxism, who also hold that the family is typical of the class society¹⁹⁾ and will disappear in the course of history, as it merely isolates the child from the influence of its environment.

In principle, of course, Ryurikov agrees with Yefremov and also extols the superhuman qualities of the new man:

All through his book, Yefremov says: the possibilities of communism are unlimited, there are no bounds to the power of free man. Spiritual abundance, according to Yefremov, is not only a flourishing of thought and feeling, not only an abundance of freedom, but also an abundance of heroism. A heroic society will create heroic people — this is one of the chief ideas of the book.²⁰⁾

D. Suvin says rightly that the heroes are unalienated because of their readiness to learn from mistakes. This non-alienation, in Suvin's

18) Yu. Ryurikov, 'Cherez sto i tysyachu let', Literatura i sovremennost', stat'i 1959-60 godov, Gosud. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1960), pp. 340-341.

19) See for example Karl Marx, 'Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei', Die Frühschriften, Alfred Körner Verlag (Stuttgart, 1972), p. 543.

20) 'Cherez sto...', p. 387.

opinion, protects them from being supermen.²¹⁾ Admittedly, alienation is often a characteristic of superbeings, especially in science fiction, as A. Bester's The Demolished Man (1953), J. Wyndham's The Chrysalids (1955), R. Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land (1961) and many other works show. The term does, however, seem to the point when Yefremov's heroes are related to contemporary socialist society.

Any critic must feel rather helpless before the monument of communist confidence and imagination, erected in Tumannost' Andromedy. Yefremov is justified in claiming that reviewers always approach the novel with contemporary, therefore unsuitable, categories.²²⁾ On the other hand, Yefremov himself cannot be free from assumptions resulting from his own background.

The main problem of the novel is the presentation of conflict in a communist society.²³⁾ Nowadays there are, according to Yefremov, two sorts of conflict: either an 'abnormal' person clashes with a 'normal' society, or a 'normal' individual clashes with 'abnormal' social conditions (such as war, espionage etc.). These sorts of conflict will be ruled out in the future because there will be only 'normal' individuals in a 'normal' society. There will still be a need of conflict in order to bring about progress, but it will be of a higher order and confined to the creative search for self-perfection. People

21) D. Suvin, 'The Utopian Tradition of Russian Science Fiction', The Modern Languages Review, No. 1 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 154.

22) 'Naklonny gorizont', p. 53.

23) Conflict in a communist society is also the theme of F. Dostoyevsky's Son smeshnogo cheloveka (1877). However, while Yefremov points out the necessity of creative conflict in such a society, Dostoyevsky depicts catastrophic conflict which results from the lack of Christian brotherly love. - See V. Revich, 'Ne byl', noine vydumka', Fantastika 71, Mol. gv. (M., 1971), pp. 293-294.

with this aim in life are quite different from the heroes of Western writers. In capitalist literature the two kinds of present conflict will be repeated forever. The 'dynamism' of the Western hero may be appealing even to socialist readers, but it is the task of the socialist writer to pass the superficially energetic hero by and to produce a new sort of dynamism.²⁴⁾

Here Yefremov presumably refers to his own heroes, but the reaction of a minority of critics shows that he did not completely meet his own demands. These critics accuse the author of the usual utopian immobility of society and staticism of his heroes.²⁵⁾ Evidently the conventional conflict situations are not as easily replaced as Yefremov hoped.

Man's craving for self-perfection is also the dominant theme of Serdtsse Zmei (The Heart of the Serpent, 1959), a follow-up of Tumannost' Andromedy. As this desire cannot be fulfilled on his own planet, man has to embark on the search for 'brothers in reason' throughout the universe: 'In the classless society man had created for himself every individual knew his planet so well there was little left to learn.'²⁶⁾

Serdtsse Zmei is a polemical attack on M. Leinster's story First Contact (1945), in which the crews of an alien and an Earth spaceship treat each other as potential enemies. Yefremov stresses the idea of peaceful contact, and claims that penetration into the universe would be

24) 'Naklonny gorizont', pp. 51-54.

25) E.g. T. Chernysheva, 'Chelovek i sreda v sovremennoy nauchnoy fantastike', Fantastika 1968, Mol. gv. (M., 1968), p. 306.

26) The Heart of the Serpent, translated from the Russian by R. Prokofieva, Foreign Languages Publishing House (M., no date), p. 12.

possible only after the communist organisation of a planet's population; therefore the Earth expedition is supposedly likely to meet in space only beings who are not only rational, but also communists. Here communism and progress are equated, which is an accepted idea in the Soviet Union, as was once again demonstrated at a recent international conference in Armenia devoted to the possibilities of alien contact. A Soviet scientist stated that only a harmonious classless society could possibly make this dream come true.²⁷⁾

If in Serdtsse Zmei Yefremov pursues the romantic side of future man's nature, in Chas Byka (The Hour of the Bull, 1968) he contemplates the more sober problem of interference with backward planets (without totally neglecting communist romanticism either).

Chas Byka is set in the even more distant future than Tumannost' Andromedy. As physical contact is now possible, the epoch is called 'Era of the Meeting Hands'. Yefremov contrasts his heroes with the people of the planet Tormans,²⁸⁾ which represents an exception in dialectical development, because it has attained a high technological level in spite of conserving a political system that combines 'criminal fascist monopolism'²⁹⁾ with Maoist 'oligarchic false socialism'.³⁰⁾

In this novel Yefremov's idea of female emancipation is outlined once again. Characteristically, the principal character is a woman:³¹⁾

27) O. Moroz, A. Lepikhov, 'Slushay Zemlya', Literaturnaya gazeta, 1972, No. 18.

28) Yefremov says he borrowed the name of 'Tormans' from Arthur [sic!] Lindsay (Chas Byka, p. 21), obviously mistaking the name of David Lindsay, the author of A Voyage to Arcturus (1920).

29) Chas Byka, Mol. gv. (M., 1970), p. 4.

30) Ibid., p. 81.

31) In science fiction women are as underprivileged as ever. - See B. Friend, 'Virgin Territory: Women and Sex in Science Fiction',

Fay Rodis, the historian and head of an expedition to Tormans.

Moral development on Earth has gone on; wearing clothes is now unusual, erotic inhibitions but also lecherousness and ambiguity are forgotten. On the other hand, technology has not rested, either: all Earth people have a personal robot, who is secretary, helper and guard in one.

The heroes are characterised through the impressions that they make on the people of Tormans (who stand for our contemporaries):

...the people of Earth appeared too serious and concentrated to the inhabitants of Yan-Yakh [the native name of Tormans]. Their matter-of-factness, their aversion to sarcasm and complete rejection of jesting, their permanent activeness and controlled expression of feelings seemed to the gossipy, impatient, psychologically untrained people of Tormans dull and void of genuine human feeling.

Only later did the natives of Yan-Yakh realise that these people were full of carefree mirth which did not result from flippancy and impoliteness, but from the awareness of their own strength and a ceaseless concern for all mankind. The straightforwardness and sincerity of the Earth people were founded on the deepest understanding of responsibility for every action, and on the subtle harmony of their personalities, which had been brought into accord with society and nature by the efforts of thousands of generations.³²⁾

Accordingly, the future man's idea of happiness is vastly different from mere joy of living. Happiness for him consists, on the one hand, of

Extrapolation (Wooster, Ohio, Dec. 1972), V. 14, No. 1; and T. L. Wymer, 'Cordwainer Smith: Satirist or Male Chauvinist', Extrapolation (May 1973), V. 14, No. 2.

32) Chas Byka, p. 151.

a comfortable, quiet and free life; on the other hand, of strictest self-discipline, eternal dissatisfaction and the desire to widen both his own knowledge and the opportunities for the world.³³⁾ Engels's definition of freedom as the realisation of necessity seems very much at the basis of Yefremov's concept.³⁴⁾

The new man's mental superiority is partly expressed in a capacity — albeit limited — to foresee the future. This is not a biological abnormality but the result of constant dialectical training. Here women are also superior to men. — F. Herbert in his novel Dune³⁵⁾ (1965) attributes the same ability to particularly well-trained people, the 'mentats'. However, these mentats base their ability on 'pure mathematical computation' coupled with a special innate talent. They are usually advisers of the aristocracy in a feudalistic cosmic empire. — These instances bring out an essential difference between scientific fantasy and science fiction:

33) Ibid., p. 197.

34) Engels tries to eliminate the apparent contradiction between man's freedom of will — which he does not question — and historical necessity by introducing the criterion of 'expert knowledge': the more expert a person is as far as a point of judgement is concerned, the less wavering he will be in his decision; as opposed to the non-expert he will realise the necessity of a certain decision. While the non-expert hesitates and is thus dominated by the subject which he should dominate himself, the expert by his firm determination of necessity proves his mastery of the subject and thus his freedom. — F. Engels, 'Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft', K. Marx/F. Engels, Werke, Bd. 20 (Berlin, 1962), p. 106. For a Marxist discussion see H. Hörz, Der dialektische Determinismus in Natur und Gesellschaft, VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1971), 4, erweiterte Auflage), pp. 213-225.

The corresponding link between freedom and necessity in contemporary Soviet art is explained by G. Kunitsyn:

Lenin showed that...true and total social freedom, including freedom of creativity, means scientifically based advocacy of the interests of the working masses, of the cause of the revolutionary proletariat.... Naturally true freedom of creativity is possible only for artists holding this position.

'Lenin on Partisanship and Freedom of Creativity', Socialist Realism in Literature and Art, translated from the Russian by C. V. James, Progress Publishers (M., 1971), p. 129.

35) New English Library (London, reprinted 1972).

in the former the formation of new qualities depends on an advanced social background plus special (dialectical) training; in the latter new qualities arise rather more accidentally (e.g., by mutation), irrespective of social conditions. The contrast between ideological determinism and ideological relativity is obvious.

In Chas Byka genetic control is perfected. Love is still the most valuable human feeling, but it has to be subjected to eugenic considerations, when another partner would guarantee better offspring. Again Engels's definition of freedom, which is determined by the supposedly objective requirements of historical materialism, is placed above possible subjective preferences.

A member of the Earth expedition has a significant message for the people of Tormans:

The principal rule of our psychology makes us look for that in ourselves which we assume in others. The not easily eradicated idea of superbeings is alive with you. Gods, superheroes, superscientists.³⁶⁾

The point is that man need not look up to any imaginary beings for qualities that he does not have. All the qualities that he requires are within himself. Man himself is superman, and Yefremov's heroes embody that idea. - This conception follows Gor'ky's and Lunacharsky's god-building' (bogostroitel'stvo), which, similarly to Nietzsche, claims that the man of the future will be superman and finally god-like.³⁷⁾

36) Chas Byka, p. 418.

37) See D. Grille, Lenins Rivale, Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik (Köln, 1966), pp. 33-35. - For an evaluation of Nietzsche's influence on pre-revolutionary Marxism see G. L. Kline, "'Nietzschean Marxism" in Russia', Demythologizing Marxism, Boston College Studies in Philosophy, Vol. II (Chestnut Hill, The Hague, 1969).

The heroes of the future, their actions, sciences and arts, correspond to the dialectical definition of beauty, given in Lezviye britvy (The Razor's Edge, 1963): purposefulness plus harmonic solution of seemingly deadly contradictions.³⁸⁾ At the same time, the brilliance of the heroes is also a weakness, because they cannot help lecturing the less advanced masses, which results in a tendency to break into long monologues interrupted only by occasional remarks of the 'ordinary' people (who are always at least symbolically present). Yefremov's inclination to turn his heroes into mouthpieces has above all been criticised in connection with Tumannost' Andromedy,³⁹⁾ but it is especially noticeable in Lezviye britvy, which is dominated by an intrepid, ingenious giant of a hero who never seems to stop making declarations, even when conversing privately.

Ye. Brandis and V. Dmitrevsky argue that Yefremov's 'man of thought and action' is rather autobiographical.⁴⁰⁾ Indeed, Yefremov (1907-1973) was a famous scientist, successful and distinguished in many fields, as well as a writer. It may be justified to characterise him and his heroes as people 'gifted with a searching, eager intellect, who strive for the new and unknown'.⁴¹⁾ But certainly it would be wrong to identify the author with his heroes. Very likely his own personality provided the

38) I. Yefremov, Mol. gv. (M.), p. 111.

39) See for example A. Sinyavsky, 'Sovremenny nauchno-fantastichesky roman', Puti razvitiya sovremennogo sovetskogo romana, Izd. Akademii Nauk (M., 1961), p. 341.

40) Ye. Brandis, V. Dmitrevsky, 'Real'nost' fantastiki', Neva, No. 4 (L., 1972), p. 169.

41) Ibid.

basis for the characters, but the heroes are models of intellectual and physical perfection which none of our contemporaries could possibly attain, as Yefremov mentions quite often.

Yefremov's works, particularly Tumannost' Andromedy, in their attempt to transcend the usual utopia by trying to depict, not an ideal society and an ideal man alone, but above all their permanent striving for even more perfection, overshadow and perhaps hamper the rest of utopian scientific fantasy. Their public and critical esteem in the Soviet Union makes it practically impossible for any author to present a comprehensive picture of the future which is vastly different from Yefremov's conception.

Yefremov's idea of the superman is in contradiction to the widely-held Western assumption that the Grecian ideal of perfect beauty combined with a brilliant intellect and noble soul is a biological improbability.⁴²⁾ In Western technology genius and superman are usually equated. The genius is even allowed some negative traits of character (arrogance, rudeness etc.). Furthermore, it is an accepted tendency of a technical genius to isolate himself from society, to shun the collective.⁴³⁾ All these characteristics would be completely unthinkable with Yefremov's heroes.

The credibility of these supermen can be tested against one of Nietzsche's statements, in which he named the precondition for heroism: 'Wenn einer zum Helden werden will, so muss die Schlange vorher zum

42) Eugen Sänger, 'Das Bild des Übermenschen in der modernen Technik', Ernst Benz (ed.), Der Übermensch, Rhein-Verlag Zürich (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 421.

43) Ibid., p. 423.

Drachen geworden sein, sonst fehlt ihm sein rechter Feind.⁴⁴⁾ In Yefremov's utopias, however, the serpent of capitalism, instead of turning into a dragon, has dwindled into a worm or even vanished completely. The lack of an obvious opponent, the mere romantic search for an abstraction (i.e. self-perfection) seems strikingly incongruous in conjunction with the massive amount of gifts which he attributes to his heroes.

Yefremov is by far the most important Soviet writer creating a superhuman new man. However, he is not the only one, as a few selected examples will show.

G. Al'tov and V. Zhuravleva in their Ballada o zvezdakh⁴⁵⁾ (A Ballad About the Stars, 1960) confront a representative of the future with apparently superior aliens on a distant planet. These beings call themselves 'The Ones Who See the Essence of Things', they communicate through telepathy, have developed hypnosis for taming animals of prey and live now in a paradisaical world without worries about the weather or food supply. Unfortunately, these creatures are ignorant of the fight for existence and are therefore characterised by total apathy.⁴⁶⁾

As opposed to them, man has never known apathy, as he has always

44) Friedrich Nietzsche, I c IX, Der Mensch mit sich allein, § 498, Vol. 72, p. 314; quoted from Der Übermensch, p. 121.

45) Zolotoy Lotus, Mol. gv. (M., 1961).

46) This situation seems based on a similar (though refuted) argument in Wells's Men like Gods (1923), where Catskill links absolute peace and human degeneration.

had to work hard in order to survive. Work means creativity; the new man demonstrates this through his very existence. 'The man of the future is a poet and a scientist. More precisely, he is the one and the other simultaneously, for beyond a certain borderline these terms intermingle....'⁴⁷⁾

The aliens, not knowing work, cannot be creative. Thus man's superiority is finally established.

Like Yefremov Al'tov and Zhuravleva are of the opinion that only communism will enable man to contact intelligent aliens. They elaborate the point by stating that communism will give man not only the technical know-how but also the moral right to establish contact. For when 'evil' has been eradicated on Earth, the danger of a potentially violent confrontation will have vanished (an idea which does not seem very concerned about the aliens' intentions).

The authors also assume that human and social evolution will continue in the communist future. Unlike Yefremov, however, they do not try to explain what kind of qualitatively different dialectical contradictions will drive on progress. All they offer is the modest statement: 'Work did not make only our distant ancestors human, work continues to form man.'⁴⁸⁾ Certainly, man's relation to work is the all-important standard of human happiness and social progress. The question remains, however, if man, who is by definition 'disalienated' from his work under communism, would not have to set himself a new historical goal in order to prolong the

47) 'Ballada o zvezdakh', p. 85.

48) Ibid., p. 86.

upward spiral of evolution.

The hero in Ballada o zvezdakh, who is a typical representative of the new humanity, is implicitly superhuman by virtue of mankind's incredible technological advancement and his moral superiority to seemingly 'better-equipped' aliens.

The authors' emphasis on the necessity of work and on the aliens' apathy in their untroubled world is explained by the communist abhorrence of a static paradise. This vision of paradise might also be rejected in science fiction, but for curiously different reasons. For instance, J. Blish in his novel The Case of Conscience⁴⁹⁾ (1958) features a paradisaical alien planet whose inhabitants follow human moral principles more purely than man ever could, although they have no religion, no concept of God. The hero, a Jesuit priest, comes to the conclusion that this planet can only be a gigantic trap set up by Satan in order to suggest to man that goodness can be reached without the help of God. Finally, the planet has to be destroyed by a coincidence of exorcism and atomic experiments. - While paradise will be a blessing for a catholic, barring such a unique exception, Soviet writers and critics never cease to point out that communism is by no means to be confused with paradise.

A. L. Morton, a Western communist, makes it clear that the visions of the land of plenty whose offers can be had without toil have always infuriated the moralists.⁵⁰⁾ He, of course, refers to capitalist society.

49) Arrow Books (London, 1972).

50) The English Utopia, Lawrence and Wishart (London, 1952), p. 23.

In view of demanding five-year plans and ever new pledges to over-production, Soviet politicians and writers certainly do not expect abundance without toil. This is also demonstrated by the new brand of superheroes in scientific fantasy, one of whose outstanding characteristics is boundless energy — an energy which the ordinary Soviet citizen would not even dream of. Thus the superhero, as opposed to the positive hero, does not call for the reader's identification. He remains an unreachable ideal.

V. Savchenko, in Otkrytiye sebya⁵¹⁾ (The Discovery of One's Self, 1967), does not think that work alone will eventually create a new superman. He holds that man's advancement does not nearly keep up with the changes of his environment. Biological evolution cannot be waited for; it has to be speeded up artificially. This could be done by producing human doubles who will be able to make use of their full brain capacity, as opposed to ordinary man's fractional use of his brain. The obvious problem, which Savchenko discusses throughout the book without being able to solve it, is the ambiguity involved in manipulating man's essence in general and his brain in particular. His formula — that artists and scientists of genius should help to create the man of the future — is no more than a makeshift answer.

Whereas Yefremov, Al'tov and Zhuravleva argue that man has a potential for developing into a superbeing, Savchenko implies that man is actually superman, but has to be made aware of it. However, he never gets

51) Biblioteka sovremennoy fantastiki, tom 22, Mol. gv. (M., 1971).

beyond the moral points involved in 'manufacturing' the new man.

I. Varshavsky's story Trava bessmertiya⁵²⁾ (The Herb of Immortality, 1971) starts where Savchenko stopped. The latent reserves of the brain have been made available to everybody. People now have the gift of foresight, the ability to 'receive' the emotions of others, computer-like capacities of calculation, total recall etc. This stage has been reached by immense genetic work. Man's life-span has been trebled, but one may think that man, perfect as he is now, deserves immortality. However, human beings may still have capacities which have not been explored yet. Personal immortality would prevent all further search for the improvement of mankind; therefore it has to be renounced. - Varshavsky reiterates the basic principle of scientific fantasy: evolution must go on, even supermen must avoid staticism.

The superman's non-alienation, implied in Yefremov's works, is made most explicit in A. Dneprov's short story Podvig (The Heroic Feat, 1962). - As the ice of the Arctic region is melting, only a superhuman intellect is thought capable of providing a last-minute rescue of humanity from impending inundation. Therefore an operation which will set free man's latent genius is performed on a group of scientists, among whom there is a physicist, Korio. His beloved Olla is told:

'Naturally he will become a different person. He will become a better person, a richer person, and more intelligent, too. His mind will be liberated of all extraneous pressures. He will be transformed into a thinker of unlimited breadth and depth.'⁵³⁾

52) Tayna vsekh tayn, Lenizdat (L., 1971).

53) A. Dnieprov, 'The Heroic Feat', R. Magidoff (ed.), Russian Science Fiction 1968, New York University Press, Univ. of London Press Ltd. (New York, London, 1968), p. 62.

Olla is afraid that Korio will also lose his affection for her, for 'he won't be Korio, my Korio...he'll be completely different...someone else...a stranger!' But her brother consoles her: 'Olla dear, there are no strangers any more..... All people are comrades and friends.'⁵⁴⁾

Indeed, the lovers' relationship does not change at all. This confirms the communist hope that mankind will eventually grow into an entity which cannot be split up by the varying abilities of individuals. At the same time, like practically all Soviet works dealing with supermen, Podvig emphasises the unlimited potential of all human beings.

The examples given of the superhero are typical of scientific fantasy.⁵⁵⁾ They show the future man as definitely superior (because enriched by fantastic dimensions) to the positive hero. As Yu. Dubrovin says in his short story Eti troye (The Threesome, 1964): "'The future" is a ten-year-old boy, who possesses the intellectual wealth of the geniuses of all time.'⁵⁶⁾ But man will undergo a tremendous change for the better not only intellectually, but also spiritually, morally and physically. The conflicts he will have to deal with will be on levels (e.g. purely mental or cosmic levels) other than today's political conflicts. The definitions of conflict, however, remain vague and reveal the difficulty of 'computing' the new society and the new man even for a dialectically inclined writer.

54) Ibid., p. 64.

55) For a contemplation of the 'infrequent' supermen in science fiction see S. Lem, Fantastyka i futurologia, Vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Literackie (Kraków, 1970), pp. 200-217; and V. Graaf, Homo Futurus, Claassen Verlag (Hamburg u. Düsseldorf, 1971), pp. 124-141.

