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Proust-Envy: Fiction and Autobiography in the Works of Iurii Olesha

Abstract

Iurii Olesha's works present us with a series of episodes for a fictional autobiography: the self-portrait of the artist as failure. Already early in his career, Olesha was committed to the achievement of success through the creation and manipulation of images of failure. These images are also dominant in his last work *No Day Without a Line*, which this article analyzes. Olesha declares in *No Day* that he wishes to "go backwards through life the way Marcel Proust succeeded in doing in his time." There are interesting similarities between the two writers, particularly the fact that *A la Recherche du temps perdu* is also in a sense based in the imagination of failure. But Olesha misunderstands Proust's procedure, and in so doing reveals much about the nature of his own talent and his inability to come to terms with time.

Keywords

Iurii Olesha, Yury Olesha Marcel Proust, imitation, intertext

PROUST-ENVY: FICTION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE WORKS OF IURII OLESHA

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“Man constitutes himself as what he is in order
not to be it.”

Jean-Paul Sartre

“What might have been and what has been
point to one end, which is always present.”

T. S. Eliot

“It’s not my fault; it’s his fault.”

Nikolai Kavalero

The Soviet novelist, Iurii Olesha always said that his talent was essentially autobiographical.¹ In his best known declaration, the speech to the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, he stated: “People told me² that Kavalero [the hero of his novel *Envy*] had many of my traits, that it was an autobiographical portrait, that indeed Kavalero was me. Yes, Kavalero did look through my eyes. Kavalero’s colors, light, comparisons, metaphors and thoughts about things were mine.”³ To this admission that Kavalero’s sensibility, though not his activity, were Olesha’s own, one may add the apparently autobiographical material of the childhood stories: “The Chain” (1929), “A Writer’s Notes” (1934), “Human Material” (1928), and the special pleading of “The Secret Notebooks of Fellow Traveller Zand” (1932). Taken together, these and other avowedly autobiographical works form a coherent image which we are asked to contemplate: the self portrait of the artist as failure. Olesha’s picture shows us that his childhood, his bourgeois family values, and his relationship to his father have inevitably led to a socially and psychologically determined doom in the post-revolutionary world. The Revolution, which no individual could control, deprived