56) Luchshy iz mirov, Mol. gv. (M., 1964), p. 213.

The search for the new man, the superman, is something that most philosophical teachings have in common. For instance, the search of communist writers is very similar to Spencer's determinism, which also holds that man is in a transition stage and will eventually be replaced by a being that transcends him by far. The change that Spencer has in mind is spiritualistic as well as materialistic⁵⁷⁾ — a result which practically coincides with Marxist views, though the assumed historic process differs, of course.

The affinity between the original Christian human ideal and the non-Christian scientific concept of the superman has been pointed out convincingly by E. Benz as

the belief in the possibility of a creative transformation of man, in the coming of a new man; also in man's surpassing of himself, a process which is already agitating inside him as an element of unrest and which is the cause of his misery and greatness.⁵⁸⁾

A recent short story by V. Morochko, 'Moye imya vam izvestno' ('You know my name', 1972), confirms Benz's statement in minute detail. - The Earth man Erzya seems to be a failure in life. When he takes up a career as a geophysicist he finds that none of the earthquakes which he predicts take place; when he studies medicine not a single one of his diagnoses is correct. After many similar experiences Erzya decides that only one person can help him: the so-called 'Exceptional One', a super-being whom nobody has ever seen, the rumours of whose omnipotence have,

57) Herbert Spencer, First Principles, Watts & Co. (London, 1946, sixth and final edition), p. 498.

58) Der Übermensch, p. 453.

however, become a myth. For a long time Erzya cruises from planet to planet in search of this legendary figure. Then a deadly 'cloud' threatens to destroy the galaxy. Erzya sees the picture of destruction in his mind, but the danger passes, and now he understands:

...reality itself reaches me before its time, and then the links break, the order of events is disturbed, the inevitable becomes impossible. Who am I and what am I capable of?⁵⁹⁾

He himself is, predictably, the 'Exceptional One' who has the ability of 'drowning' any reality in his own mind.

This is proof to Erzya that he is no failure and, curiously enough, that he is 'like everybody else' — except for one additional talent.

While the author, obeying the spirit of materialism, tried to destroy a quasi-religious myth, he (unwittingly) supported it by creating a god. Morochko modifies, but does not contradict, the expectation of the Second Coming of Christ,⁶⁰⁾ which was more explicit in the works of N. Fedorov and D. Merezhkovsky.

On the whole, the supermen of Soviet scientific fantasy bear a surprising resemblance to the 'supra-moralistic' ideal man, whom Fedorov describes in his 'Philosophy of the Common Cause'. Like Marx, Fedorov envisages an eschatological model world which is populated by a collective of people, whose 'super-humanity' consists in the scientific 'transformation of the blind, unreasonable force of nature' into a means 'directed by reason'.⁶¹⁾

59) V. Morochko, "'Moye imya vam izvestno'", Fantastika 72, Mol. gv. (M., 1972), pp. 202-203.

60) This is a common theme in science fiction: see A. Ryan, 'The Mind of Mr. J. G. Ballard', Foundation, No. 3 (London, 1973), p. 45.

61) N. Fedorov, Filosofiya obshchago dela, tom II, reprinted by Gregg International Publishers Ltd. (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants, England, 1970), p. 121.

The depiction of the positive superhero illustrates once again that even philosophical systems which are diametrically opposed as far as their basic assumptions are concerned and each of which claims uniqueness of cognition for itself may converge surprisingly in at least part of their final conclusions. To use C. G. Jung's terminology: the superman might well be the symbol of a universal model of the unconscious, the symbol of a psychological archetype.

IV. ALIENATED HEROES IN SCIENTIFIC FANTASY

1. Utopian Types

So far we have looked at heroes who are fully integrated into their respective societies, no matter whether these societies are supposed to take shape in the near or distant future.

The 'disalienation' of the heroes is, in fact, a requirement of Soviet criticism, which puts great value on the didactic function of positive characters. However, there are writers of pure fiction as well as of scientific fantasy who for various reasons still prefer to choose an unintegrated, alienated individual for their protagonist. - It will be advisable to characterise the prototype of alienation, the 'superfluous man' of 19th-century Russian literature, before discussing the development of his counterpart in scientific fantasy.

The 'superfluous men' of the last century are widely considered reflections of real types in Russian society. They are vaguely aware of socially progressive ideas, but usually far from carrying them out, as they are mostly unable to cross the line between theory and practice. What remains is an overpowering doubt about themselves and their society. Although by birth and education they are normally typical representatives of the Russian upper class, they stand isolated even in it, because their class does not share even their dim notions of progress. The following definition of the 'superfluous man' may be taken as comprehensive:

His main features are: alienation from official life
in Russia, from his own social environment (usually

aristocratic), by comparison to which the hero is aware of his intellectual and moral superiority, and at the same time mental fatigue, profound scepticism, the clash between word and action and, as a rule, social passivity.¹⁾

The 'superfluous men' enter the literary scene with A. Griboyedov's Gore ot uma (Woe from Wit, 1824). The most famous example is provided in A. Pushkin's Yevgeny Onegin (1823-1831). The line is continued by e.g. M. Lermontov's psychological novel Geroy nashego vremeni (A Hero of Our Time, 1840), his poem Demon (written 1829-1841) and A. Gertsen's Kto vinovat? (Who's to Blame?, 1846). The term 'superfluous man' becomes a household word (at least in upper class households) with I. Turgenev's Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka (The Diary of a Superfluous Man, 1850). Turgenev, indeed, employs this type of character in many works, such as some of the Zapiski okhotnika (Notes of a Hunter, mainly 1846-1852), Rudin (1856), Dvoryanskoye gnezdo (A Nest of Gentlefolk, 1859), Nakanune (On the Eve, 1860), Veshniye vody (The Torrents of Spring, 1871) and others.

I. Goncharov carries the picture of social superfluosity to the extreme in Oblomov (1859), and A. Chekhov emphasises the term again in his short story Lishniye lyudi (Superfluous people, 1886). The type is also present in L. Tolstoy's Voyna i mir (War and Peace, 1862-1869) and Anna Karenina (1875-1877), and F. Dostoyevsky's Prestupleniye i nakazaniye (Crime and Punishment, 1866) and Brat'ya Karamazovy (The Brothers Karamazov, 1880) among others.

1) Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya, tom 4, Sovetskaya entsiklopediya (M., 1967), entry 'lishny chelovek'.

The 'superfluous men' flourish especially from the 1820s to the 1890s, but they appear frequently even in the early 20th century. - Naturally, there is a wide difference between the various manifestations of the type. What they all have in common, however, is their sense of isolation and loneliness - with social alienation often expressed in terms of the hero's estrangement from his beloved.

N. Chernyshevsky sees the irony of the 'superfluous men' in the fact that they are - in spite of all their worthlessness - still the most valuable people in the Russian society of their time. They have the right ideas to further progress (they usually support the abolition of serfdom, protest against tyranny and social discrimination - in short, they advocate democracy and liberalism), but they lack the courage to carry them out. For even the most intelligent and courageous person finds it very hard to break the mode of life imposed on him by education and the lethargy of his society. A more active type of behaviour can be expected only in the future, when the educational system has changed and people are able to act according to reason:

There are happy circumstances for all of us, but not everybody is able to make use of them; this ability, however, constitutes almost the only difference between people whose life follows a desirable or an undesirable course.²⁾

There is a contradiction in Chernyshevsky's argument when he puts the individual's deplorable state down to his social environment, but

2) 'Russky chelovek na rendez-vous', Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy, tom 5, stat'i 1858-1859, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1950), p. 160.

suggests at the same time that salvation is to be found in obeying one's reason, as if a person's reason were not also affected by his environment. However, a sore spot in the 'superfluous man's' make-up is brought out clearly: his lack of determination, which is close to cowardice.

N. Dobrolyubov thinks that Oblomov is the culmination of all 'superfluous men'. His total apathy is due to his social station (landed gentry) and the intellectual and moral degeneration stemming from it. He has never learned to bear responsibility, because his servants have always solved even the simplest problems for him. Oblomov and his ilk are all useless parasites, although they had a theoretical chance to become great men:

They all have one thing in common: a fruitless struggle for activity, the awareness that they could accomplish a lot, but that they will accomplish nothing.³⁾

On the other hand, Oblomov's passivity is by no means unusual, because Russian society is so conditioned 'that every alert man seems, not without reason, restless and completely superfluous to society'.⁴⁾ Naturally, if apathy is common, rôles will reverse and the active individual will appear alienated (which can be seen as early as in Gore ot uma). In this alienation Dobrolyubov sees a chance: a breakthrough in social development must come about by overall apathy pushed to the extreme. This is, indeed, a surprisingly dialectical concept, which was later developed by Lenin.

3) 'Chto takoye oblomovshchina?', Sobraniye soch. v devyati tomakh, tom 4, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., L., 1962), p. 329.

4) 'Kogda zhe pridet nastoyashchy den'?', ibid., tom 6 (M., L., 1963), p. 124.

Only one year after Dobrolyubov's analysis, Bazarov in Turgenev's Ottsy i deti (Fathers and Children, 1861) becomes the symbol of historic progress, which now passes through a phase of nihilism. Despite Bazarov's negative view of the world, Gertsen sees him as a hopeful figure: '...the Pechorins [Geroy nashego vremeni] have will-power without knowledge, the Rudins have knowledge without will-power, the Bazarovs have knowledge as well as will-power.'⁵⁾

N. Saltykov-Shchedrin, like all Russian socialists, believes in the political importance of literature, which makes it easy to see why these critics and authors are held in such high esteem in the Soviet Union. Shchedrin writes that literature has not only to serve the representatives and the most urgent needs of a given society, but must also point out the tendencies which have not been consciously absorbed by society, but which will determine its future.⁶⁾ This rôle of literature (which can be interpreted in terms of enlightenment or propaganda) can best be fulfilled if the obsolete 'superfluous man' is discarded and replaced by a 'positive type', a man of action who will be the characteristic hero of 'positive-nihilist' literature.⁷⁾

The positive type that Shchedrin demands has by that time appeared only in Chernyshevsky's bold novel Chto delat'? (What's to Be Done?, 1863). The title itself suggests the shift of emphasis from the contemplative

5) 'Eshche raz Bazarov', Sobr. soch. v tridtsati tomakh, tom 20, Izd. Akademii Nauk (M., 1960), p. 38.

6) 'Naprasnyye opaseniya', O literature, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1952), pp. 298-299.

7) Ibid., pp. 306-309.

attitude in Kto vinovat? (Who's to Blame?) to the activity of the new generation.⁸⁾

The theorists of Soviet literature criticise the 'superfluous man' as violently as did the early socialists of Tsarist Russia. M. Gor'ky's argumentation in his famous speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 is astonishingly close to Shchedrin's. Gor'ky puts the appearance of 'superfluous people' down to individualism's development into egocentrism⁹⁾ in bourgeois society; he also calls for an active, creative new hero:

We must make labour the principal hero of our books, i.e., man as organized by labour processes, one who, in our country, is equipped with the might of modern techniques, and is, in his turn, making labour easier and more productive, and raising it to the level of an art. We must learn to understand labour as a creative act.¹⁰⁾

Consequently, there is no place for the indecisive, weak types of pre-revolutionary times:

In our country, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, there must not, there cannot be, any superfluous people. Every citizen has full liberty to develop his capacities, gifts and talents. The only demand presented to the individual is that he should be honest in his attitude to the heroic work of creating a classless society.¹¹⁾

8) Compare H. Gifford, The Hero of His Time, Edw. Arnold & Co. (London, 1950), p. 181.

9) 'Soviet Literature', On Literature, Foreign Languages Publishing House (M.), p. 241.

10) Ibid., p. 254.

11) Ibid., p. 255.

'Archaic' individualism as a theme of literature is also castigated by Lenin in his article Partiynaya organizatsiya i partiynaya literatura (Party Organisation and Party Literature, 1905). The objective goal of an artistic perception of reality coincides with the interests of the proletariat. Therefore, Lenin emphasised, the literature of the future will be free – in the sense that it will be liberated from the power of the bourgeoisie and will serve the socialist proletariat.¹²⁾

Again, as proletarian heroism will have to be reflected in heroic positive types of literary characterisation, there seems to be no room for an alienated individual who would be 'unreal' by Soviet standards of artistic perception.

Obviously, an element of the ideologically 'unreal' has a good chance of slipping into a genre such as scientific fantasy, which is concerned with 'the not yet real' and 'the potentially real'. Indeed, there are kinds of speculative fiction as a whole in which an alienated hero is indispensable.

Before we turn to the socialist alienated hero, however, let us have a brief look at two older varieties of the type.¹³⁾

One of the first alienated protagonists of Russian 'pure' fantasy appears in F. Dostoyevsky's Son smeshnogo cheloveka (The Dream of a

12) See I. Chernoutsan, 'Leninsky manifest revolyutsionnogo iskusstva', Literatura i sovremennost', sbornik 7, stat'i o literature 1966 g., Izd. khud. lit. (M., 1967), p. 14.

13) The best surveys of pre-revolutionary Russian utopias and fantasy are V. Svyatlovsky, Russky utopichesky roman, Gos. izd. (Peterburg, 1922) and V. Revich, 'Ne byl', no i ne vydumka', Fantastika '71.

Ridiculous Man, 1877). The hero, who can see no purpose in life, decides to shoot himself. But before he can do so, he falls asleep and in his dream is transported to a planet which is the exact double of Earth before the fall of man. Happiness, peace and beauty rule in this paradise. Man and nature communicate with each other, fear is unknown. But the visitor from Earth destroys the idyll. His very presence infects the natives with dishonesty, jealousy, cruelty, shame and false feelings of honour. Religions, laws and science are created. Wars and feuds spring up.

In his dream the visitor dies with grief when he sees the misery that he has caused. But actually he awakes and realises that he has seen the truth. Now he knows that happiness would be attainable if only everybody adhered to the Christian gospel of brotherly love. The hero forgets all his plans of suicide and decides to preach the gospel: 'What has to be fought is the idea that the analysis of life is worth more than life itself, that the knowledge of the laws of happiness is worth more than happiness itself! And I shall fight.'¹⁴⁾

This is a rejection of the state-regulated, scientific happiness which Chernyshevsky had proclaimed in his Chto delat'? It is a rejection of atheist socialism in favour of the old Christian ideals, which does not, however, exempt capitalism from Dostoyevsky's condemnation.¹⁵⁾

Significantly, by his conversion the hero overcomes only his

14) F. M. Dostoyevsky, Sobraniye sochineniy, tom 10, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1958), p. 441.

15) On Dostoyevsky's faith in the Orthodox Church rather than the socialist revolution see V. Ya. Kirpotin, Dostoyevsky — khudozhnik, Sovetsky pisatel' (M., 1972), pp. 233-236.

alienation from himself. He will still be alienated from most of his fellow citizens, who will most likely consider him crazy, as Dostoyevsky points out. Here we have the most important contrast to the Marxist concept which defines personal and social alienation as inseparably linked.¹⁶⁾

The second work which has to be mentioned here is V. Bryusov's Respublika Yuzhnogo Kresta (The Republic of the Southern Cross, 1905). This story with its strong technological component may be classed as related to scientific fantasy. Surprisingly, it fits into the theme of alienation, although it has no distinct protagonist. However, all the citizens of the Republic, according to R. L. Jackson, display the kind of alienation which is typical of the Underground Man:

Like the Underground Man, the citizen of the Republic understands only two ways of life: a submissive, totally regulated existence or the wild, monstrous anarchism of the 'underground'. The two extremes reflect the organic disharmony of reason and will in the Republic's citizens. It is in the conception of this citizen as a split and irrational being, and of the inevitable and terrible end of a national order, that Bryusov's 'Republic of the Southern Cross' follows the anti-rationalist, anti-utopian tradition of Notes from the Underground.¹⁷⁾

Respublika Yuzhnogo Kresta is strongly influenced by Wells's When the Sleeper Wakes (1899). The story describes how 300 steel works in the Southern Polar region develop into a republic, which becomes a world

16) See K. Marx, Texte zu Methode und Praxis II, Rowohlt (Hamburg, 1970), pp. 56-58.

17) R. L. Jackson, Dostoyevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature, Mouton & Co. (S'Gravenhage, 1958), p. 116.

state. This state boasts material abundance, an ideal welfare and education system and a superficially perfect democracy. But it is really ruled by a 'Board of Directors' who unobtrusively impose censorship and general uniformity, even as far as clothes and food are concerned. Secret police, espionage and political murder are all typical of the Directors' rule. - Suddenly a mysterious epidemic breaks out and infects the whole population of the capital. The symptom of the disease, mania contradicens, is that people wish one thing, but say and do another.¹⁸⁾ For instance, doctors poison their patients and nurses kill the children entrusted to them. The epidemic results in general insanity, brutality, debauchery and, finally, anarchy and death.

Bryusov offers no explicit cause for the outbreak of the disease, but he alludes very strongly to the combination of smugness and autocracy which are prevalent in the Republic:

The problem of the future historian will be to determine how much this system was responsible for the outbreak and spread of that fatal disease which brought to destruction the town of Zvezdny, and with it, perhaps, the whole young Republic.¹⁹⁾

Jackson's interpretation of the epidemic as an expression of the citizens' rebellion against rationality must seem doubtful if we consider that the apparent rationality of the system is only a veil which covers

18) Vl. Bakhnov, in the parody 'Yedinstvenny v svoem rode', Fantastika 1966, vyp. 1, Mol. gv. (M., 1966), applies a similar idea to cybernetic machines, which 'pathologically' contradict disagreeable truths in order to please their masters.

19) V. Brussov, The Republic of the Southern Cross and Other Stories, Constable and Co. Ltd. (London, 1918), p. 8.

the most arbitrary acts of tyranny. Britikov's opinion is more convincing: he views the disease as a symbol of the irrationality of a system, whose capitalist characteristics provide the basis of fascism.²⁰⁾ While Jackson is right in equating the symptoms of the citizens' alienation (chaos, anarchy) with those of the Underground Man, he is wrong in assuming identical causes for it.

Both Dostoyevsky and Bryusov place their characters in an environment which has distinct anti-utopian traits. The characters' alienation is therefore not very surprising. However, not even the heroes of a socialist utopia are necessarily well-integrated types.

The stock character of utopias, the traveller in space and/or time who discovers the coveted society, traditionally has the rôle of a careful observer; he seldom becomes involved himself with the life of utopia. This functionalism of the traveller is particularly noticeable in works written by pre-Marxist writers, who tend to view their utopias as mere ideals to be contemplated. The ideal can be described by the traveller without his even dreaming of identifying with it (the instances when he does settle down in utopia are exceptional). His objective distance from the model society — he cannot and does not want to be integrated in it — never lets the problem of alienation arise.

The socialist writer should use a different approach when describing his ideal society. His ideal is not unattainable, but will be realised in the conceivable future: utopia has become eschatological. The term 'utopian' is actually offensive to many communists who base their contempt

20) Russky sovetsky nauchno-fantastichesky roman, p. 40.

on Engels's and Lenin's equation of utopianism and unscientific idealism.²¹⁾ Here the word will not be used in this derogatory sense;²²⁾ 'utopia' shall be an improved social structure whose realisation is at present blocked by political circumstances²³⁾ – in other words, an expression of the desire for a better world, which is still within the bounds of possibility.²⁴⁾

The logic of socialist humanism demands that man himself creates his utopia. It is not given to him by a god or a god-like King. Thus not only is the citizen's detachment from utopia lessened; the visitor also loses a good deal of his objective distance when it is assumed that the coming of utopia must be at least 'embryonically' programmed into him, even when he comes from another social system or epoch. After all, even the feudalist or the capitalist are necessary stages on the way to communist man.²⁵⁾ No doubt these people would still be alienated in a communist utopia because of insuperable antagonistic contradictions.

21) See F. Engels, Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft, Verlag der Marxistischen Blätter (Frankfurt/M., no date), p. 68; or V. I. Lenin, 'Dve utopii', Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy, tom 22, Gos. izd. pol. lit. (M., 1961, izdaniye pyatoye), pp. 117-121.

22) Connotations discussed in detail by M. Buber, Der utopische Sozialismus, Verlag Jakob Hegner (Köln, 1967), p. 16.

23) See H. Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation, Penguin Books (Middlesex, 1972), p. 13.

24) Compare E. Bloch, Freiheit und Ordnung, Aufbau Verlag (Berlin, 1947), p. 154.

25) See, for instance, K. Marx, Texte zu Methode und Praxis, III, Rowohlt (Hamburg, 1970), p. 167.

Theoretically, however, a communist or socialist, who would only have to overcome potential difficulties of psychological preparation – as the transition from socialism to communism is non-antagonistic²⁶⁾ – should find it easier to adjust when transported to a distant utopia.

Since Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Gulliver's Travels (1726), which are more strongly fictionalised than most other utopias and therefore not always recognised as such, 'bourgeois' heroes have prevailed in utopian literature.²⁷⁾ Nowadays, however, there are quite a few Soviet utopias, whose heroes are usually, though not always, socialists or communists themselves. We will try to establish what part alienation still plays in some of these works.

The trailblazer for all Soviet utopias to follow is A. Bogdanov's Krasnaya zvezda²⁸⁾ (The Red Star, 1908).

The Martian scientist Menni half-persuades, half-forces the social-democratic revolutionary Leonid to accompany him to Mars. The journey is made in a spaceship which uses 'minus-matter' for fuel.

Leonid is to be acquainted with socialism in the highly developed Martian society. Later he is supposed to be an ambassador of Martian culture on Earth: 'There [on Earth] blood is running for a better future,

26) See I. Yermolayev, Zakony razvitiya obshchestva i stroitel'stvo kommunizma, Mysl' (M., 1971), p. 41.

27) A. L. Morton, The English Utopia, Lawrence and Wishart (London, 1969), p. 122.

28) Some critics regard the novel as the first socialist utopia, for instance V. Svyatlovsky, Russky utopichesky roman, p. 49; others bestow this honour on Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream in Chernyshevsky's Chto delat'?, for instance V. Revich, 'Ne byl', no i ne vydumka', Fantastika 71, p. 287.

but even for fighting it is necessary to know this better future. You shall receive this knowledge here.'²⁹⁾

Bogdanov depicts a fully-organised planetary superstate on Mars, in which demand and production are ideally coordinated, i.e., on the basis of a planned economy and the good will of the individuals. Martian civilisation is completely automatised (computers are even in charge of planning); pollution does not exist. Even the sounds of the machines are pleasant, almost melodious. All work is voluntary and supposed to give man a chance of self-realisation. As a rule, people work 4-6 hours per week.

Leonid, overcome by all the new impressions and the superiority of the Martians, falls into a delirious fever. He is nursed by Netti, a woman doctor, whom he has taken for a man. When this regrettable error is done away with, they fall in love and start working for the foundation of a 'League of Worlds' between Mars and Earth.

However, even the Martians are not all-powerful. As they refrain from birth-control and are unable to produce protein synthetically, a shortage of food is imminent. They will have to colonise either (uninhabited) Venus or Earth in order to make new sources of food available. - In the final discussion the scientist Sterni proposes to choose Earth and to eradicate its population, as it is not mature enough for a social revolution. Netti, in contradicting him, declares that the Earth people surpass the Martians as far as energy, passion and heroism

29) A. Bogdanov (i.e. Malinovsky), Krasnaya zvezda, Krasnaya gazeta (L., 1929), p. 48.

are concerned, for they have to fight for socialism with all their strength, whereas on Mars capitalism has been overcome without comparable resistance by the ruling classes. The Congress agrees with her and, for the time being, sends an expedition to Venus.

Leonid, hearing of Sterni's plan, suffers another feverish attack, in which he later thinks he has killed Sterni. He returns to Earth, fights actively for the Russian revolution and is seriously wounded. Netti comes to Earth, informs Leonid that his murderous deed was only a nightmare and takes him back to Mars.

In Krasnaya zvezda the hero, an early socialist revolutionary, finds himself unable to cope with the ideal society that he is, after all, fighting for. Leonid escapes into dreams and nightmares. - He does not grasp the Martian social system (which, e.g., sanctions suicide) and cannot appreciate Martian culture (Martian literature, drama and art are incomprehensible to him), although he realises its superiority.

But Leonid is not only intellectually inadequate, he is, above all, emotionally unstable, which makes him a foreign body in the composed Martian society. His emotionalism is particularly stressed in his rash, furious, though imaginary attempt to kill Sterni.

Leonid's problem is the conflict between mental recognition of the ideal and emotional inability to adjust to it. This failure is epitomised in his relationship with Netti.

The Martians practise polygamy; Leonid himself approves of it theoretically. When he learns, however, that Netti has had polygamous ties before, he is deeply shocked and unable to live up to his own principles. Now Netti turns monogamous and pledges herself to Leonid

forever. - This is not a very convincing solution, as the representative of the infinitely superior culture has to 'lower' her own standards in favour of a supposedly backward attitude. Leonid tries to impose his own rules on the future society instead of adopting its more progressive ones himself. But of this he is hopelessly incapable:

...what shattered my psyche was the very character of that culture which I tried to enter with all my heart: I felt oppressed by its greatness, the depth of its social structure, the purity and transparency of its human relations.³⁰⁾

The ideal quality of many traits of Bogdanov's utopia is debatable - especially from a Soviet point of view as the author lost much of his political influence after being denounced by Lenin as an 'idealist'.³¹⁾ On the other hand, Bogdanov's 'principles of organisation' ('tectology')³²⁾ which are of secondary interest in this context, were valuable in a practical sense for the revolutionary of his time. The introduction to the 1929 edition of the book claims that the novel to quite a large extent anticipates the productive and social structure of the twenties in the Soviet Union.³³⁾

30) Ibid., p. 186.

31) V. Lenin, Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy, tom 48 (M., 1964), p. 161.

32) For a short summary of Bogdanov's theories see S. Utechin, Russian Political Thought, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. (London, 1964), pp. 208-213; or id., 'Philosophy and Society: Alexander Bogdanov', L. Labeledz (ed.), Revisionism, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (London, 1963).

33) B. Legran, 'Predisloviye', Krasnaya zvezda, p. 5.

Bogdanov is one of the first to abandon the schematic utopian traveller in favour of a full-blooded hero with all his peculiarities and shortcomings, whose reaction to Martian society is not just a catalyst for descriptive purposes but actual involvement, which poses a creative problem.³⁴⁾ The alienation of the hero shows up the gap between the socialist ideal and its realisation.

The continuation of Krasnaya zvezda is another Martian novel, Inzhener Menni³⁵⁾ (Menni the Engineer, 1912). Here Bogdanov describes how the proletariat, while building the Martian canals (a gigantic irrigation system) a few hundred years ago, united and came to power without a spectacular revolution. The hero is an ancestor of the Menni in Krasnaya zvezda. Infinitely ambitious, he initiates the construction of the canals and organises it dictatorially. Although Menni is a product of the capitalist class, he does not fit into it: when he is asked to neglect safety for reasons of profit, he kills the insinuator in a fit of rage which is reminiscent of Leonid's nightmare.

When Menni has realised that socialism is superior to the existing order and will win the day, he feels inadequate to the new times and takes refuge in suicide.

The theme of suicide appears in both novels, which is significant as Bogdanov himself died in a blood-transfusion experiment that was at least semi-suicidal. - Many critics voice their disapproval of legitimised

34) See R. Nudel'man, 'Fantastika, rozhdannaya revolyutsiyey', Fantastika 1966, vyp. 3, Mol. gv. (M., 1966), p. 338.

35) Kniga (L., M., 1925).

suicide in Krasnaya zvezda. Indeed, some of the justifications given by Bogdanov, e.g., old age or frustration with one's work, seem rather incompatible with the high level of Martian medicine or the assumed professional motivation respectively. Britikov, however, articulates the principal Soviet condemnation of suicide by saying that a true collectivist would never set an example of spiritual capitulation to the others.³⁶⁾

Some details of Krasnaya zvezda are doubtless borrowed from Wells's The War of the Worlds (1898): e.g., the themes of alien invasion, of lack of raw materials, the colour of Mars.³⁷⁾ However, the similarity between Bogdanov's first novel and K. Lasswitz's Auf zwei Planeten³⁸⁾ (1897) is far more striking.³⁹⁾

Auf zwei Planeten, which was translated into Russian shortly after the turn of the century, also deals with contact between Earth men and anthropoid Martians. Lasswitz's hero Grunthe has the same political conviction as Leonid and the same unpredictable temper. He is also taken to Mars, admires its advancement and marries a native girl, who is vastly superior to him. The main dissimilarities are that Lasswitz's Martian society is based on incredible scientific progress rather than on perfect

36) A. Britikov, Russky sovetsky nauchno-fantastichesky roman, p. 54.

37) For more details see N. Chernaya, V mire mechtyipredvideniya, Naukova dumka (Kiyev, 1972), p. 71.

38) Gebrüder Weiss Verlag (Berlin, no date).

39) For an evaluation of Lasswitz's importance see F. Rottensteiner, 'Kurd Lasswitz: A German Pioneer of Science Fiction', Th. D. Claeson (ed.), SF: The Other Side of Realism, Bowling Green University Popular Press (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1971).

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principles of organisation, and that Mars and Earth make war before coming to terms. Bogdanov's different emphasis on collectivism and peace is reiterated in many Soviet utopias.

In the 1920s A. Tolstoy started the tradition of Soviet scientific fantasy with his novels Aelita (1922) and Giperboloid inzhenera Garina (The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin, 1926-1927). V. Shcherbina remarks that in previous works of this kind the hero usually did not identify his own interests with society's, but rather found himself in conflict with reality. He goes on:

In Soviet literature another hero moves into the foreground — the man of the new society, who feels inseparable from his people and who makes it the principal goal of his life and actions to serve his socialist motherland.⁴⁰⁾

These characteristics are, in his opinion, already present in the two works mentioned.

There is no doubt that Tolstoy owes Bogdanov the rough outlines of Aelita. - The Russian engineer Los' and the Red Guardsman Gusev travel to Mars in a space-ship invented by Los'. They find a society whose technological development excels that of Earth, but whose social structure is archaically encrusted by a class system. Gusev and — more reluctantly — Los' make themselves the leaders of the inevitable revolution and prove their physical and intellectual powers, although their efforts fail in the end.

40) 'Nauchno-fantasticheskiye proizvedeniya A. N. Tolstogo', A. Tolstoy, Giperboloid inzhenera Garina, Aelita, Gos. izd. det. lit. ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR (M., 1963), p. 431.

As with Lasswitz and Bogdanov, the Martians' technical progress is due only to the great age of their civilisation, by no means to superior biological qualities. Aelita reflects the new self-confidence created by the October Revolution: Soviet citizens do not model themselves on the utopias of other states or worlds; on the contrary, they now impose their own standards of utopia on others.

The love story between Los' and Aelita follows Bogdanov's example. Again the girl is the visitor's teacher and interprets the unknown culture to him. It goes without saying, however, that Aelita's literary quality, i.e., the author's psychological insight and narrative subtlety, by far surpasses that of Bogdanov's novels, which were primarily conceived as pamphlets rather than works of literature.

Sometimes Los' and Gusev are regarded as incomplete characters, as two halves of originally one hero. Indeed, Los' is the extreme of the hesitant romantic, whereas Gusev embodies the other extreme of the irresistible man of action, who acts first and thinks later. The two could hypothetically have originated from a personality split of the sometimes thoughtful, sometimes impulsive Leonid. - If we leave these speculations and take the two heroes as independent characters, the picture is different. Then Gusev is the intellectually simple, ardent revolutionary whose protest is totally unorganised and reflects the elementary emotional force of the revolution, not its spiritual and strategic principles: 'The reason is said to be that A. N. Tolstoy did not yet have a clear concept of the communist party.'⁴¹⁾ Nevertheless,

41) Ibid., p. 434.

Gusev is regarded as one of the first realistic pictures of the new type of citizen.⁴²⁾

Los', on the other hand, stands for the 'individualism of the intelligentsia'.⁴³⁾ Shcherbina sums up his position: 'He feels lonely, defenceless; he cannot yet identify totally with the people, devote himself to society's requirements.'⁴⁴⁾ - Mars is not utopia; utopia is supposed to be built in Los''s own country. Thus his romantic desire to go to Mars - a feeling different from Gusev's revolutionary fervour - symbolises his alienation from Soviet society. Moreover, after Los''s return his loneliness becomes even more obvious: now his isolation is not simply caused by a vague longing to leave Earth, but by a more definite reason, namely his intense love for Aelita, the representative of a backward social system. He is now lost for the cause of revolution, as his attention will be romantically distracted forever:

Los' stared in front of himself with white, wide-open eyes.... The voice of Aelita, of love, of eternity, the voice of longing flies through the whole universe, calling, inviting, asking: where are you, where are you, love....⁴⁵⁾

42) See V. Baranov, 'Talant vash - nastoyashchy russky', Lit. gaz., 1973, No. 2.

43) P. Yershov, Science Fiction and Utopian Fantasy in Soviet Literature, Research Program on the U.S.S.R. (New York, 1954), p. 21.

44) 'Nauchno-fant. proizvedeniya', p. 435.

45) Aelita, p. 429.

When Los' joined Gusev in the fight for revolution on Mars, he proved his latent 'socialist conscience'; basically, however, he remains a non-vanguard intellectual who cannot find his place in the new state. His alienation is different from Leonid's in that he could cooperate if he wanted to, whereas Leonid wished to cooperate with utopia but could not.

Tolstoy concentrates on human conflict in Aelita and deliberately neglects the description of strange machines, unusual automata and detailed social mechanisms, which are so often focused upon in conventional utopias and consequently make man appear a negligible quantity.⁴⁶⁾

A few years later, in his fantastic adventure novel Giperboloid inzhenera Garina, Tolstoy condemns extreme individualism. While he displayed understanding for Los', he has not a trace of sympathy for the Russian renegade Garin, an engineer who invented the most powerful weapon on Earth. Los' is passive and at best a lukewarm supporter of socialism, but at least he does not do it any harm. As opposed to him, Garin thinks that his genius lifts him above the collective and entitles him to his own laws. His 'superindividualism'⁴⁷⁾ causes him to found a fascist utopia with strongly emphasised classes, brain conditioning and human stud farms. Garin is a megalomaniac, unprincipled, power-mad and a hater of communism and communists. Such a negative figure requires a more positive counterpart than Los'. Therefore Garin's opponent, Shel'ga, is a more rational communist than Gusev; he is strong, noble, incorruptible.

46) 'A. Tolstoy o literature', Sov. pisatel' (M., 1956), p. 272; quoted from Yu. Ryurikov, 'Cherez sto i tysyachu let', Literatura i sovremennost', Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1960), p. 379.

47) 'Nauchno-fant. proizvedeniya...', p. 439.

Garin is faintly similar in his criminal madness to Buzheninov, the hero of Tolstoy's earlier story Golubyye goroda (Azure Cities, 1925), who is driven into frustration and finally into murder and arson because of 'the disharmony between himself and his environment'.⁴⁸⁾ Garin, however, is beyond alienation as he has deserted all forms of society. He considers himself a cosmopolitan and thus escapes the psychological problems of Buzheninov.

The idea of conflict has changed considerably from Bogdanov to Tolstoy: in Krasnaya zvezda the hero is a socialist who is inadequate in a communist society; in Aelita he is an alienated intellectual who is at best a 'fellow-traveller'; in Giperboloid, finally, the hero is a megalomaniac Russian turned capitalist, the absolutely negative hero to whom the standards of alienation do not apply any more. While the psychological conflict is lessened from Bogdanov to Tolstoy, the situations grow less theoretical and the oppositions become more politically concrete.

V. Itin, in his Strana Gonguri (The Land of Gonguri, 1922) puts even more emphasis on his hero's psychological problems than A. Tolstoy. Itin's protagonist is shown as a wistful, intelligent man, who does not appear to the reader to be less clever than himself. Therefore the book does not suffer from the flaw which so often renders unbelievable the presentation of fantastic pictures of the future.⁴⁹⁾

48) A. Tolstoy, Polnoye sobr. soch., tom 5, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1947), p. 324.

49) Compare R. Nudel'man, 'Fantastika, rozhdennaya...', p. 357.

The revolutionary Gely awaits his execution in a prison of the 'Whites'. One of his fellow prisoners, a doctor, puts him in a hypnotic trance, and Gely tells him of the far future in which he is (or will be) the engineer Riel'.

After thousands of years of the 'new era' Riel''s native planet is an enormous garden, interspersed with cities whose prefabricated parts are put together by air-ships. Whole continents can be changed by planting new mountains or eliminating old ones. Authorities and legal systems do not exist any more, crime is unheard of. Collectivism prevails; even artists mark their works with the sign of their school rather than with their own name.

However, when Riel' takes part in an expedition to another planet untouched by civilisation, he realises to what extent 'the inhabitants of the big city had forgotten about original, inscrutable nature'.⁵⁰⁾

The note of slight discontent which Riel' shows here grows into definite dissatisfaction when it comes to his own work. Whatever he invents seems irrelevant to him. - One day, however, he finds a method of observing the history of the macrocosmos, which is reflected in microscopic parts of matter turned into light.

What Riel' sees is the history of Earth at the time of Gely. Horrified by the pictures of fighting, war and collective suicide, Riel' feels for the first time glad to live in his own epoch. Then, however, the terrible visions take complete hold of him. Overcome by what seems

50) V. Itin, 'Strana Gonguri', Vysoky put', Gos. izd. (M., L., 1927), p. 183.

to him to be the inherent pessimism of history, Riel' kills himself — only to find himself waiting for his execution as Gely.

Several layers of dream and reality intermingle in this complicated novel. What is transparent through all the layers is Gely-Riel''s despair in a world which has seemingly mastered all historical problems and become perfect. But superficial perfection cannot satisfy the questing mind of a man who wants to look behind smooth mechanisms into the essence of things. Riel' is, indeed, a reincarnation of Faust:

And then, under the influence of a tormenting and bright desire, a desperate thought came to my mind — I wanted to be master of the most microscopic rays of energy, transform them into visible waves of light and see with my own eyes what the world is made of.⁵¹⁾

As war appears to be the essence of things, Riel''s shock is comprehensible. Here utter frustration, as in Krasnaya zvezda and Inzhener Menni, justifies suicide as the final refuge of the alienated individual.

As opposed to Strana Gonguri, whose location is not specified, Ya. Okunev's Gryadushchy mir (Future World, 1923) is firmly set on Earth.⁵²⁾

The heroes, Vikent'ev and Yevgeniya, both suffer from tuberculosis. They are put into suspended animation by means of a special gas, which cures their disease in the process (this is a digression from the 'rule' in speculative fantasy, where suspended animation is conventionally used to prolong a sick person's life until a cure can be found).

51) Ibid., p. 191.

52) The title may be a polemical allusion to D. Merezhkovsky's article Gryadushchy kham (1905), which, from the communist point of view, was a denunciation of the revolutionary proletariat. — Compare Russkaya literatura kontsa XIX-nachala XX v., 1901-1907, Nauka (M., 1971), p. 242.

They wake up in the 22nd century, when the 'world-wide commune' has been realised. Private ownership is abolished and government has become superfluous, because 'everybody does what he wants; but all want what everybody wants'.⁵³⁾

People have a telepathic world language, harmony, order and friendship prevail. Instead of eating food one bathes in nourishing solutions; radioactive showers replace sleep. Families do not exist any more; children are brought up collectively.

In this era of frankness and sincerity coyness and love do not go together any longer. If somebody has emotional trouble, he can be cured in a 'hospital for emotions', where hypnosis is applied. - Supply and demand are regulated by a 'statistical office'. All the cities of Earth have spread out and melted into one gigantic complex. (Complete urbanisation is rather a nightmare of science fiction. In scientific fantasy town development is viewed in a less pessimistic light - with rare exceptions such as N. Aseyev's short story Zavtra (Tomorrow), which was published in the same year as Gryadushchy mir.)

Vikent'ev and Yevgeniya, who are rather faceless figures of the early Soviet society, do not at first feel at home in the commune. Yevgeniya is in a particular predicament when a famous scientist straightforwardly declares his love at first sight. Unused to so much directness, she cannot for a long time make a decision. Finally, she makes up her mind, joins the scientist and thus becomes 'naturalised'.

53) Ya. Okunev, Gryadushchy mir, Priboy (Petrograd, 1923), p. 50.

Vikent'ev's problem is now aggravated; having lost Yevgeniya, he feels totally isolated: 'I'm lonely...as if I were in a desert'.⁵⁴⁾ But the 'hospital for emotions' can help. Vikent'ev is cured of his longing for Yevgeniya; now they are both fully integrated citizens of the world commune.

Gryadushchy mir is a weak utopia. The reason is not so much the description of the ideal society (although the organisation of labour, perhaps the most important criterion of freedom, is hardly discussed) as the fact that the heroes are too pale for characters who are supposed to be more than interested by-standers. It is evident that especially Vikent'ev would have been unable to find his place in the new environment, were it not for the 'deus ex machina' of hypnotic adaptation.

An even less convincing instance of eventual disalienation of the heroes is given in V. Nikol'sky's Cherez tysyachu let (In a Thousand Years, 1927).

A Russian engineer and a German professor travel in a Wellsian time-machine to the 30th century. The people of that time look like Homer's heroes and gods; they are, however, considerably more peaceful:

Imagine people of harmonious build, strength and beauty, reason and elegance, and you get a pale formula of the new humanity. It was a completely new race.⁵⁵⁾

Nikol'sky's model society does not display any original traits worth mentioning. What is more interesting is how the two heroes can assimilate

54) Ibid., p. 65.

55) V. Nikol'sky, Cherez tysyachu let, P. P. Soykin (L., 1927), p. 24.

themselves to the men of the future, who have achieved so much that they can be regarded as a new quality of human being. The time-travellers are quite aware of the insuperable difference between themselves and the utopians:

I felt like a savage who has for the first time met with the company of civilised people and who is terribly afraid of doing something out of place.⁵⁶⁾

But it turns out that the people of the old times do not really have any trouble in coping at all. They adapt to their distant descendants almost immediately. No plausible reason for this is given; the only explanation lies in the psychological oversight of the author.

Like most Soviet writers of utopias, Nikol'sky claims that his picture of the future is based on Marxist principles. On the other hand, he finds it hard to say whether Plato's, Campanella's, Morris's, Bellamy's or Wells's utopias might not be closer to the truth.⁵⁷⁾ A dogmatic Marxist would never even consider this possibility.

The two last works dealt with are certainly the least convincing utopias of them all, but the best illustrations of the point that a particular kind of utopia requires a certain amount of alienation of the (time-) travelling hero in order to be successful in its literary aspirations and convincing in its political design. This kind of work is characterised by a hero who does not only want to visit utopia, but who

56) Ibid., p. 34.

57) 'Ot avtora', ibid., p. 4.

wants to live in it. The plausibility of the whole work depends on how plausibly this character, always the intended reader's contemporary, copes with the new environment. The reader, especially when he is a socialist, knows that he himself could not leave his environment without a certain loss of identity, even if he were destined for a communist utopia. Settling down in a new society necessarily involves a search for a new identity, a struggle with alienation which might never end. From this point of view Krasnaya zvezda, the earliest of the utopias mentioned here, might also be the best.

Obviously, Soviet literature in the early and middle twenties was not yet subjected to Party interest as much as it was going to be in the years to come. The situation changed in the late twenties and early thirties, when the 'Russian Association of Proletarian Writers' (RAPP) dominated literary standards. As it held that literature's task was above all to support the first five-year plan, fantasy was strongly objected to. The publication of Ya. Larri's Strana schastlivykh (1931) was a rare exception; it was the last utopia to be published for 26 years.

When socialist realism was declared the obligatory artistic method in 1934, literature finally became an instrument of the Party's educational and ideological purposes. Fantasy consisted mainly of the polemical, anti-capitalist adventure stories of the 'Soviet Jules Verne',⁵⁸⁾ A. Belyayev, and his followers. Social and political criticism vanished completely from scientific fantasy and retreated to the fairy-tale which

58) B. Lyapunov, V mire mechty, Kniga (M., 1970), p. 57.

disguised it even further. - Thus, some of Ye. Shvarts's fairy-tale dramas, which are related to subsequent satirical works of the Strugatskys (Ponedel'nik nachinayetsya v subbotu [Monday Begins on Saturday, 1965]; Skazka o troyke [The Tale of the Triumvirate, 1968]) and V. Shefner, offer veiled criticism, most notably Drakon (The Dragon, 1943),⁵⁹⁾ in which it may be Stalin who is satirised as the dictatorial dragon.

In the forties and early fifties 'production fantasy' (nauchno-proizvodstvennaya fantastika) played the most important rôle. At that time scientific fantasy was supposed to inspire current production methods directly, by being just a bit ahead of it as far as fantastic ideas were concerned. - The critic S. Ivanov formulated the logical outcome of this attitude in 1950 in his 'limitation theory' (teoriya predela). He demanded explicitly that writers of fantasy deal with themes of the near future and confine their imagination to 'Earth concepts'.⁶⁰⁾

The limitations imposed by this demand are indeed crippling, as is unwittingly demonstrated by Ivanov's most ardent disciple, V. Nemtsov, whose fantasies are often outpaced by reality even before publication. His works serve most critics as illustrations of why this 'limitation theory', which confuses scientific prognosis and literary imagination, finally had to be discarded.⁶¹⁾

59) P'esy, Sovetsky pisatel' (L., 1972).

60) S. Ivanov, 'Fantastika i deystvitel'nost', Oktyabr', No. 1 (M., 1950).

61) See A. Sinyavsky, 'Sovremenny nauchno-fant. roman', Puti razvitiya sovremennogo sovetskogo romana, Izd. Ak. Nauk (M., 1961), p. 335; or A. Britikov, 'Evolyutsiya nauchno-fant. romana', Istoriya russkogo sovetskogo romana, kniga 2, Nauka (M., L., 1965), p. 369.

The beginning of the space age in 1957 dealt a shattering blow to science fiction, which felt cheated out of the dream-like grandeur of its 'space operas'; but it gave the kiss of life to Earth-bound scientific fantasy, which in the wake of the break-through could now with impunity expand not only into the cosmos, but into new spheres of the imagination as well.

2. The Space Age

The start of the new era in scientific fantasy coincides roughly with the beginning of 'the Thaw'. Its most important landmark is the publication of Tumannost' Andromedy in 1957. This work initiates the new tendencies in fantasy, which now enlarges its scope both outwardly — into the distant future and into the universe, and inwardly — into psychological and sociological investigations of man's confrontation with change.

Curiously, the new scientific fantasy has not produced any full-scale communist utopias apart from Yefremov's works. One of the reasons, as has been indicated, is the ideological appreciation which Yefremov's vision enjoys and which hampers potentially different interpretations of the future. Another reason might be the newly-found chance of simply experimenting with one or more aspects of the future, which enables the writer to explore his characters more thoroughly than would a comprehensive utopian setting whose emphasis is necessarily on social organisation rather than on human characterisation.

In this chapter we shall deal with the hero in a particular utopian situation, not with his general position in a complete utopia. Again, the stress will be on the importance of alienation in this context.

One of the writers who are especially interested in the philosophical possibilities of modern scientific fantasy is the former 'realist' G. Gor.

This interest is reflected in the very profession of Pogodin, the hero of the long story Strannik i vremya¹⁾ (Time and the Traveller, 1962):

1) Fantastika 1962, Mol. gv. (M., 1962).

he is a philosopher.

Pogodin is put in suspended animation for 300 years so that he can join his wife who is taking part in a cosmic expedition. She will return after a few centuries of Earth time, which last only a fraction of that in the relative time of the space-ship.

When Pogodin awakes in the 23rd century, he is not impressed only by the material abundance and collective happiness (well-known qualities in all utopias), but, above all, by the fact that space and time have become completely new categories. As even gigantic distances can be travelled in a few minutes, cities as centres of social and professional life have become dispensable. - This idea may be based on the expectations of Owen, Fourier and Engels; the latter especially thought cities typical of capitalism and anticipated the eventual levelling out of urban and rural discrepancies.²⁾

In the 23rd century private property is unknown; household requisites simply materialise whenever needed. The hero is used to considering robots mere machines, but he finds that they now have emotions, are even capable of suicide.

There are many similar instances when Pogodin has to revise old concepts. His special position, as he remarks himself, is due to 'the alienation of his temporary death'.³⁾ The hero's loss of identity is

2) See N. Meshcheryakov, 'Nauchny sotsializm o tipe poseleniy budushchego obshchestva', Krasnaya nov', 3/1931, pp. 125-126.

3) 'Strannik i vremya', p. 9.

symbolised in the loss of his name:

And who would have thought of calling me Pavel Dmitriyevich, when I did not need name or patronymic. I was distinguished from all the others who lived at the same time as I by something more important than a name: age. After all, I had passed my 335th birthday a short time before.⁴⁾

When Pogodin meets Bom, an alien who is marooned on Earth and can never return to his native planet Tioma, he finds a kindred spirit. Bom tells him that the scientists of Tioma are able to bring about immortality, but that the realisation of it has been rejected by common consent. For 'the individual is linked with history, with his time. But when he becomes immortal he is torn away from the moment, from history, from social existence'.⁵⁾ This loss of roots applies to Pogodin and Bom as well: leaving one's time automatically means leaving one's place, and vice versa.

(Gor later stresses this point in other works, especially in the short story Ol'ga Nsu⁶⁾ (1965). Here 'submolecular biology' has given immortality to mankind. But the scientist himself who discovered the secret refuses to be treated. He does not want to give up mortal man's unity with mortal nature.⁷⁾)

4) Ibid., p. 7.

5) Ibid., p. 85.

6) Al'manakh nauchnoy fantastiki, vyp. 3, Znaniye (M., 1965).

7) Slightly varied arguments are used by A. Voznesensky, for whom immortality is 'movement stopped': 'Oza', Akhillesovo serdtse, Khud. lit. (M., 1966), p. 66; and by S. Zhemaytis, according to whom only the human species, not the individual, can live eternally: 'Artakserks', Fantastika 71, Mol. gv. (M., 1971), p. 169. The latter's point was made far more subtly in S. Lem's Oblok Magellana (1955). One of his characters rejects immortality

However, although Pogodin is cut off from history and nature almost as an immortal would be, he fights for a way out of his dilemma by trying to learn about the new time. But in the end the basic truth remains unshaken: 'I loved my contemporaries, my epoch. And only now have I understood how strongly man is attached to his own time.'⁸⁾

In all Gor's works some basic motifs recur again and again: for instance, man's relation to time (Leonardo da Vinci is sometimes mentioned as a time-traveller who was stuck in the past), the problem of human identity in a mechanised or even cyberneticised environment, immortality, human beings or humanoid aliens marooned in space.

The novel Dokuchlivy sobesednik⁹⁾ (A Tiresome Debating Partner, 1962) does not depart from this formula. - An imaginary Russian author writes a book which describes the problems of an alien cosmonaut who has crash-landed his ship on Earth in prehistoric times and is forced to stay. The novel is interspersed with 20th-century scenes, but the emphasis of the narrative is put on what happens to the 'traveller' and to his advanced home planet Aneidau.

On Aneidau cybernetics plays an important part in biological development. Thus the hero has a 'robot-double', which has taken a weight off his brain by collecting all his personal memories since his childhood. These memories can be called up on request.

because 'without death there would not be change. Without change there would not be evolution. Without evolution there would not be Man'. - Magellanovo oblako, Detskaya literatura (M., 1966), p. 291.

8) 'Strannik i vremya', p. 134.

9) Sovetsky pisatel' (M., L.).

Furthermore, the traveller is equipped with a robot 'anti-you', which possesses firm logic and a strongly developed sense of contradiction. Being cynical, sceptical, almost nihilistic, the robot is supposed to relieve the hero's isolation by controversial discussions. It turns out that their main point of controversy is the problem of the robot's existence. It claims to have a personality of its own, even to be its own creator, whereas the traveller does not want to concede that it is more than an artificial machine.

The battle of wits between the man and the robot does not end in a clear decision, but the machines are now definitely closer to humans than the hero admits. This is illustrated by the practically symbiotic relationship between a man and his 'robot-double': 'Between the unusually adaptable and accomplished apparatus and its master new relations developed, relations of mutual dependence.'¹⁰⁾

As on Tioma, biology is the 'metascience' of the traveller's home planet. Man has become an inseparable part not only of history and society, but also of his biosphere. He can communicate with animals or even herbs by 'transferring his consciousness' into any given being.

When eventually the traveller's robots get out of order — the robot 'anti-you' goes insane, and the 'robot-double' suffers from amnesia — his isolation becomes so depressing that he redoubles his efforts to communicate with some troglodytes who live nearby. He is unsuccessful for a long time; all the same, he comes to the conclusion that his life will have a

10) Dokuchlivy sobesednik, p. 153.

meaning only if he can impart a little knowledge to the primitive people: 'The world is infinite, but also uniform. And uniformity links all those to whom history and nature have given reason.'¹¹⁾

The traveller does finally manage to communicate with the troglodytes, and later historical discoveries prove that he sparked off the evolution of modern man.¹²⁾

Dokuchlivy sobesednik is the first of our examples in which the hero is transferred 'backwards', i.e., to a period of social inferiority. In cases like this, the superior time-traveller is often able to 'guide' his less developed fellow men. Instances are M. Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889), in which the protagonist dominates his new environment immediately — though without permanent consequences; or V. Mayakovsky's plays Misteriya-buff (Mystery-bouffe, 1921) and Banya (The Bathhouse, 1929-1930), in which a 'messenger' from the future tries to put the working-class people of the twenties on the right path to communism. For Gor's hero, however, this job is much more laborious. Here we have a glimpse of characters to come: superior communist heroes who find it (almost) impossible to improve a backward environment.

In Gor's Uera¹³⁾ the device of time dilation is again essential. The cosmonaut Larvef returns to his planet Dineya after 200 years, but

11) Ibid., p. 244.

12) This is one of the countless examples in speculative fiction of works which anticipate the idea of E. von Däniken's subsequent popular bestsellers, such as Erinnerungen an die Zukunft (1968), Zurück zu den Sternen (1970) etc. — For a 'debunking' of Däniken see, for example, J. Slodek, 'Fossil astronauts', Foundation (London, 1973), No. 4.

13) Al'manakh nauchnoy fantastiki, vyp. 1, Znaniye (M., 1964).

is only slightly older than he was at the start of the journey. By now communism has taken over completely; cruelty and greed have disappeared, and so have the words that denote them.

Larvef marries again, but discovers eventually that he is unable to settle down at any given time. So he starts on a new journey which will bring him back in another 170 years. He is the eternal adventurer, who will be alienated even in the most miraculous society.

This motif of the restless traveller is borrowed from C. P. Maturin's gothic novel Melmoth the Wanderer¹⁴⁾ (1820), which features a demonic hero who lives to an age of over 150 years after concluding a pact with the devil. Gor adapts the theme to modern times and uses it in many works, e.g. the early novel Lanzhero (1938) and the short story Elektronny Mel'mot (The Electronic Melmoth, 1964). Both Melmoth and his heroes are alienated, though for different reasons: the one because of an evil restlessness which forces him to antagonise everybody; the others because of a searching, creative restlessness which results in permanent dissatisfaction with the present.

G. Gor is the founder of the 'philosophical tale' within scientific fantasy. His imaginary planets are symbols of Earth and its future inhabitants, who develop new ethical and aesthetic standards under new technological conditions.¹⁵⁾ For example, when the chance of rejuvenation is given on the planet Dineya, one of the characters explains why she

14) Archibald Constable and Company (Edinburgh).

15) Ye. Brandis, 'Fantastika i filosofiya', Lit. gaz., 13 Dec. 1966.

refuses it: 'I ask neither fate nor science to return my past to me. It has become a part of my experience.'¹⁶⁾

The aliens or the people of the future — both are actually symbols of progress — usually develop a new relationship with nature, history and time, as is illustrated in Gor's collection Fantasticheskiye povesti i rasskazy (Fantastic Tales and Stories, 1970): 'History and progress have made each of us into a god, who forms himself and all his environment.'¹⁷⁾ The 'man-god' is one with matter and nature; a sort of inverted pantheism has developed in the far future. This advanced state is reminiscent of the ideas conveyed in ancient myths and fairy-tales, where man and forests and lakes etc. were a unit, before civilisation cut man's umbilical cord with them.¹⁸⁾

Finally, science will revive mythology. Reason and emotions will be fused together harmonically, the individual will be able to live simultaneously on different planes of space and time. In Gor's world 'the intellect cannot be alienated from nature',¹⁹⁾ the power of man and the power of nature are united. In the story Sad (The Garden) a man can transform himself temporarily into a beautiful garden, in Kartina (The Picture) a picture represents a new world accessible to man. In Sineye

16) 'Uera', p. 164. - The acceptance of unpleasantness in this and other works corresponds to the point of view of the 'Savage' in A. Huxley's Brave New World (1932), who claims 'the right to be unhappy': Penguin Books (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1972), p. 187.

17) 'Minotavr', Lenizdat (L.), p. 113.

18) Equally 'mythological' fantasy, which is, however, less weighed down by technical detail and repetition, is written by V. Kolupayev, Sluchitsya zhe s chelovekom takoye!..., Mol. gv. (M., 1972).

19) A. Urban, Fantastika i nash mir, Sovetsky pisatel' (L., 1972), p. 149.

okno Feokrita (Feokrit's Blue Window) man travels freely through time. School children are taken to the epochs dealt with in history classes, tourists go back to classic antiquity, people of different epochs fall in love with each other. But even this desirable state of affairs is not without drawbacks:

We have time only to spend a few minutes on Mars, in the paleolithic or mezolithic eras, on the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. But we don't have enough spare time to enjoy the joy of living.... I propose to create a field of slowed-down time.²⁰⁾

Gor's time-travellers do not require the assortment of technological gadgets which is common in most works of speculative fantasy. With him time-travel seems rather a new mental faculty with a dream-like character about it. For the same reason the problem of interference with the past or future is never raised.

In his latest work, Izvayaniye²¹⁾ (The Sculpture, 1972), the author again presents a synthesis of fantasy, philosophical contemplation, myth and fairy-tale. Once more he reflects on the link between culture and nature, man and matter, history and time. It is the human sense of poetry which makes all these harmonise; consequently the culmination of harmony is a very special person: Ofeliya, who is 'a girl and a book'.

The hero, Pokrovsky, is again a cosmonaut who returns to Earth in the 23rd century. An 'electronic philosopher' assigned to him has to act as an interpreter of the new world. Pokrovsky and Ofeliya then 'travel' back to the turmoil of the early Soviet Union. He works as a painter for

20) 'Sineye okno Feokrita', p. 163.

21) Sovetsky pisatel' (L., 1972).

a while, but eventually feels that his superior knowledge isolates him in the 20th century. So Ofeliya takes him off again to where they came from.

Gor's emphasis is now more strongly on the theme of 'man and the biosphere' than ever before. He tries to depict a world which is ruled by harmony not only among people, but, on a more philosophical level, between man, culture, nature and time. In a more profound sense than the social one, man is alienated from the world until this extreme form of harmony is achieved.

This almost Dostoyevskyan vision (see Son smeshnogo cheloveka) may be an attempt to transcend the basically materialistic determinants of Marxist ideology, which is not very explicit about the further evolution of communistic man. Gor's 'synthesis of Wells and Andersen'²²⁾ might well pass for his idea of a 'transcommunist' future.²³⁾

The next two novels to be considered, M. Yemtsev's and Ye. Parnov's Dusha mira (The Soul of the World, 1964) and N. Amosov's Zapiski iz budushchego (Notes from the Future, 1965), use a less poetic approach than Gor's works, but they put forward equally interesting psychological points.

In Dusha mira the scientist Arafev dreams of making a great discovery. He is a very talented young man, but it is hard for him to hold on to a job, because his inability to compromise tends to lead him into clashes with his superiors. When he gets a post in the 'Institute of Telepathy',

22) Ibid., p. 40.

23) For an opposing view, which considers Gor's visions to be as orthodox as Yefremov's, see D. Rudnev, "'Zamknuty mir" sovremennoy russkoy fantastiki', Grani (Frankfurt/M., 1970), No. 78, p. 169.

he reveals to a colleague, a Czech girl, that he feels frustrated because people are not close enough to each other. The girl answers:

'Doesn't common thought unite people more closely than if they were tied to each other with an iron chain? Hasn't communism brought billions of people closer to each other...?'

'Right...it's all true.... But I'm looking for a different quality.... Damn it all, completely different.... I want to bring people closer together in a physical sense. So that they are aware of each other all the time.'²⁴⁾

Arafev's wish seems to be fulfilled when he and his friend breed a mutated plant, which grows to gigantic dimensions and develops phenomenal 'psi'-qualities. It collects the conscious and subconscious data of all the people in the world. Thus every person has, as it were, a double in the plant, which becomes the 'soul of the world'. Whenever two people approach each other, so do their doubles which form structural units through the exchange of energy. This results in the mutual psychic penetration of their live equivalents, who are then incapable of distrust, secrets and lies.

Instead of being happy, however, many scientists, especially Soviet ones, disapprove of this total elimination of individuality. They want rather 'a free man in a free communist world'.²⁵⁾ Finally, the opinion that absolute mental collectivism is not preferable to the advantages of individual existence wins the day: the plant is to be destroyed.

24) M. Yemtsev, Ye. Parnov, 'Dusha mira', Uravneniye s blednogo Neptuna, Mol. gv. (M., 1964), pp. 82-83.

25) Ibid., p. 153.

But by now the plant can defend itself perfectly by imposing psychic blocks on all attackers. Arafev, moreover, is given a mental picture of what the distant future will be like if the plant's dominance continues. Earth will become a 'bioplanet' with people reduced to mere heads rooted in the soil. Arafev is horrified by this 'social organism', for which he will be responsible.

The authors' description of the terrifying future may be indebted to F. Werfel's Stern der Ungeborenen (1946), in which human beings at the end of their lives are put in 'retrogenetic soil' and grow into flowers or sometimes into furious monsters rooted in the ground.

Arafev realises that there is only one way to avoid the development sketched out to him: mankind has to unite — but this time in the solidarity of a common idea, i.e., the fight against the plant. For so far humanity's disunity has been the plant's strength and barred the path into a better future.

The situation pictured in Dusha mira is meant to be a warning directed against excessive collectivism. The indignant rejection by Soviet scientists of the idea that the plant might be the fulfilment of all communist desires can hardly cover up the addressee of the warning, i.e., the socialist state.²⁶⁾

Indeed, the compatibility of satisfactory individualism and efficient collectivism has still to be proven. Socialist states usually claim 'the unity of society, collective and individual'²⁷⁾ in their respective

26) See Dzh. Gleg, 'Vozrozhdeniye antiutopii v proizvedeniyakh A. i B. Strugatskikh', Novy zhurnal, kn. 98 (N.Y., 1970), p. 148.

27) Einführung in den dialektischen und historischen Materialismus, Verlag Marxistische Blätter GmbH (Frankfurt/M., 1971), p. 465.

communities. They disprove their own claims, however, when they find it necessary to incite their citizens by extreme propaganda campaigns, for instance to carry out successive five-year plans. These measures would surely be dispensable, if society were up to this high standard.

Paradoxically, Arafev, who dreams of the new collective, is a distinct individualist himself. When his dream comes true, he has to realise that his discovery is anything but the blessing for mankind that he expected it to be. This, of course, would not help to do away with the frustration which he felt before the plant had been bred. His is a case of foiled ambition and destroyed hope. The meagre recognition that 'People have to know not only what was or will be, but also what must not be,'²⁸⁾ does not seem sufficient to end his discontent.

The hero of N. Amosov's Zapiski iz budushchego²⁹⁾ is Prokhorov, a professor of medicine. He suffers from leukaemia and develops a method to preserve his body until a cure is found. This is the case in 1991, when Prokhorov starts his 'second life'.

The highly psychological approach of the author is emphasised by the fact that the book takes the shape of Prokhorov's diary. With a frankness which is rare in scientific fantasy, the professor gives an account of his sexual problems; he criticises bureaucracy and the careerism and opportunism of the scientists in Soviet institutes; he complains that the

28) 'Dusha mira', p. 255.

29) A fragment appeared in Fantastika, 1966, vypusk 1, Mol. gv. (M., 1966). The only complete edition available was Die zweite Zukunft, aus dem Russischen ins Englische von George St. George, aus dem Englischen von Karl-Otto von Czernicki, Droemer Knauer (München, 1967).

majority of scientists are underpaid, while a small minority — because of their status rather than their skill — are paid far too highly. (It has to be noted, however, that the novel never appeared in the Soviet Union in a full, 'unbowdlerised' version.)

In the 1990s science has advanced tremendously. Suspension of animation has become an everyday occurrence. Immortality is within the range of possibility, but many people reject the idea, because only biological death seems to guarantee the continuity of progress. The 'map of the brain' has been deciphered completely; thus psychology has become an exact science which has total electronic and chemical control of the brain function. Criminality can now be rated a disease.

Prokhorov is, on the one hand, delighted with the pace of progress — after catching up with new achievements he continues to work in his former field — but on the other hand he is worried by the possibility of scientific abuse. For instance, when an American professor proposes to stimulate people's brains in such a way that they will be happy even under the worst conditions, Prokhorov opposes the idea, because man must have the right to choose his own way of life.³⁰⁾

Prokhorov finds that the cabals and opportunist plots which disgusted him so much in the past are still alive in the institutes of the future. Generally, the professor's position in the nineties is one of disappointment. This is true of his professional as well as his private life: his attempt to set up an 'Institute of Immortality' fails; the

30) In science fiction, naturally, it is the Russian who proposes and the American who objects.

woman he loves and who expects his child is murdered by her insane husband. The novel ends on this note of hopeless alienation.

Both Arafev and Prokhorov are men who desire social and scientific perfection, although they are far from perfect themselves. As, however, their idealism can never measure up to harsh reality, they seem to be condemned to the rôle of social outsiders.

Suspended animation or anabiosis is not necessarily merely a means to create the hero's alienation by placing him in an unknown environment. It may itself be a symbol of alienation when a lonely, disappointed protagonist tries to escape to a better world. This symbolism, which is only incipient in Zapiski iz budushchego, is more explicit in A. Gorbovsky's story He Will Wake in Two Hundred Years.

The central character, Andrey, an employee in a publishing house, 'unlike the rest of his fellow workers in this exalted establishment... was not convinced that he fulfilled his aim in life by sorting index cards and wilting over dictionaries'.³¹⁾ Andrey has only vague notions of what to expect in the future, but he is left little choice: his dismissal is imminent, and anabiosis is his only hope of further existence.

In the next few instances we find the hero in a planetary context other than his own. K. Bulychev, in the short story Podelis' so mnoy³²⁾ (Share My Experience, 1970), makes it clear how a native of Earth and an alien could be totally incompatible on the mental-emotional plane.

31) C. G. Bearne (ed.), Vortex, New Soviet Science Fiction, Pan Books Ltd. (London, 1971), p. 105.

32) Fantastika 69/70, Mol. gv. (Riga, Baku, M., 1970).

A man finds himself on a planet whose inhabitants can directly share all their mutual joy and suffering. (The general situation is reminiscent of E. Bellamy's To Whom This May Come [1888], one of the first stories dealing with telepathy. Here a ship-wrecked traveller finds himself on 'the islands of the mind-readers'.)

The hero is able to join in, but he discovers that such profound emotions are unbearable for a human being who is used to individual feelings. As he lacks the psychic strength which is necessary on this planet, the man is out of place. All he can do is return to Earth.

In nearly every other case where the traveller leaves Earth, alienation starts either sooner or later. Sooner when there is no way of communication between a solitary man and his unknown counterparts, or later when he understands their way of thinking, but does not approve of their actions morally. The second case is more interesting (though less likely), for here the hero has to decide whether he should interfere with an alien society or leave it alone, regardless of how offensive it may be to his own moral standards.

The Strugatsky brothers have given the most notable examples of heroes in this kind of quandary.

Their first work dealing with the problem is the long story Popytka k begstvu³³⁾ (An Attempted Escape, 1962). In the distant future, when interstellar travel has become commonplace, two young men, Vadim and Anton, are persuaded by a stranger, Saul, to fly him to an unknown planet,

33) Fantastika 1962, Mol. gv. (M., 1962).

which they name Saula. The inhabitants of Saula are human and live in a slave-holding society. The slaves have no will to survive at all and are brutally slaughtered for experimental reasons.

The Earth people capture a warden, and learn to their amazement that he does not see anything wrong with murdering the slaves. Saul is desperate to employ violence in order to bring about freedom and equality. But his companions realise that it would be historically impossible to raise a backward society such as this to socialist standards immediately. They manage to convince Saul and return to Earth. Saul disappears, but leaves a note which identifies him as a deserter from a German concentration camp. Ashamed of his desertion to the future, he goes back to his own time and dies in the fight for socialism.

The message is made abundantly clear: the initiative of individuals is pointless if the purpose of their fight does not coincide with the succession of historic stages assumed in Marxism. The person who disregards this order and tries to force ambitious ideas on an inadequately mature society is out of place and powerless. Saul's ideas and ambition are of no use in either the future or the past, they must be applied to his own time.

Anton is also the hero of Trudno byt' bogom³⁴⁾ (It's Hard to Be a God, 1964), which is written in much the same vein as Popytka k begstvu. He is a member of the 'Institute for Experimental History', which tries to influence the development of man on a planet still steeped in feudalism.

34) Dalekaya Raduga, Mol. gv. (M., 1964).

The historians, who work under an assumed identity — Anton is Don Rumata in the state of Arkanar — intend to save the guarantors of progress, i.e. scientists, scholars and poets, to make the future of the planet more tolerable.

When Anton-Rumata, impatient in the face of ignorance, cruelty and squalor, which are imposed on the people by the ruling class, suggests more drastic measures, he is told by a colleague that they have come to help the people 'but not to quench their just fury'.³⁵⁾ Again, violence is ruled out as a means of enforcing superior social ideas; excessive interference would in the long run be an impediment to historic evolution.

But Anton is too involved to think of his work as a mere experiment any longer; his lack of power frustrates him. Although, compared to the natives, he may be a god, as far as his knowledge is concerned, he is a very helpless deity, as a discussion with one of the planet's leading physicians shows:

'Make people love work and knowledge more than anything else so that work and knowledge become the only purpose of their lives!'. . .

'I could also do that,' said he [Anton-Rumata]. 'But is it worthwhile depriving a humanity of its history? Is it worthwhile exchanging one mankind for another? Wouldn't that be the same as wiping one mankind from the face of the planet and creating a new one in its place?'. . .

'Then, my Lord, wipe us from the face of the planet and create us anew in more perfect form...or better still, leave us alone and let us follow our own path.'

35) 'Trudno byt' bogom', p. 170.

'My heart is full of compassion,' said Rumata slowly. 'I cannot do that.'³⁶⁾

Arata, a 'professional mutineer', asks Anton-Rumata to provide weapons for the fight against serfdom. When his request is declined, Arata describes the historian's rôle even more negatively than the physician:

'You shouldn't have come down from the sky,' Arata said suddenly. 'Go back home. You only do us harm.'

'That isn't true,' said Rumata gently. 'At least we don't harm anyone.'

'But you do harm us. You inspire unfounded hope.'³⁷⁾

At the end Anton-Rumata loses his self-control and takes part in a violent uprising. This means that he identifies with life on the planet as much as with his former existence as historian. His conflicting identities are symbolised by his beloved Kira. She is a native girl, but willing to go to Earth with him. Thus she holds the balance between his Arkanar and his Earth life. However, she is killed before they can depart, which signifies the destruction of both of Anton-Rumata's identities. He himself is saved, but for ever after he is an apathetic, taciturn brooder.

In Trudno byt' bogom the message of Popytka k begstvu is slightly modified. Interference with the course of history may be worth an attempt, but it has to remain on a very minor scale, which rules out forceful

36) Ibid., p. 310.

37) Ibid., p. 316.

action from outside a given society. As soon as interference becomes more than a detached experimental trifling with historical details, it is doomed to failure. The result can only be as gloomy as with Anton-Rumata.

Whereas the 'interference problem' in most works of the Strugatsky brothers is mainly symbolic of similar problems on Earth and is, in fact, directly applicable to world politics,³⁸⁾ there is also a trend in scientific fantasy which concerns itself with interference with 'actual' alien civilisations, as is, above all, demonstrated by some of S. Lem's works, such as the novels Edem (1959), Solaris (1961), Niezwyoczony (The Invincible, 1964). The Strugatskys exploit this theme in one of the episodes of their novel Vozvrashcheniye (The Homecoming, 1962).

The third work which belongs in the same category as Popytka k 'begstvu and Trudno byt' bogom is the more complex Obitayemy ostrov³⁹⁾ (The Inhabited Island, 1971).

The cosmonaut Maksim is marooned on an unknown planet with a human population. He tries to learn all about the people and their society. First he joins a legion which is supposed to eradicate the so-called 'degenerates', who are the government's worst enemies.

Maksim is faced with a picture of world-wide chaos and destruction. The country he happens to find himself in is ruled by a military dictatorship which took over from the capitalists and aristocrats. The neighbouring states are threatening to invade the country at any moment.

38) Compare A. Gromova, 'Introduction: At the Frontier of the Present Age', Vortex, p. 22 (see note 31).

39) Detskaya literatura (M., 1971).

When he is ordered to shoot a group of 'degenerates', Maksim deserts the legion and joins the political underground. There the 'degenerates' inform him that the rulers are tyrants who have neither an ideology nor an economic programme. The rebels think that certain towers positioned all over the country send out a radiation which is deadly to them. Maksim, however, who has superhuman mental and physical faculties, can cure their pains and, in addition, helps to destroy one of the towers. Later he learns that the towers — officially set up for antiballistic purposes — are designed for a purpose totally different from that which the rebels assumed: their radiation eliminates people's critical abilities and instils a sense of subordination into them. The 'degenerates' are the only ones who are affected by physical pain instead. Therefore they are bitterly persecuted by the rulers, who are actually 'degenerates' themselves.

Maksim destroys the remote control centre of the towers and captures 'the Wanderer', the master spy of the government and, in Maksim's opinion, one of the worst oppressors. But 'the Wanderer' turns out to be a Russian and a member of 'Galactic Security'. He accuses Maksim of rashness in trying to start a revolution when the time is not ripe and the people not ready. Inflation is rampant, there is a tremendous shortage of food, a lack of doctors and medicine, etc. But at the present stage a revolution could only aggravate the economic disaster. Maksim, who realises his own short-sightedness, decides to stay on the planet, but promises: 'I will do what competent people order me to do. If necessary, I'll concentrate on inflation. If required, I'll sink submarines....'⁴⁰⁾

40) Ibid., p. 318.

Like Anton, Maksim is virtually a god, compared to the natives of the planet, which is called 'inhabited island' because its people believe that it is the only populated world in the universe. His technical and medical knowledge and his physical strength are immensely superior to theirs. Still, Maksim is a blind god.

While Anton's alienation is based on the fact that he is aware of his power but must not use it even under the utmost provocation, Maksim's is based on his unawareness of historical processes, which makes him use his power to the wrong end, i.e., premature revolution. The planet's development, however, can be put on the right course only by unspectacular, diligent work which takes into account all possible economic and social factors.

From Popytka k begstvu to Obitayemy ostrov we can observe a definite expansion of the motif of political interference. In the first work the possibility of using violence as a means of interference is ruled out; in the second the infiltration of a fifth column with limited tasks is considered; in the third the employment of a fifth column with a wide range of responsibilities over an unspecified period of time is approved. In all three cases the hero who contemplates or uses violence, albeit with the noble intention of inciting socialist revolution, would lose his moral superiority over the backward society and have to find a new identity if he engaged in violent activity. At the same time he would cut himself off from his own background and the political wisdom of his society.

The Strugatsky brothers' novel Khishchnyye veshchi veka⁴¹⁾ (Predatory

41) Mol. gv. (M., 1965).

Things of Our Age, 1965) also deals with political interference. It is, however, set in an imaginary state on Earth, not in an extraterrestrial context.

The hero and narrator is Ivan Zhilin, who also appears in the Strana bagrovykh tuch – Put' na Amal'teyu – Stazhery trilogy. He travels to the 'Country of Fools' (Strana durakov), which is characterised by the material well-being and political and intellectual apathy of its inhabitants. Most of them pass all their time eating and drinking, others amuse themselves by throwing bombs at unsuspecting crowds. Hardly anybody even reads books; Ivan's interest in literature is mocked at. Freedom and happiness are defined in very simple terms in this country: 'Liberate man from worry about the bread he requires and from worry about tomorrow, and he will be truly free and happy.'⁴²) (This is the same theory as the one presented by Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor in Brat'ya Karamazovy (The Brothers Karamazov). While, however, the Grand Inquisitor regards lethargy and indifference as innate human characteristics, the people in the 'country of fools' are corrupted by social and political conditioning and can therefore possibly be redeemed.)

The newspapers of the country make ignorance an idealised norm; an influential organisation buys up and destroys works of culture; alcoholism, drug-addiction and criminality are widespread. The use of 'psycho-technic' means to keep everybody happy is considered. Possibly most men will soon spend all their time far from reality, dreaming away in their

42) Ibid., p. 187.

bathtubs in a drugged stupor — a vision which calls to mind O. Stapledon's Star Maker (1937) with its corresponding idea of permanent sleepers, the pleasure centres of whose brains are constantly stimulated.⁴³⁾

Ivan seems to be a detached observer in this country of over-indulgence, but at the end it turns out that he is an agent of the 'Security Council'. He is supposed to fight people's lethargy. But he realises that 'until a humane view of the world is re-established people will die or become idiots, and no operational groups of any sort will help here.'⁴⁴⁾ So he decides to stay in the country and to try and reform the people, although he has no idea of how and where to start.

The authors' intention is given in their introduction: they want to show that bourgeois ideology does not only create economic and military crises, but also influences people's souls and leads to their spiritual death.⁴⁵⁾

In this grotesquely distorted model of a Western state the citizens — through lack of intellectual, cultural or moral interests — have become human animals, who are comparable to Gogol's Starosvetskiye pomeshchiki (The Old-World Landowners, 1831). In the mirror of satirical overstatement the Strugatsky brothers show up a great many appalling phenomena of the (capitalist) world; they especially reinforce their favourite criticism of (Western) philistinism by concentrating on the mental consequences of drug-addiction, i.e. magnification of lethargy, which is the outstanding philistine characteristic.

43) Penguin Books (Middlesex, 1972), pp. 45-48.

44) Khishchnyye veshchi veka, p. 310.

45) 'Ot avtorov', ibid., p. 310.

Ivan, who does not share the vices of the 'fools', is clearly isolated in their midst. However, Ivan's character and his dilemma are not focused upon, as was the case with the heroes of the three 'extra-terrestrial novels' mentioned above. The authors use him as a catalyst: through his description the deplorable state of the 'fools' can be shown more clearly, since he is so patently different.

While the other three works present more abstract situations, in which the outsider-heroes have to adopt a certain method which will eventually bring social improvement, i.e., either non-interference or careful underground work, Khishchnyye veshchi veka refers directly to present political circumstances, but fails to give a remedy or an indication of potential improvement. Paradoxically, this novel is a highly emotional polemical accusation against (Western) philistinism and satiety seen with the eyes of an objective witness, whereas the others are sober statements of politico-historical problems seen with the eyes of deeply involved subjective heroes.

Another example from the Strugatsky brothers' reservoir of alienated characters is the 'time-traveller' who has trouble adjusting to a society more advanced than his own. They use the same device of time-dilation as S. Lem in Powrot s gwiazd (Return from the Stars, 1951) or G. Gor in Uera, in their novel Vozvrashcheniye⁴⁶⁾ (1962).

A spaceship leaves Earth in 2012 and returns in 2112. The members of the crew are now confronted with a novel technology, in which, for instance, 'cybers' play an important rôle. The cosmonauts, expert scientists in their own time, are poor beginners in the 22nd century. To them

46) Gos. izd. detskoy lit. ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR (M.).

the people of the 'new time' seem to possess universal knowledge. Moreover, the cosmonauts' 'descendants' make it quite clear that their 'ancestors' appear rather ignorant to them: "'I'm so fed up with being someone to whom people talk in order to take a rest!" said Zhenya.⁴⁷⁾ (A. Kazantsev in Sil'neye vremeni (Stronger than Time, 1973) avoids this kind of problem by endowing his heroine, Vilena, with multiple talents. Thus, when she returns to Earth after a space journey which lasted two generations, her niece can say: 'But you are not only a pianist, Aunt. You are also a physicist. And you became a cosmonaut. In our time everybody has to be as universal as you....'⁴⁸⁾)

The principal hero of Vozvrashcheniye is the cosmonaut Kondrat'ev who is not only worried about his lagging knowledge, but above all about the apparent disappearance of meaning in his life. He tries to integrate himself into the new society by taking a job as a 'whale shepherd', which means that he has to look after whales from a submarine. But he still feels unmotivated:

Kondrat'ev began to think and suddenly, with surprise and horror, he realised that he did not have a great dream. Formerly, in the beginning of the 21st century he knew: he was a communist, and like millions of other communists he dreamt of the liberation of mankind from worry about a piece of bread, of providing everybody with a chance for creative work. But that was in the past, a hundred years back. He still had the same ideals, but now, when everything had been done, what could he still dream about?...

47) Ibid., p. 249.

48) Moskovsky rabochy (M., 1973), p. 271.

Now there were no communists. All ten milliards were communists.... 'But they have quite different goals. The former goals of the communist — material wealth and mental and physical beauty — have ceased to exist. They are now reality. A spring-board for a new gigantic jump ahead. Where? And where is my place among the ten milliards?'⁴⁹⁾

This is the most explicit statement by the hero himself of his own alienation which we have come across. In view of the divergence between Kondrat'ev's and the 22nd-century communists' motivation, it is hard to imagine that he will actually find a place in the new society. In fact, the Strugatsky brothers' attempt to integrate him is rather feeble. They assume that the love of a girl can bring Kondrat'ev out of his shell of alienation. But a purely personal relationship as this seems insufficient to eliminate the hero's overriding lack of identification. The serious social conflict is replaced and supposedly solved by an ordinary love story. - (S. Lem uses the same method in Powrot z gwiazd, which, as he later admits, is a simplification of the main problem.⁵⁰⁾ V. Krapivin in Ya idu vstrechat' brata (I'm Going to Meet My Brother, 1962) also tries to cure social alienation on a personal level. A crew of cosmonauts who will return to Earth in 300 years are told before their departure:

'Don't forget the old names. You'll return in many years' time, but the grandsons of your friends will meet you like friends. The grandsons of your brothers will become your brothers.'⁵¹⁾

49) Vozvrashcheniye, p. 157.

50) S. Lem, 'Fantastika — ne samotsel'', Voprosy literatury, 9/1970, p. 178

51) 'I'm Going to Meet My Brother', The Molecular Cafe, Mir Publishers (M., 1968), p. 85.

Vozvrashcheniye is not an attempt to produce a comprehensive picture of an ideal society. It is a collection of episodes which feature a number of well-known ideas of speculative fantasy and give a rather kaleidoscopic view of the future. The episodes deal, i.a., with the search for alien contact, the 'biocodification' of the brain, a prophetic computer, new telepathic qualities, and the interpenetration of space continua.

By no means every author deliberately depicts his time-travelling hero as alienated in a new social environment. A good example of such a supposedly disalienated hero is given in L. Lagin's Goluboy chelovek (The Azure Man, 1967). A young Soviet worker and student, Antoshin, is mysteriously 'transported' to the year 1894. He is at first taken for a country bumpkin and works as apprentice to a brutal cobbler. Gradually, he surprises his masters and his new friends by his superior knowledge (especially by his ability to read and write). Antoshin joins the revolutionary movement in Russia and tries to stir up the people against their rulers. He ridicules servile behaviour, criticises religious piety and declares that there is no greater honour than being a worker or farmer. One day the dream of his life comes true and he meets the young Lenin. Antoshin asks him a question which he has actually already answered for himself:

'Please, tell me — if someone knows for sure that the cause of the people will be victorious, if he even knows when exactly it will be, is he nevertheless obliged to join the struggle of the working class?'

...

'Certainly he is,' the young man [Lenin] interrupted Antoshin, 'there's no doubt about it. I should say that he's even particularly obliged to.'⁵²⁾

52) L. Lagin, Goluboy chelovek, Sovetsky pisatel' (M., 1972), pp. 151-152.

This conversation is meant to justify the hero's actions and to emphasise his oneness with the forces of revolution; it does, however, demonstrate above all the alienation of Antoshin, who is truly superfluous — in a way even more so than Saul, Anton-Rumata or Maksim. The former knows every detail of the historical development to come, while the latter three know only the general tendencies. To be sure, Antoshin can look forward to a speedy fulfilment of his ideal, while the frustration of the others stems, to an extent, from the very remoteness of this ideal. Nevertheless, Antoshin's exact knowledge of future events, and the inevitableness of a clearly mapped-out course of history, also show up the pointlessness of his (and everybody else's) activities. If he is honest with himself he will have to admit that his rôle is that of a spectator, but not of a participant. Thus his apparent success within the underground movement, even his arrest, cannot be more than a façade. Really typical of Antoshin's situation are his various condescending, but totally pointless predictions of mischief to the enemies of the working class.

It should be noted that the fantastic device of time-travel does not necessarily bring about the hero's alienation. In numerous works of science fiction the time-traveller is at home in any part of the 'time-stream'. Under his manipulations history becomes an extremely malleable substance, for instance in I. Asimov's The End of Eternity (1955), R. Heinlein's The Door into Summer (1956) or P. Anderson's The Corridors of Time (1965). For the Soviet writer, however, history has an inner logic which cannot be manipulated at will. It would not be materialistically tenable if, for instance, Antoshin's interference, which is really outside the dialectical development of class antagonisms, were supposed to cause the revolution. Lagin's difficulty of giving his hero a meaningful rôle

is also enhanced by the fact that he deals with 'real history' and not with (symbolic) products of his imagination, where slight deviations from the materialistic formula are less obvious.

In the fragment and the novel which are both entitled Ulitka na sklone (The Snail on the Slope, 1966 and 1968) the Strugatsky brothers present a new kind of alienated hero.

The setting is unspecified. The hero of the fragment, Kandid, works in a biological station which was set up by the 'Administration' in order to investigate a large forest. According to the authors, the forest is 'a symbol of all that which is still hidden from mankind because of the incompleteness of scientific, philosophical and sociological knowledge'.⁵³⁾

Kandid survives a plane crash over the vast forest. Wounded and unable to find his way back to the station, he settles down with the inhabitants of a small village and even marries one of the local girls. The taciturn Kandid is somewhat ostracised among the stupid, gossipy villagers (who call him 'Molchun').

The village is threatened by zombie-like creatures from the forest who try to abduct the women. The locals, living in superstitious fear of the forest, are not prepared to defend themselves. Kandid, however, finds that the creatures are quite easily defeated. He and his wife set out to search for a mystic city. On their way they meet the true rulers of the forest: cruel Amazons who possess superior scientific knowledge. They are in charge of the 'zombies' and other monsters, use people as guinea pigs for biological experiments, control viruses and — most importantly —

53) 'Ulitka na sklone', Ellinsky sekret, Lenizdat (L., 1966), p. 385.

are capable of parthenogenesis. To them men are dispensable and despicable.

Kandid and his wife manage to escape from the Amazons and return to the village. He is sure that the forest is encircling the village more and more tightly, but its inhabitants live in blessed ignorance of the misfortune which 'progress', symbolised by the forest and the Amazons, will bring them:

'...the most terrible thing is that historic truth here, in the forest, is not on their side, they [the villagers] are relics sentenced to death by objective laws, and helping them means opposing progress, slowing down progress in a minute area of its front. But that doesn't interest me,' thought Kandid.... 'Here it is not the head that chooses. Here it is the heart that chooses. Historical laws are neither bad nor good, they are outside morals. But I'm not outside morals!'⁵⁴⁾

Kandid has to be on the villagers' side because they helped and nursed him, even if his decision entails opposition to objective progress.

In the 'extraterrestrial novels' and Khishchnyye veshchi veka the heroes identify historical with moral progress. The inferior stage of history has many characteristics which are morally repulsive to them. Moral disgust is actually the basic reason for their alienation in the backward society. On the other hand, it is the preservation of their moral standards which enables them to integrate themselves again into their respective 'home worlds' (with the exception of Anton-Rumata).

Kandid, however, in assuming that scientific and historical progress do not necessarily coincide with moral progress, is the first hero who tries to understand the backward people's feelings, the first who does not

54) Ibid., pp. 461-462.

measure them solely by the yardstick of historical materialism. This is especially surprising as he has no chance to be a fully accepted member of the village community.

The hero of the novel Ulitka na sklone is Perets, who works in the 'Administration for Forest Affairs'. His very (Jewish) name and the fact that his colleagues call him 'monsieur', 'signor' etc. rather than 'comrade' indicate that he is an outsider. Like Kandid, Perets realises that progress and morality are not necessarily linked. Characteristically, he speaks of himself as an 'emotional materialist';⁵⁵⁾ this term could be applied to Kandid as well.

Perets has an ambivalent attitude towards the forest. He is at the same time attracted and repelled by it. The symbolism of the forest is extended in the novel: it stands for the hidden meaning of life, which man wants to know, but is also afraid of.

When Perets wants to resign from his job, he becomes entangled in a kafkaesque struggle with anonymous bureaucracy. He looks for the director of the Administration, but nobody seems to know him; everybody describes him differently. Eventually, after a lot of nightmarish experiences, Perets discovers that he himself is the director. So it turns out that his desperate search in the jungle of bureaucracy has really been a search for his own identity.

As different departments evidently cancel each other's work out, Perets believes that it would be best to dissolve the whole Administration. But the spy Domaroshchiner convinces him that the issue of directives must

55) Ulitka na sklone, Posev (Frankfurt/M., 1972), p. 76.

not stop. The content of these orders is irrelevant; but their very existence proves the existence of a superior force as an orientation mark in a world of uncertainty.

This seems to be the answer to Perets's longing for understanding. As there is no meaning in life outside man himself, Perets can now forget about his yearning for the forest, for the unknown. Of course, the question is whether he was not better off when he did not have knowledge, but at least had hope for a secret meaning beyond man. Here, for the first time, man's alienation from himself, his self-delusion, may be preferable to the discovery of his true identity in an 'absurd' world.

The heroes of Ulitka na sklone transcend the characters of the 'interference novels'. Theirs is not only a political, but an existential, suprapolitical problem.⁵⁶⁾ What they are searching for is the general identity of man beyond the ideological context. Both these heroes have much in common with Kamill in Dalekaya Raduga. He is not the principal character of the novel, but he shows indications of the sort of alienation which is later exemplified in more detail by Kandid and Perets.

Kamill was one of thirteen scientists who connected themselves to machines. They lost all their weaknesses and passions and turned into 'naked intellect plus unlimited possibilities for the perfecting of the organism'.⁵⁷⁾ These people were immortal and invulnerable, but twelve of

56) I. Ignat'ev says rightly that starting with Ulitka na sklone the Strugatskys' works have developed from 'scientific fantasy to pure fantasy with a philosophical undertone': "'Gadkiye lebedi" — novy samizdatovskiy roman brat'ev A. i B. Strugatskikh', Radio Svoboda, Issledovatel'skiy byulleten' (Myunkhen, 19 Jul. 1972), No. 28, p. 2.

57) A./B. Strugatsky, Far Rainbow, translated from the Russian by A. G. Myers, Mir Publishers (M., 1967), p. 72.

them destroyed themselves. The reason for their suicides is hinted at when the position of the last survivor is described:

Nobody likes him. Everybody knows him — there isn't a soul on Rainbow who doesn't know Camille — but not a soul likes the man. If I were as lonely as him I'd go out of my mind, but it seems as if Camille just isn't interested. He's always by himself.⁵⁸⁾

Kamill believes that the human race will eventually split into two societies, an emotionalist and a logical one. He tried to anticipate this split in his own personality. In order to concentrate all his energy fully on science he attempted to tear away his emotions from himself and became half man, half robot. But the experiment failed. Kamill's emotional indifference is only a mask, as his last words before the destruction of all human life on the planet Raduga witness:

With a terrible grief he looked at the evening sea, at the cooling beach, at the empty deck chairs throwing a strange triple shadow. 'Loneliness...' he repeated. 'You always kept away from me, you people. I was always superfluous, a bore, an incomprehensible eccentric. And now you are going. And I'll be left alone.'⁵⁹⁾

Kamill's main reaction to the world around him is doubt. It is this feeling which alienates him from the optimistic positive characters who surround him, but links him with his successors, Kandid and Perets.

V. Dmitrevsky sharply criticises scientific fantasy which, as he says, pretends to be allegorical and turns out to be ambiguous, in which

58) Ibid., p. 23.

59) Ibid., p. 148.

a lonely hero tries to solve contemporary problems by a 'universally human' approach instead of applying the concept of class determination.⁶⁰⁾

This criticism is, above all, aimed at the latest works of the Strugatsky brothers. Their attempt to break the pattern of the positive, ideologically 'bullet-proof' heroes in favour of a less single-minded, but more credibly human central figure does not correspond to the rules which a Soviet writer is supposed to follow. Their more recent heroes are literarily promising, but politically doomed to failure because of their switch from historical to 'emotional' materialism. In view of this fact it is easily explicable why some of the Strugatsky brothers' latest works, such as the second part of Ulitka na sklone and the novel Gadkiye lebedi⁶¹⁾ (The Ugly Swans, written 1966-1967), are now largely confined to underground circulation.

60) 'Za gorizontami vremeni', Pravda, 31 Jul. 1970.

61) Posev (Frankfurt/M., 1972).

3. 'Mainstream' Writers in Fantasy

Scientific fantasy's growing reputation is reflected by the fact that nowadays more and more writers of 'mainstream' literature are using its means of expression. Certainly, fantastic elements have pervaded many distinguished works of post-revolutionary literature: examples are V. Mayakovsky's dramas; the works of A. Tolstoy which have been dealt with above, I. Erenburg's Trest D.E. (Trust D.E.) in the twenties; L. Leonov's Doroga na okean (The Road to the Ocean), P. Pavlenko's Na Vostoke (In the East) in the thirties. However, these works were either written when science fiction and scientific fantasy had not been split off from the mainstream as a somewhat inferior genre or when the separation process had just begun. After all, it was only in the second half of the twenties that H. Gernsback coined the term 'scientifiction' and thus indicated a divergence from the main body of literature. Before that, the works of H. G. Wells, for example, had not been considered part of an independent genre.¹⁾

The negative attitude of many writers and critics towards speculative fiction — for which some explanations are given in the introduction — is now gradually eroding. This is illustrated by the total 'conversion' of former 'realists' such as G. Gor and by more and more frequent ventures

1) On the isolation of science fiction see S. Lem, Fantastyka i futurologia, vol. 1, Wydawnictwo Literackie (Kraków, 1970), pp. 235-236; or P. Nicholls, 'Science Fiction and the Mainstream', Foundation (London, 1973), No. 3, p. 17.

of 'respectable' writers into the genre. A few notable examples are given in the collection Nefantasy v fantastike (Non-Fantasy Writers in Fantasy, 1970), which, among others, contains contributions by V. Tendryakov, L. Leonov and V. Shefner.

Tendryakov's tale Puteshestviye dlinoyu v vek²⁾ (A Journey Lasting a Century, 1963) is set in the not too distant future, in which man is, however, capable of stunning scientific feats.

The 'Brain Institute' dispatches a 'codified' cerebral copy of the scientist Aleksandr Barten'ev to a planet which is 36 light years from Earth. Its intelligent inhabitants are supposed to reconstruct a double of Barten'ev from the 'brain print', gather from him all his information about Earth, then teach him about themselves, make another 'print' and send it back to Earth, thus giving mankind the same chance to learn about them. The whole procedure will last about 100 years.

The alien planet is meaningfully called Kollega and its inhabitants kollegyane. Nonetheless it is clear that the double will live in desperate isolation. Barten'ev is told:

He will be like you, exactly like you. He will have your mind and your feelings. And now imagine what you would experience in a strange world, among creatures dissimilar to you, dissimilar intellectually. What is more, you would be aware that you could never meet your father, mother, sisters or brothers. For when you return, they would all be in their graves. Love, friendship — all this would die. You would be a forgotten stranger without a home. Do you like the idea? Don't you want to ask his forgiveness for it?³⁾

2) Nefantasy v fantastike, Biblioteka sovremennoy fantastiki, tom 19, Mol. gv. (M., 1970).

3) Ibid., p. 32.

Tendryakov materialistically equates brain and soul. While Barten'ev loses part of his soul through the brain print he gains the ability to picture his double's sufferings by almost telepathic means.

Besides the theme of the double's displacement, the author deals with the more easily fathomable discontent which some of the people of the communist future experience in their own time and their own environment.

Earth seems to have achieved perfection. There is equality for all; oppression and violence have ceased to exist. A new slave-owning era has begun, but now the slaves are not people, but obedient machines. All man has to do is give orders. The order itself, not the work any more, is now creative.

However, this superficially enviable state of affairs does not please everybody. Galya, Barten'ev's wife, longs for the old days when man had to face danger and hardship and heavy work, but received satisfaction in exchange: 'We don't know the burden of work, but we don't know the joy of resting after it, either.'⁴⁾ (Galya's attitude seems inspired by a similar situation in A. Kuprin's story Tost [The Toast, 1906], in which a young woman of the year 2906 would have preferred to live in revolutionary times instead of in her own contented, happy epoch.)

This is a very unorthodox point in the context of scientific fantasy, which usually presents a picture of technology helping and supplementing man's abilities, but not replacing them. However, in science fiction the extremes of machine dominance over man — H. G. Wells and E. M. Forster provide early examples — or of the striving after a carefree world of

4) Ibid., p. 42.

slaving robots and lazy, easy-going humans have always been more frequent.

The Italian writer V. Rossi uses an argument similar to Galya's, when he states that man is degenerating because of today's lack of hard work. Answering him, the Soviet academician A. Petrovsky claims that Rossi's point applies only to the capitalist world, where people devote to stale pleasures all the spare time which technology creates for them. On the other hand, technology will never be able to take the creative spark out of people in the socialist world, where man will consequently improve, not degenerate.⁵⁾

While many labourers would find it hard to agree with both Rossi's and Petrovsky's implication of the apparent lightness of present-day work, it might be more difficult to contest Tendryakov's projection of a labourless future. The author suggests that man's demand for creative work can, in the long run, be met only by the permanent discovery of new frontiers, new challenges to the human mind, such as contact with a highly intelligent alien race.⁶⁾

From the Marxist point of view, man's victory over alienation from his work will be the fulfilment of individual human development.⁷⁾ Thus Tendryakov's assumption that this kind of alienation will still or again

5) V. Rossi, 'Homo Sapiens degradiruyet'; A. Petrovsky, 'Chelovek ostayetsya chelovekom', Lit. gaz., 1973, No. 18.

6) For a similar view of 'man and the machine', but a different solution, see G. Al'tov, 'Klinika "Sapsan"', Al'manakh nauchnoy fantastiki, vyp. 6, Znaniye (M., 1967), pp. 88-90.

7) See e.g. K. Marx, Texte zu Methode und Praxis II, Rowohlt (Hamburg, 1968), pp. 50-52; or K. Marx, Die Frühschriften, herausgegeben von S. Landshut, Alfred Kröner Verlag (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 361-362.

exist, even when the traditional root of all evil – the class society with its private ownership – is eradicated, cannot expect too much ideological support.

Tendryakov also envisages a new rôle for art in the communist society. The artist will not have to serve propagandistic or educational purposes as today or primarily fulfil entertainment functions as with Yefremov; instead, he will be a mediator between the unhappy and the happy:

The more talented he [the artist] is, the stronger will his influence be. A genius will be able to make another person's trouble seem your own. And having experienced the suffering conveyed by the artist man will change, become more subtle, more alert. They say: art is a form of communication.⁸⁾

The last sentence is certainly valid today as well. But the difference will be in the shift of emphasis from political to emotional communication.

Tendryakov obviously does not try to sketch out a totally blissful future world. Even 'disalienated' types will, according to him, not necessarily be boundlessly happy. His novel is characterised by a slight reservation towards the future, a noticeable wistfulness for the ephemeral present and, stylistically, by a 'warm psychological lyricism'.⁹⁾

Far from Tendryakov's lyricism L. Leonov's 'film script' Begstvo mistera Mak-Kinli¹⁰⁾ (Mr. Mak-Kinli's Escape, 1961) is a satirical attack

8) 'Puteshestviye dlinoyu v vek', p. 76.

9) D. Suvin, 'Ein Abriss der sowjetischen Science Fiction, Science Fiction, p. 329.

10) Nefantasty v fantastike.

on war-mongering and, at the same time, a frightening description of the threat to which the 'common man' is exposed.

Mr. Mak-Kinli loves children and would like to have a family. However, times are not safe — the threat of the atomic bomb is imminent — and he decides to delay his plans for another 300 years or so. For now science has made it possible for anyone to wait out any critical phase on Earth. He can, e.g., be buried for an indefinite period and be revived again, or he can bide his time in a spaceship. — But these means of escape are far too expensive for Mak-Kinli, who is only a clerk.

Leonov says in his foreword that the country in which the story is set, the people, and the events are purely fictional. However, this fictional country, where all efforts are directed towards inventing ever more abominable means of destruction, is clearly a Western capitalist state, as all suggestions of disarmament are regarded as 'red propaganda'. The contrast between the peaceful East and the belligerent West becomes even more glaring, though less credible politically, when 'the other half of the planet' starts to disarm unilaterally. — In spite of these naive touches, Leonov conveys the frightening picture of an industry which treats war as a profitable business item and cynically disregards its victims.

Mak-Kinli deserts his fiancée and attaches himself to a rich old widow in order to get hold of the money which is necessary for survival. He is driven to a point where he would even kill the widow. Luckily, however, he manages to obtain a 'ticket to the future' without committing murder. But when he does have the ticket, Mak-Kinli forgets his panic, thinks again and decides not to submit to temptation. He will stay in the present and face whatever is coming.

Mak-Kinli is the 'hero of our time';¹¹⁾ he stands for the average decent man of the present. His attempt to desert his epoch and his friends, his criminal plans, which are totally out of character, signify a social alienation which could be experienced by any contemporary, especially in the West.

The hero is a passive pawn who is pushed about by political events and circumstances. Meek and ordinary, he finds himself in an utterly incongruous 'Raskol'nikov situation'.¹²⁾ This incongruous predicament brings out the hero's psychological conflict, illuminates his alienation and provides the basis for Leonov's sharp attack on the nonsense of war-mongery in general and Western war-mongery in particular.

The satirical possibilities of scientific fantasy are also exploited by V. Shefner. In addition, he views fantasy as the 'continuation of poetry by other means'. He is especially interested in the fairy-tale element of the genre and in the chance of placing the hero in curious situations. For Shefner the 'supra-fantastic' task takes precedence over technical aspects. Like H. G. Wells, he wants to create normal heroes with all their weak and strong points within a fantastic environment.¹³⁾

Shefner's novel Devushka u obryva, ili Zapiski Kovrigina¹⁴⁾ (The Girl by the Precipice or Kovrigin's Notes, 1964) is an account of how Andrey Svetochev invents the wonderful substance Akvalid in the 22nd century. The

11) Ibid., p. 368.

12) Yu. Surovtsev, 'Zemnoye prityazheniye', ibid., p. 413.

13) V. Shefner, 'Ot avtora', ibid., pp. 107-109.

14) Nefantasty v fantastike.

account is written in 2231 by the inventor's friend, Matvey Kovrigin, and re-edited in 2306.

Kovrigin is a pedantic lover of literature, who is collecting an anthology of 20th-century poetry (disregarding a certain Vadim Shefner¹⁵) and is also interested in the 20th-century writers of fantasy.

In the 22nd century all food is synthetic; money is obsolete; swear-words are out of use; alcohol and tobacco are only consumed by a few very old people, who are called Chep'yuvin (short for: 'a man who drinks wine') and Chekurtab (short for: 'a man who smokes tobacco'); communal living has taken the place of the family; machines can set up telepathic links between friends; robots do all the unpleasant jobs; 'electronic-bionic' constructions are used in medical experiments instead of animals.

However, it seems that man will never be able to reach out into space beyond his solar system. The 'Theory of Inaccessibility' states that there is no material resistant enough for an interstellar space-ship. At this point Andrey produces from water the incredible substance Akvalid which replaces stone, metal, glass, wood, concrete, paper, cloth etc. and, incidentally, refutes the then almost dogmatic theory.

When Andrey has finished his work there does not appear to be a worthwhile job for him any more. He falls into deep despair when his wife dies shortly after the completion of his task. This is why he declines an

15) In actual fact, Shefner is, of course, immortalised in similar anthologies, such as Antologiya russkoy sovetzkoy poezii, tom 2, Gos. izd. khud. lit. (M., 1957).

honorary artificial prolongation of his life and dies soon afterwards.

Shefner is indebted to Mayakovsky's plays in many respects. Mayakovsky in Klop (The Bedbug, 1928) shows up the philistine in a far progressed environment; Shefner exposes the 'semi-philistine' Kovrigin in the same way. The rarity of tobacco, alcohol and swear-words in the 22nd century goes back to the banishment of these in Klop. - Most of all, however, Shefner owes to Mayakovsky when it comes to the formation of fantastic neologisms, above all meaningful parodistic abbreviations. He adopts and perfects the system which Mayakovsky indicates by e.g. glavnachpups ('glavny nachal'nik po upravleniyu soglasovaniyem') in Banya. - Devushka u obryva teems with new creations of this kind, as a few examples may show: AVTOR ('Avtomatichesky Voditel' Transporta, Obladayushchy Rech'yu'), ERAZM ('Elektronny Rastolkovyvatel'ny Agregat, Znayushchy Mnogoye'), ATILLA ('Avtomatichesky Tvoryashchy Impul'sny Logichesky Literaturny Agregat').

How dependent man has become on machines is illustrated by the fact that prospective authors do not have their works judged by fellow-humans, but deal solely with aggregats like SLAVA, MAVRA, PUMA etc. Other machine names, such as SAPIENS and ANTROPOS even indicate that man has been completely replaced by mechanisms.

Especially the last two examples demonstrate that there is an implicit criticism of a potentially overtechnical (and overbureaucratic) environment behind the humoristic front.

The two heroes have different points of view as regards automation. Kovrigin is suspicious of all machines. Yet his is not the suspicion of the responsible citizen, but of the ignoramus. He is clearly out of place in the all-mechanical future, as is also emphasised by his obsession with the 20th century.

Andrey is less sceptical as far as the development of machines is concerned. If he is aware of any danger produced by science, he thinks it can be overcome by science as well. Such a danger is signalled by the 'Theory of Inaccessibility' which decrees a social and scientific standstill at a certain point.¹⁶⁾ Andrey, by eliminating the threat of a standstill, proves a much more useful citizen of the future society than Kovrigin, though not a less alienated one. His individualism and virtual suicide place him near such characters as Leonid (Krasnaya zvezda), Menni or Riel' (Strana Gonguri).

Besides being a satire on technology, Devushka u obryva is also an ironic fairy-tale. Thus, Andrey and his wife spend their holidays in a scientifically built ginger-bread house; the Chep'yuvín and Chekurtab are semi-mythological savants rather than representatives of ancient vices (unlike Prisyarkin in Klop). - The novel, furthermore, parodies scientific fantasy and its sometimes pompous self-importance. This is revealed by the striking nonsense value of many of the machines and also by the insertion of a part of a traditional scientific fantasy story. The cosmic espionage and violence of the story contrasts very disadvantageously with the poetic, slightly sad mood of the main plot and its implicit dream of a more perfect world.

The fairy-tale element is even more distinct in Shefner's other fantastic works which comprise the volume Zapozdaly strelok¹⁷⁾ (The

16) This theory, with its paralysing effect, may be a reminder of the 'limitation theory', imposed on scientific fantasy in the early fifties.

17) Sovetsky pisatel' (L., 1968).

Belated Archer, 1968).

Chelovek s pyat'yu 'ne', ili ispoved' prostodushnogo (The Man with Five Shortcomings or The Confessions of a Simple Mind) is the picaresque diary of Stefan Petrovich Prokhorovich, whose father nicknamed him as indicated in the title because of his five drawbacks (neuklyuzhy, nesoobrazitel'ny, nevydayushchiysya, nevezuchy, nekrasivy).

Stefan has to leave school so that his parents can afford to send his brilliant brother, Viktor, to university. In his attempts to be successful and make money, Stefan subsequently runs into the most grotesque adventures. One inventor cons him into taking a potion which makes him grow thick green fur all over his body, another gives him a paste that transforms him into a live musical instrument. Always ready to attach himself to anybody unusual, Stefan becomes the disciple of a science fiction fan who reckons that the arrival of aliens is at hand. He expects them to be the complete opposite of man. Thus they will say 'hello' instead of 'good-bye' and vice versa, they will sleep by day, drink tea with salt, read backwards etc. Unfortunately, Stefan's teacher — who wants the aliens to feel at home and therefore adapts himself totally to their customs — is certified insane when he goes into the female department of a sauna bath, with his clothes on and his shoes on his head.

Finally, when Stefan is 49 years old and has experienced countless similar adventures, he is rejuvenated and made handsome by an 'elixir for the immediate regeneration of the organism'. Now he is rid of all his drawbacks, marries a beautiful girl and lives happily ever after.

Stefan is the typical stupid prince of the fairy-tale, who is pushed around by events and in the end, apparently through sheer luck — but really as a reward for his goodness — finds more happiness than his more

clever, more handsome, but also more reckless brother. Thus the alienated prince becomes a respected member of society in the end.

This tale, which bursts with humorous ideas and is written in an excellent, subtly ironic manner, satirises careerists such as Viktor and again parodies some of the basic motifs of speculative fiction. Apart from the send-up of the desperate search for paradoxes, which is expressed in the 'alien episode', the actual contact theme is also ridiculed when Stefan meets 'Vasya from Mars'. Shefner says:

You yourselves, dear readers, have naturally guessed that he was not a Martian at all. He was an alien from the distant transgalactic nebula X-51719, an anthropomorphic native of the geomorphic planet Iolanta-del'ta in the star-cluster M-497.¹⁸⁾

Sergey Kladeyev in the story Skromny geniy (The Modest Genius) is as unassuming as Stefan, but less naive. He himself is an inventor, not a guinea pig for them like Stefan. Among other things he constructs OSEPSON ('Optichesky Solnechno-Energetichesky Pribor Sovershennogo Osobogo Naznacheniya').

Sergey marries a woman who turns out to be a nag and is completely unappreciative of his genius. She even envies a friend whose husband is a 'genuine inventor', as he is employed by the administration and constructs such useful things as a tin-opener which weighs several tons. - Unlike Stefan, Sergey shuts his mind to what other people say. He lives withdrawn from society and from his wife until he decides to rejuvenate himself and his former sweetheart by means of the OSEPSON and make a new start. Again

18) 'Chelovek s pyat'yu "ne"', ibid., p. 234.

social alienation can be broken only in a fairy-tale context.

The accusation of bureaucracy is extended in the novel Zapozdaly strelok, ili kryl'ya provintsiala (The Belated Archer or The Wings of a Backwoodsman). Aleksey Vozmozhny invents wings to make work easier for his mother, who is a postwoman in a small village. However, instead of gaining recognition Aleksey is even criticised. A newspaper writes:

A certain A. Vozmozhny, separating himself from the united collective of postal workers, instead of caring for the punctual delivery of letters to the village labourers, devoted himself to useless projects and thought up how to fly with wings.¹⁹⁾

Aleksey thinks of himself as an archer who has shot his arrow too late to have any effect. Man can now fly in machines, which are more practical than wings could be: 'Formerly people — strong people — dreamt of having wings. And what would happen if that dream came true now?... Unnecessary weight, a snail's house.'²⁰⁾ (A. Belyayev had also been aware of this problem. His Ariel²¹⁾ does not even use wings, but is able to fly because of a change in his molecular structure.)

After several authorities have refused to make use of Aleksey's invention (among them Glavsportsnaryadoprojekt and Glavlesopozhar), a sub-department of BEBI ('Byuro Etalonizatsii Bytovykh Izobreteniy') agrees

19) 'Zapozdaly strelok', ibid., p. 509.

20) O. Larionova, 'Leopard s vershiny Kilimandzharo', Al'manakh nauchnoy fantastiki, vyp. 3, Znaniye (M., 1965), p. 154.

21) Izbrannyye nauchno-fantasticheskiye proizvedeniya v trekh tomakh, tom 3, Mol. gv. (M., 1958).

to take them. This sub-department is called NTZ ('Nauchno-Teoreticheskoye Zavedeniye') Gus'lebed', because in it experts on geese and swans keep arguing which bird is more important. More and more sub-sub-departments are formed, Aleksey's plans are completely diluted, and the first public test of the wings, which by now have nothing in common with Aleksey's idea, fails miserably. Finally the wings have to be produced in their original form: 'the total "wingisation" of mankind has begun.'²²⁾ However, the invention still has no useful purpose apart from delighting some amateurs. Only after Aleksey's death does it turn out that the wings are invaluable for the exploration of Venus. So his arrow has not been shot too late, after all.

In spite of the semi-happy ending, in Zapozdaly strelok we find again the isolation of a man who is confronted with an all-powerful bureaucracy. This impression is softened by the humorous and dream-like undertones of the narrative — it also makes use of neologisms in the vein of Mayakovsky and others, and is interspersed with Shefner's nostalgic poems.

Shefner's works of fantasy prove Ye. Brandis's point that the best examples of the genre are not only full of genuine problems, but are also written in a poetic style and mood.²³⁾ The author's subtly ironic approach allows him a critical attitude towards Soviet reality which might well fall foul of the party line, if it were in a less poetic disguise.

The heroes of Shefner's 'scientific fairy-tales' are ahead of their social environment in terms of moral and scientific advancement (Devushka

22) 'Zapozdaly strelok', p. 538.

23) 'Problemnost' i mnogoobraziye', Avrora, No. 1 (L., 1973), p. 73.

u obryva, Skromny geniy, Zapozdaly strelok) or simply in terms of moral superiority (Chelovek s pyat'yu 'ne'). His characters, however, are not overbearing heroes in the sense that the works concentrate solely on their personal problems. The author also intends to point out that something is wrong with an environment that fails to integrate valuable individuals. This is not immediately obvious as Shefner's message is refracted several times through the prism of his 'shy humour'²⁴⁾ before the reader receives it.

The most distinguished contemporary 'realist' who has produced a work which can be classified as scientific fantasy is A. Solzhenitsyn. In his play Svecha na vetru (A Candle in the Wind, first version written 1960) he presents a hero who is cast in the same mould as Ivan Denisovich, Kostoglotov or Nerzhin.

Aleks Koriel', who spent ten years in prison and who was then rehabilitated and worked as a teacher in a lonely region for another five years, returns to the city. He meets his former fellow prisoner Filipp Radagays, who, contrary to Aleks, is anxious not to reveal his past, as he now has a responsible position at the university, where he heads a biocybernetic laboratory. Aleks agrees to join Filipp in his work. - Their object is to transform frail personalities into strong, irresistible ones by influencing their 'biocurrents' electronically. The first to be 'vectorised' is the unstable, neurotic Al'da, a relation of Aleks.

Whereas Filipp has no doubts about the rightness of what they are doing - he is, above all, interested in his own career - Aleks, who used

24) A. Britikov, Russky sovetsky nauchno-fantastichesky roman, p. 309.

to be a fanatical scientist himself, now asks disturbing questions:

'Why do we have science?'

Filipp. ...'In the last analysis, the 20th century without science wouldn't be the 20th century! It is its soul!'

Aleks. 'Or its soullessness?'²⁵⁾

Their attempt to stabilise Al'da's personality is successful, but to Aleks she has now lost her individuality: 'We took a miracle of nature! And turned it into a stone!'²⁶⁾ What is worse, the experiment can be used for military purposes in order to deprive soldiers of fear.

Aleks believes that it is more important to hand to the 21st century the 'shaking candle of our soul'²⁷⁾ rather than mere progress in physics. The experiments may eliminate this chance, as man's soul grows through suffering: 'the contented man is always a beggar in his soul.'²⁸⁾

The following dialogue shows up Aleks's displacement and, at the same time, his concern with the future and the purpose of science and society:

Aleks. ... For me the most important question of life has always been: why? ... Why do we have science at all? I'm told that it is interesting; that you won't stop progress; that it is connected with the productive forces. But all the same — why? Everywhere strange aims are foisted upon us: we have to work — for work's sake, we have to live — for society.'

Sinbar. 'That is a great, magnificent aim. Why don't you like it?'

25) A. Solzhenitsyn, 'Svecha na vetru', Sobraniye sochineniy, tom 5, Possev-Verlag (Frankfurt/M., 1969), p. 143.

26) Ibid., p. 192.

27) Ibid., p. 200.

28) Ibid., p. 190.

Aleks. 'It is magnificent, but it isn't an aim.'

Sinbar. 'Why not?'

Aleks. 'Because if I live for you and you for me, it is a vicious circle. But it doesn't answer the question "Why do we live?"',²⁹⁾

Eventually, Aleks reaches the conviction that science is more than an instrument which helps one to understand the world in general and mankind in particular. It has to be the actual conscience of humanity. Therefore Aleks decides to go into 'social cybernetics' and to cooperate in constructing a model of society which can be used as a touchstone for any reform. While biocybernetics interferes with that which is most perfect on Earth, i.e. man,³⁰⁾ social cybernetics aims at interfering with the most imperfect, i.e. human society. The result might be something even better than socialism.

Svecha na vetru is an outstanding example of the 'new' scientific fantasy. In it, 'metascientific' thought becomes a theme in its own right, while science and technology provide the 'background noises'. This change of emphasis is achieved by the dominating rôle of the hero, who in prison became estranged from his former life and former friends, but who was also enriched in mind and soul by his experience. Solzhenitsyn's claim of general validity of his message is stressed by the fact that the play is set in an unspecified country which has both capitalist and socialist traits.³¹⁾

29) Ibid., pp. 179-180.

30) K. Vonnegut in Player Piano (1932) uses the reverse argument: as man is imperfect, he cannot live in a technically perfect world. - Panther Books (Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts, 1973), p. 255.

31) See J. Chaix-Ruy, A. Soljenitsyne ou La Descente Aux Enfers, del Duca (Paris, 1970), p. 122.

Aleks is, indeed, a hero whose strong moral views would be liable to alienate him in any part of the world. A scientist who takes responsibility for his work instead of leaving it to the politicians is hard enough to cope with, as Oppenheimer and Sakharov have shown; a scientist who, moreover, is inclined to question the very usefulness of science must be undesirable for any society which is dominated by the idea of technological advancement. While, however, all over the world the public and many scientists have displayed a certain caution, if not uneasiness, as regards the use of science since the atomic bomb,³²⁾ a part of publicised opinion in the socialist states tends to show a definite smugness when it comes to potentially doubtful results of scientific progress.³³⁾ This attitude is, for instance, reflected in an interview on future computerisation in the Soviet Union:

'Have I understood you correctly? The adaptation to "data banks" as, incidentally, to any great innovation, requires certain efforts. But there isn't any "danger" to be expected from them under our Soviet conditions. Is that right?'

'Perfectly right. The Soviet people trust their own administrative organs which stand for the interests of the people, and which try to give the widest expression to the will of the masses.'³⁴⁾

32) However, this critical feeling is usually misdirected in science fiction, which wrongly demonises science itself, not the conditions that make its abuse possible. - Compare M. Pehlke/N. Lingfeld, Roboter und Gartenlaube, Carl Hanser Verlag (München, 1970), p. 50.

33) An opinion poll carried out among Soviet and foreign scientists between 1971 and 1973 shows that many of them - rather disturbingly - assume that scientific work automatically produces greater moral responsibility: see 'XX vek. Nauka i obshchestvo', Lit. gaz., 1973, No. 38.

34) 'Komp'yuter zhelayet schast'ya', Interview with Academician V. Glushkov by V. Moyev, Lit. gaz., 1972, No. 1.

Svecha na vetru is directed against such self-righteousness as well as against the actual misuse of science.³⁵⁾ The play has not been published in the Soviet Union.

After its 'subcultural' years, scientific fantasy is now on the way towards gaining a place in 'recognised' literature. One of the reasons for this is certainly to be found in the spreading awareness even in the U.S.S.R. that 'realism' in the strict sense does not automatically guarantee literary value.³⁶⁾ The mainstream writers who have realised this and made use of the means of fantasy have helped to enhance the reputation of the genre. However, this enhancement is not their exclusive merit. Britikov emphasises that the literary level of the best 'original writers of fantasy' is by no means lower than that of the 'newcomers'. For the former and the latter fantasy has opened up new vistas of literary expression.³⁷⁾ It supplies the author with a new choice of themes, which extend far into the future and into the cosmos. These themes are likely to give new life and content to old forms, such as the novel, the drama, the (short) story, and even to enrich poetry.³⁸⁾ In addition, they enlarge the possibilities of polemical, satirical and parodistic works, which are especially susceptible to fantasy's shaking-off of conventional ideas of time and space.

35) Similar apprehensions are expressed by A. Voznesensky, 'Oza', Akhillesovo serdtse, Khudozhestvennaya lit. (M., 1966), p. 58.

36) A. Britikov, Russky sovetsky...roman, p. 270.

37) Compare V. Revich, 'Razbivaya steklyannyye dveri', Introduction to Antologiya skazochnoy fantastiki, Biblioteka sovremennoy fantastiki, tom 21, Mol. gv. (M., 1971), p. 7.

38) Early instances of poetic scientific fantasy are provided by V. Mayakovsky: i.e. Letayushchy proletary (1925), Nemnozhko utopii (1925). More recent examples are found in various Fantastika-collections, A. Voznesensky's Oza (1966) and V. Shefner's collection of poems, Zapas vysoty (1970).

4. Anti-utopian Types

The anti-utopia is the modern answer to the optimistic utopian trust in the coming, or at least the possibility, of a better world. Instead of suggesting what should be, it describes the horrors of what must not be. The anti-utopia is

a work depicting a society which is officially 'perfect' but which is demonstrated to have flaws making it unacceptable to the author's — and presumably the reader's — point of view. The societies described in these novels have been called, among other things, reverse utopias, negative utopias, inverted utopias, regressive utopias, cacoutopias, dystopias, non-utopias, satiric utopias and — most recently — nasty utopias. Anti-utopian novels appear to fall into three major groups: anti-totalitarian, anti-technological, and satiric (or combinations of these three).¹⁾

This otherwise valid definition leaves out a very important point: the characterisation of the anti-utopian hero. — As opposed to the observer type of the traditional utopian traveller, the protagonist of the anti-utopia has an active part in the plot — a fact which makes novels of this kind generally more readable than utopias. He is, without exception, an alienated man, a revolutionary who wants to overthrow the existing order, even though his further plans are usually quite vague.

Soviet literature has no room for the anti-utopia. A hero who fights overall social evil is either placed in the past or the present of

1) A. Lewis, 'The Anti-Utopian Novel', Extrapolation, V. II, 1/1961, p. 27.

capitalist states. The future is supposed to be communist, which means that there will be no total opposition and, above all, no more social revolutions.

General trust in communist ideology, however, might clash with confusion about the realisation of details. The critic V. L'vov says that the people of the future will indisputably lead a happy and harmonic life. At the same time he admits that different authors of scientific fantasy have quite different ideas of happiness.²⁾

While there is apparently considerable space for diverging opinions behind the façade of common ideological guide-lines, the general validity of the communist conception may not be questioned. The work which attempts this stands little chance of publication in the Soviet Union. There are, however, exceptions, such as I. Kremnev's anti-revolutionary peasant utopia Puteshestviye moyego brata Alekseya v stranu krest'yanskoy utopii³⁾ (My Brother Aleksey's Journey to the Land of the Peasant Utopia, 1920).

The implications of this reactionary vision are so obviously ridiculous that the writer of the preface can easily justify its publication by saying that every worker and farmer should know how the enemy envisages the future, so that he can critically and consciously deal with his arguments.⁴⁾

2) 'Chelovek nashey mechty', Neva, 4/1962, p. 168.

3) Gos. izd. (M.).

4) P. Orlovsky, 'Predisloviye', ibid., p. XIV.

Unfortunately, this noble view does not seem to apply when it comes to less harmless criticism. Ye. Zamyatin's infinitely more literary and more meaningful novel My (We), which was written in the same year as Puteshestviye, does not incur similar indulgence.

My⁵⁾ is a scathing anti-utopian satire on social uniformity and political entropy. People in the 'One State' are degraded to numbers; the hero is called D-503. He is the constructor of a space-ship which is to bring the blessings of the 'One State' to other planets. The principal blessing is the elimination of individualism. Privacy is limited to short sexual encounters which are regulated by 'pink coupons'. Every move of the 'numbers' is mathematically calculated; the individual has no rights; the State, the 'we' is everything.

In this mathematical world irrationality is represented by the symbol $\sqrt{-1}$. This is what burns inside the hero like a foreign body.⁶⁾ Like the Underground Man,⁷⁾ he is unable to drown its impact and finally gives in to irrationality and therefore to rebellion against the totally and exclusively rational State. Incited by the seductive and intelligent I-330, D-503 joins forces with the 'uncivilised' rebels who live beyond the wall which encircles the 'One State'. Their plan to steal the space-ship fails, but they manage to break the wall down and start the rebellion. However, the

5) Ye. Zamyatin, Inter-Language Literary Associates (N.Y., 1967).

6) Characteristically, Yefremov's 'superheroes' completely lack irrationality. - See D. Rudnev, "'Zamknuty mir" sovremennoy russkoy fantastiki', Grani (Frankfurt/M., 1970), No. 79, p. 223.

7) Compare M. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare, Oxford Univ. Press (New York, 1967), p. 105.

rebels are defeated and subjected to a new kind of operation which deprives them of their imagination. After that all of them, including D-503, are unthinkingly happy 'numbers' whose spirit has gone for ever.

Most anti-utopias condemn potentially dangerous future societies without offering detailed alternatives. The roots of evil already exist in the present, but this present is by far preferable to what the future might have in store, as the potential of social good still balances the negative possibilities. Thus the remedy, the hint of an alternative, has to be looked for in the present — or the past, from the hero's point of view. - In My the comparative desirability of the 'old times' is indicated by the rebels' striving for an anarcho-democratic ideal and, more drastically, by the atavistically hairy hands of the hero.

The anti-utopias which follow Zamyatin's novel, e.g. A. Huxley's Brave New World (1932), G. Orwell's 1984 (1948), I. Levin's This Perfect Day (1970), are largely indebted to My. They all view the restoration of emotionalism and irrationality as a return to humanity. Furthermore, most of them argue that culture and civilisation, nature and technology are incompatible. - While anti-utopias have their merit in pointing out threatening present tendencies, they are still basically destructive in their denunciation of science, which is expressed through the linking of technology and totalitarianism.⁸⁾

D-503 lives in a world in which anything but equanimity is suspect. His very unrest, his obsession with $\sqrt{-1}$ would suffice to alienate him from

8) See F. R. Schenk, 'Augenschein und Zukunft', Science Fiction, p. 267.

his society, even if he did not take part in the rebellion. M. Ginsburg says that My is essentially concerned with the problems of man, i.e., with the relation between the individual and society, the temptation of mental slavery and the longing for freedom, the conflict between the rational and the irrational, the fear and the attraction of alienation.⁹⁾ Indeed, D-503, like all anti-utopian heroes, is torn by profound conflict. He is a guilt-ridden, remorseful rebel, who is even driven to contemplating suicide.

The anti-utopian hero, as a rule, wavers between his conditioning, i.e. identification with his society, and a seemingly inexplicable desire to rebel against it. He is not a displaced person, like many of the other alienated characters who have been considered; he stands for the restless element which is inherent in any, even the most placid, society. When this element is eliminated, man is deprived of his 'soul' and the freedom of choice which made him human. Losing their alienation, heroes like D-503 also lose their humanity and become mere robots who accept unquestioningly whatever the State and its rulers may decree.

Entropy and energy are, according to Zamyatin, the two essential forces of the world: 'One leads to blissful quietude, to happy equilibrium; the other, to destruction of equilibrium, to tormentingly endless movement.'¹⁰⁾ The force of energy is represented by heretics who are necessary for a healthy political and literary development — and who will always be necessary as there is no eschatology.¹¹⁾

9) Introduction, Ye. Zamyatin, We, translated by M. Ginsburg, Bantam Book (Toronto, N.Y., London, 1972), p. XV.

10) Ibid., p. 165.

11) 'O literature, revolyutsii i entropii', Litsa, Izd. imeni Chekhova (N.Y., 1955), pp. 249-251.

Zamyatin's warning of entropy is taken up in many works of scientific fantasy. However, here the term tends to imply individual smugness, which might hamper progress within communism, rather than a basic 'fault', which might distort the system. Thus in Yefremov's Serdtse Zmei (The Heart of the Serpent), 1959) entropy is likened to the victory of personal indifference.

Both Zamyatin and Yefremov are afraid of social standstill, but the solutions they propose are vastly different. Zamyatin suggests eternal antagonistic (revolutionary) conflict, Yefremov — eternal non-antagonistic (individual) conflict. Zamyatin relies on 'mistakes' which stir society up and are more valuable than any truth, Yefremov depends on the possession of an irrefutable truth as a framework for minor dialectic clashes of 'mistakes'. If a clash endangered the framework itself, the work depicting the situation would automatically turn into an anti-utopia.

Britikov writes that Zamyatin misrepresents the goal of communism by taking the elimination of the individual in an anonymous mass for its essence.¹²⁾ However, Zamyatin does not question the good intentions of communism at all;¹³⁾ what he wants to show up is the potential danger of state-regulated happiness ruling out individual choice completely — an apprehension which is not unfounded, as Stalinism shows.

12) Russky sovetsky nauchno-fantastichesky roman, p. 95.

13) C. Walsh says rightly that 'dystopia is most often social planning that backfires and slides into nightmare, whatever its original intent may have been': From Utopia to Nightmare, Geoffrey Bles (London, 1962), pp. 137-138. Similarly, H. B. Franklin states that the modern anti-utopian position is based on the apprehension that 'utopia may work all too well' and not on the former dismissal of utopia as impracticable: Future Perfect, Oxford Univ. Press (New York, 1966), p. 393.

Furthermore, Britikov remarks that communist teachings are not dogmatic, but rather a guide for action which has to be perfected incessantly. An example of this flexibility is the assumed gradual transition of the dictatorship of the proletariat into the people's state.¹⁴⁾ This again does not counter Zamyatin's criticism of the idea of a very last revolution, after which no abrupt changes are supposed to occur any more. However, no objection to the content of the novel can do away with the evidence that the discussion of highly critical literature is acceptable from an official point of view only in such cases as the afore-mentioned Puteshestviye, where the pointlessness of the criticism is assured.¹⁵⁾

A. Terts's Lyubimov (1963), which had to be published abroad, also exemplifies the unacceptability of anti-utopias in the Soviet Union.

The mechanic Tikhomirov takes over power in the imaginary Soviet city of Lyubimov. He achieves this by using 'ESP'-powers which he acquired through reading 19th-century literature on 'psychic magnetism'. These seemingly occult powers do not clash with dialectical materialism, as Tikhomirov learns from Engels's Dialektik der Natur, in which consciousness is defined as the highest form of matter: 'Consequently consciousness also needs to change and produce some material result....'¹⁶⁾

14) Russky sovetsky...roman, p. 95.

15) On the other hand, early European utopias may prove instructive to Soviet readers, because they illustrate the complicated development of the idea of socialism, as L. Vorob'ev writes in his introduction to the Soviet edition of some Western utopias ('Utopii i deystvitel'nost'', Utopichesky roman XVI-XVII vekov, Khud. lit. [M., 1971], p. 38).

16) A. Terts, Lyubimov, ed. B. Filippov (Washington, 1964), p. 50.

Once his strength is assured, Tikhomirov plans to improve mankind. As he will instil the right kind of thoughts into everybody, crimes will not happen any more and prisons will be abolished. - He begins by forcing the proud Serafina Petrovna to marry him. At the wedding he tries to emulate the feats of Jesus: he turns water into wine, cucumbers into sausages etc.

The dictator 'suggests' to his subjects that work is sweet and the overfulfilment of the norm a particular joy. Everybody seems happy, except for himself: 'Alone, alone I carry the burden of worry, restlessness, doubt and unsatisfied needs!',¹⁷⁾

The Soviet administration makes some attempts to recapture the city, but its ruler is able to make the troops go astray quite easily. Thus Lyubimov becomes virtually invincible.

Finally, Tikhomirov makes friends with the detective Vitaly Kochetov, who was infiltrated from Moscow but converted to Tikhomirov's cause. Together they try to find an amplifier for the dictator's psychic powers. They are unsuccessful, however, and Tikhomirov gradually despairs when he sees that people change for the better only temporarily, i.e., when he exerts pressure on them. In his frustration he abuses his power more and more often, he even murders people by giving them mental orders to die.

At the end, Tikhomirov's concentration fails him. The troops conquer Lyubimov and reestablish Soviet power.

While My is concerned with the conflict between individualism and conditioned collectivism, Lyubimov's central theme is the contrast between

17) Ibid., p. 91.

freedom and dictatorship. The dictator is threatened not by his subjects' rebellion but by losing his grip on their consciousness.¹⁸⁾ What is more, he ends up doubting his own intentions when it dawns upon him that choice is a necessary element of happiness. It is in this recognition that D-503 and Tikhomirov meet.

The dictator predetermines the course of events by 'magnetic suggestion'. In the final analysis, history is based not on material or natural laws but on the arbitrary will of Tikhomirov. The overpowering figure of the leader, inspired by the reign of Stalin, is one of Terts's dominant themes. The leader's blind will stands for the elemental, spontaneous, deeply anarchistic and individualistic force which lurks under the surface of seemingly peaceful life.¹⁹⁾ The author uses the fact of the personality cult as evidence against the idea of teleology which he regards as inherent in Soviet ideology. Tikhomirov's 'ESP'-powers are the uncontrollable forces of the subconscious, which do not lend themselves to any kind of teleology.

(Terts also employs the method of linking political opposition and alienation in some of his stories, such as Sud idet (The Trial Begins, written 1956) and Gololeditsa (Slippery Ice, written 1961). The hero of Gololeditsa²⁰⁾ like Tikhomirov, has 'ESP'-abilities, though less powerful ones: he is limited to clairvoyance. The secret police, rather

18) Compare A. van der Eng-Liedmeier, 50 jaar literatuur in Sowjet-Rusland, Werkgroep 2000 (Hilversum, 1967), p. 196.

19) B. Filippov, 'Vmesto predisloviya', Lyubimov, pp. 8-10.

20) A. Terts, Fantasticheskiye povesti, Institut littéraire (Paris, 1961).

unsuccessfully, try to exploit his talent. When he loses his gift he is thrown into prison. - Here the contradiction between the Party's claim to the materialistic explicability of history and the trust of the head of the secret police in the magic malleability of the future is the butt of the satire.)

The anti-utopia which concentrates on the point of view of the dictator is surely unusual. Terts is relieved of the necessity to bring the anti-utopian hero into direct contact with the tyrant or a representative of the collective dictatorship, as is the case with Graham and Ostrog (When the Sleeper Wakes), D-503 and the Benefactor (My), the 'noble Savage' and Mustapha Mond (Brave New World), Winston Smith and O'Brien (1984). Instead of indirect information on the motivation of the leader, Terts provides an immediate insight into Tikhomirov's psyche. What emerges as the most important recognition is not the trite theorem that 'power corrupts', but the more basic truth that even absolute power requires plausibility in its actions. The fact that suggestion cannot replace conviction brings about Tikhomirov's fall.

Tikhomirov is alienated in two respects. First, he is driven to separate himself from Soviet society and set up a utopia of his own; secondly, he is alienated from his own subjects when he realises that his will never be a society of consciously happy, advanced citizens, but an empire of apathy.

Tikhomirov has no individual enemy challenging him; the fight takes place largely within himself, which is an innovation as anti-utopias go. Another unusual feature of Lyubimov is indicated by the fact that the people outside the hermetically closed dictatorial state do not represent a vaguely desirable alternative, but rather another anti-utopia, which

substitutes propaganda for 'ESP'. In this respect, Lyubimov paints a more pessimistic picture than most similar works, which usually permit at least a glimpse of freedom.

The symbolism of the alienated hero is heightened in Terts's story Pkhents²¹⁾ (1966). An extraterrestrial being relates how he has lived in Moscow for more than thirty years after being marooned on Earth. In order to pass for human the creature has to strap his many-limbed plant-like body into a form similar to a hunchback's. His very shape keeps him apart from 'normal' humanity. But far graver are his spiritual problems: In his endeavour to adapt to his environment the alien has taken a job as a bookkeeper and perfectly mastered the Russian language while the memory of his own native tongue is fading. Even so he finds it impossible to put the essence of his inhuman concepts into human expression. Never again will he have a chance to communicate with a kindred spirit. His isolation is further increased by the fact that he feeds himself by pouring water all over his body and has to take at least one bath a day, which — in a communal house with only one bathroom — could easily reveal his true identity and expose him to everybody's disgust.

The creature does not feel inferior to human beings. On the contrary, he is convinced of his superior intellect and physical beauty. But in the face of human lack of understanding of anything different he dare not destroy his incognito. - The alien's misfortune symbolises, in fact, the plight of the isolated 'underground' writer in the Soviet Union. Sinyavsky-Terts, in the 1966 trial which accused him and Daniel'-Arzhak of anti-Soviet

21) Fantastichesky mir Abrama Terts'a, Inter-Language Literary Associates (Paris, 1967).

activities, compared himself to the alien and admitted to being different from others. But difference alone, he argued, further, should not be a reason to curse a person.²²⁾

Obviously, the line between anti-utopias and 'warning literature', which is an accepted part of scientific fantasy, is not always easy to draw. Ye. Tamarchenko even lumps them together and speaks of antiutopii-preduprezhdeniya.²³⁾ This is, however, an exception. Usually the term anti-utopia is used more loosely in the West. For instance, J. Glad calls a critical article Vozrozhdeniye antiutopii v proizvedeniyakh A. i B. Strugatskikh²⁴⁾ (The Renaissance of Anti-utopia in the Works of A. and B. Strugatsky). He assumes that the anti-utopia is concerned with an ideological search, as opposed to the ideological uniformity of the utopia. However, he does not seem to distinguish between the search within a given ideology and the complete negation of it. Only the latter characterises the anti-utopia. The Strugatsky brothers do often present biting satirical criticism of shortcomings or harmful tendencies in their own state, but they do not question the overall validity of its ideology.²⁵⁾

Another misconception with regard to Soviet anti-utopias is expressed in an introductory remark to a reprint of Ye. Voyskunsky's and I. Lukod'yanov's story Formula nevozmozhnogo (Formula for the Impossible, 1961). This story describes the arrival of cosmonauts in a 'cybernetic paradise', where the people themselves have degenerated into mechanical puppets. The author of the introduction says: 'This paradise makes its inhabitants forcibly

22) E. J. Brown, Russian Literature Since the Revolution, Collier-Macmillan Ltd. (London, 1969), p. 312. - Compare also pp. 309-311.

23) 'Mir bez distantsiy', Voprosy literatury, 11/1968, p. 112.

24) Novy zhurnal, 1970, kn. 98.

25) See A., B. Strugatskiye, 'Davayte dumat' o budushchem', Lit. gaz., 1970, No. 6.

"happy". And this is exactly how the communist society is planned.'²⁶⁾
 However, in spite of a certain similarity to My in the elimination of choice as an element of happiness, Formula nevozmozhnogo is, above all, a warning of possible cybernetic dangers. It is written in the same vein as R. Bradbury's visions of technological horror and is not a specifically 'anti-communist anti-utopia'.

The reason why anti-utopian and merely critical elements in scientific fantasy are easily confused could be found in the fact that Marxism, with its promise of an ideal society, has undoubted utopian traits. As the traditional utopia is static and inflexible it cannot absorb criticism; the realisation of even minor flaws might destroy the whole picture. Marxism, however, introduces historical development as an inalienable part of utopia, as Tumannost' Andromedy has shown. Thus the utopian vision can stand criticism dealing with single points of concern, though not with the principle of historical materialism and its final result in general. When these principles are questioned — as in Zamyatin's denial of a final revolution — or when the end result is denigrated — as by the undesirable states in My and Lyubimov — a critical work becomes anti-utopian.

Neither the works of the Strugatsky brothers nor Formula nevozmozhnogo are anti-utopian in this sense. In any case, they lack a hero who doubts, opposes and finally fights the allegedly ideal state. As opposed to the traditional utopia, which needs no hero as it rests on collective happiness, the anti-utopia is typified by a single aggressive hero, who is as alienated from the collective as the Underground Man, but whose rebellion is more active than the latter's 'posture'.

26) Posev, 12 Jul. 1963.

V. CONCLUSION

Alienated characters in Soviet literature are not limited to scientific fantasy. This is proved by Yu. Olesha's Zavist' (Envy, 1926) and I. Erenburg's Den' vtoroy (The Second Day, 1933) among many others.

One of the protagonists in Zavist'¹⁾ is the superfluous frustrated Kavalеров, a philistine who is painfully aware that the times have passed him by. He knows that he does not belong to the new society, that he cannot participate in the great feats that the socialists are accomplishing. Kavalеров feels himself to be a parasite and compensates for his guilt complex by cherishing an intense hatred and envy of those who are successful and socially accepted. Wishing to avenge himself on one of them, he even plans murder, but lacks the courage to carry his plan out.

Erenburg's Safonov in Den' vtoroy²⁾ is much more complex than Kavalеров. He is a gifted young mathematics student, who reads and knows more than all his acquaintances. But he feels that he, contrary to them, is afraid of life. In a fit of masochism he rejects the love of the girl Irina. For a while he associates with a drunken cynic, who — indirectly incited by Safonov — commits sabotage and is sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Safonov is appalled by the similarity of this incident to

1) Yu. Olesha, Pergamon Press (Oxford, 1969).

2) Sobraniye soch. v devyati tomakh, tom 3, Khudozhestvennaya literatura (M., 1964).

Ivan Karamazov's and Smerdyakov's deed. Like Ivan, he is unable to believe in anything and, like so many other alienated people, contemplates the idea of suicide. According to Irina, Safonov has missed the historical period for which he would have been best suited. Formerly he would not have been happier, either, but at least he would have lived among people who were equally unhappy.

Both Kavalеров and Safonov are manifestations of the past: the former is the bourgeois philistine, the latter is the bourgeois nihilist philosopher. They cannot grasp the idea of collectivism, their selfishness removes them inseparably from the forward-looking majority of (the idealised) Soviet society.

When these two novels were written, the idea of the positive hero had not completely matured. The alienation of the above-mentioned characters is explicable, since they are non-socialists in a socialist society, and justifiable, because of the propagandistic and didactic value of pillorying the bourgeois enemies of this society. Similar examples appear throughout Soviet literature, especially during periods of temporary relaxation of censorship.³⁾

However, the presentation of alienated heroes is risky at any time, for the principal purpose of Soviet literature is education through positive example:

Whatever a Soviet author writes, whatever side of reality he touches, he must invariably start from the position of the heroic ideal, for in the heroic is the essence of the people's creative activity.⁴⁾

3) See T. Rogers, 'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin 'Thaw', Mouton (The Hague, Paris, 1972).

4) 'Vremya geroicheskoy npravstvennosti', Literaturnoye obozreniye, No. 4 (M., 1973), p. 4.

A. Terts disagrees completely with this sort of attitude in his critical essay Chto takoye sotsialisticheskyy realizm? (On Socialist Realism, 1959). According to him, the same determinism which characterises the Soviet interpretation of Marxist theory ruins the quality of the literary hero:

The positive hero is not simply a good man, he is a hero illuminated by the light of the most ideal ideal, a paragon worthy of any emulation, a 'man-mountain' from whose summit the future is visible.⁵⁾

The demand of many critics, especially in the thirties, that literature must not be dominated by conflictlessness is in Terts's opinion a mere gesture. For as long as the party line has to be toed, these demands can only mean 'variety within the limits of monotony, arguments within the limits of unanimity, conflicts within conflictlessness'.⁶⁾

As opposed to the positive hero, the 'superfluous man' of the 19th century is characterised by lack of determination, aimlessness and a tendency towards self-analysis. He is far more dangerous to the positive hero than a straightforwardly negative opponent, because he has no goal at all; he is neither for nor against it, he is simply beyond a goal; this must not be, as it does not fit into the clear picture of right and wrong.

Furthermore, Terts goes on, the 'superfluous man' is ironic. He can laugh about himself and about anything holy, while the positive hero concentrates so hard on his god of ideological determinism that he has lost all self-irony. Being an allegory rather than a man of flesh and blood, the

5) Fantastichesky mir Abrama Tertsya, Inter-Language Literary Associates (Paris, 1967), p. 417.

6) Ibid., p. 419.

positive hero does not need a psychological background. Therefore his psychology usually sounds false.

Socialist realism is incongruous in itself. It hopelessly attempts to combine the deterministic (religious) approach to literature of the 18th century with the realism of the 19th, and thus produces dissonant clashes between the quasi-religious ideal of communism and the sober reality of life. Literature can be saved only if it discards determinism and turns to grotesque, 'phantasmagoric' works which substitute hypotheses for a fixed goal.⁷⁾

Scientific fantasy is openly grotesque;⁸⁾ it naturally comes closest to Terts's demand. Although it cannot do away with the goal as such, it can at least offer different assumptions about its final characteristics. This still means hypothesising within clearly defined limits, but it does give the writer of fantasy a wider range of possibilities than the 'realist' has. Also, fantasy provides a more reliable refuge for the 'superfluous', the alienated hero. By its specific devices it can even 'create' alienated characters quite inconspicuously.

Although there is no exact parallelism between the alienated heroes of modern scientific fantasy and their 'superfluous' predecessors, it is possible to point out a few similarities.

Leonid (Krasnaya zvezda), Vikent'yev (Gryadushchy mir), Osorgin (Cherez tysyachu let), Pogodin (Strannik i vremya), and Kondrat'yev are comparable to the 'superfluous people' in Turgenev's Nakanune (1860), who

7) Ibid., pp. 425-444.

8) See Ye. Tamarchenko, 'Mir bez distantsiy', Voprosy literatury, 11/1968, p. 99.

are confronted with Insarov, a vastly superior person who symbolises individual and social advancement. Equally, the above-mentioned heroes of fantasy have to face up to a superior society. They are all socialists, and as such theoretically better equipped to absorb the ideal than the wavering, irresolute 'superfluous men'. But whenever their alienation is actually overcome, it does not happen 'naturally', i.e., through a cognitive process which eliminates their inferiority. Their integration remains either unexplained or is brought about by the 'dei ex machina' of hypnotism or a new love. However, none of these can credibly solve the heroes' psychological dilemma, which is intellectual as well as emotional. For this reason the 'open-ended alienation' of Pogodin is far more convincing and helps to maintain the psychological balance of Gor's novel. No doubt a contemporary socialist would have endless trouble finding a place in a communist society of a few centuries hence — all the more so as it is hard not to become confused even nowadays: 'There are many reasons why in our supercomplicated time [Soviet] people might lose their orientation, follow a wrong course.'⁹⁾

Saul (Popytka k begstvu), Anton-Rumata (Trudno byt' bogom), Maksim (Obitayemy ostrov) and Zhilin (Khishchnyye veshchi veka) are also slightly reminiscent of some 'superfluous men'. Like Pechorin's (Geroy nashego vremeni), their frustration and lack of purpose threaten to explode into violence; like Rudin they know all the solutions to all problems without being able to apply them. Only Maksim and Zhilin, like Lavretsky (Dvoryanskoye gnezdo), have some hope of eventually being useful to their

9) R. Kosolapov, Ni teni utopii, Mol. gv. (M., 1971), p. 5.

social environment. This hope is not enough to integrate them now, but it indicates a possibility of this in the future. However, it must not be forgotten that all these modern characters have to fulfil a mission which is imposed upon them by their own superior background. The heroes are originally alienated only in their assumed identity, not in their 'supra-identity'. Gradually, though, their identities grow into one, so that their whole being suffers a blow when they are unable to adjust to the inferior society. This is particularly obvious in Anton-Rumata's case.

The motivations of the 'superfluous man' are rather vague. However, his dreams of progress, even if intangible, are always 'positive dreams'. As opposed to him, some of the alienated heroes of scientific fantasy are motivated by a distinct fear of progress, which might turn out to be a curse in disguise. Examples are Araf'yev (Dusha mira), Prokhorov (Zapiski iz budushchego), and Mak-Kinli (Begstvo mistera Mak-Kinli), who are frightened of the consequences of a politically unchecked technology; Barten'ev's wife (Puteshestviye dlinoyu v vek), who sees automatisisation as a threat to creativity; Koriel' (Svecha na vetru), who questions the purpose of science; and particularly the anti-utopian heroes, for whom future development results in total human suppression.

The alienated heroes of fantasy, like the 'superfluous men', usually maintain a certain ironic objectivity towards themselves. This self-irony is absolutely necessary to keep the characters from disintegrating. Alienation is created through the awareness of it on the part of the individual concerned; the objective fact of the incompatibility between the hero and his environment becomes subjective recognition by him of this fact. Now the only alternative is self-irony or suicide.

J. Williamson differentiates between two literary positions on science and progress. One is the epic, optimistic point of view, the other the ironic, satirical approach.¹⁰⁾ Without doubt most scientific fantasy represents the first position. On the other hand, 'the epic needs a dash of irony, for suspense and complexity, while the ironic needs an epic hint, to relieve the gloom'.¹¹⁾ When the ironic figure of the alienated man appears in the epic genre of scientific fantasy, the two points of view can be balanced perfectly.

Though the 'superfluous man' and the unintegrated hero of fantasy share the essential characteristic of alienation and, in individual cases, retain a few more similarities, there can be no doubt that the difference between them is as vast as the time gulf which separates their appearances. The hero of fantasy is never a poseur like Yevgeny Onegin, a pitiable wretch like Chulkaturin (Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka) or 'Hamlet' ('Gamlet Shchigrovskogo uyezda' in Zapiski okhotnika) or a person estranged on a merely individual level like Zaykin (Lishniye lyudi). His problems have been enlarged and complicated through the decades. His world is vaster and has more dimensions to it, as Riel' (Strana Gonguri), Kandid and Perets (Ulitka na sklone) and Gor's characters testify.

Scientific fantasy, more than any other genre, favours the existence of alienated characters. The reason for this is its specific quality of parachronism. Parachronism is naturally implicit in speculative fiction as a whole, because any valuable work dealing with the future is intended

10) Teaching SF, published by J. Williamson (Portales, New Mex., 1972), p. 20.

11) Ibid.

to be applicable to the present as well. But as often as not, it is made explicit through the stock methods used: the discovery of strange planets (preferably populated by humanoid aliens), time travel, time dilation, parallelism of universes, etc. All these devices separate the hero from his own background and place him in a strange, unfamiliar environment. Under these circumstances, social alienation is more 'realistic' than instantaneous integration. (Nevertheless the latter occurs at least as frequently.)

However, fantasy can exploit these devices only when it is given the chance of free operation in time -- from the beginning of the Earth (or even earlier) to its end (or even later). During the 'period of limitation', parachronism, and consequently alienation, were ruled out from fantasy. Such a situation is nowadays unthinkable. Man's flight into space, incipient as it may be,¹²⁾ has brought the possible existence of other intelligent beings to the foreground of our consciousness. If new worlds are open to us in fact, their description in fantasy can hardly be banned. In a nutshell: fantastic manipulations of space and time create parachronism, which creates alienation. If no alienated hero were to be tolerated by Soviet criticism, parachronism would have to be eliminated, which would mean the end of modern scientific fantasy. This, however, seems impossible:

In our time fantasy received from science the sanction of credibility, and this was almost a revolution in the fate of the genre. Millions of

12) However, I. Shklovsky/C. Sagan argue that manned interstellar flight would be technically possible even now: Intelligent Life in the Universe, Holden Day, Inc. (San Francisco, London, Amsterdam, 1966), pp. 439-447.

people started to read fantasy with an unparalleled passion, above all because the scientific sanction of credibility made them view fantastic worlds as a possibility which tomorrow might become reality.¹³⁾

As regards the man of the future, none of the writers of scientific fantasy would agree with P. Bloomfield that 'the best people are quite perfect enough as it is, and have been so for many centuries',¹⁴⁾ as, obviously, the communist ideal is a more recent one. But many of them would follow V. Dmitrevsky's opinion that the people of the communist era will have 'the characteristics of the best contemporary men'.¹⁵⁾ The resulting transference of the positive hero to the future rejects the element of mystery, surprise and, therefore, credibility in fantasy.¹⁶⁾ The predictability of the positive hero must fail to captivate the reader.

The 'superhero', as depicted by Yefremov, is so removed from the contemporary reader, as far as his physical and psychological evolution is concerned, that he gains the advantage of mystery and credibility. At the same time he is too abstract to provoke identification.

The alienated hero holds the balance: he is mysterious and credible because he leaves evolution open-ended, and he invites identification because he is imperfect. While the positive hero and the 'positive superhero' represent certainty, the alienated character stands for doubt. This emotion may be undesirable in politics, but is satisfyingly creative and psychologically convincing when reproduced in literature.

13) 'Mir bez distantsiy', p. 114.

14) Imaginary Worlds or the Evolution of Utopia, p. 273.

15) 'Za gorizontami vremeni', Pravda, 31 Jul. 1970.

16) For an extended evaluation of mystery and plausibility as elements of fantasy see A. & C. Panshin, 'SF in Dimension', fantastic (Oakland, Flushing, April 1973), pp. 95-97.

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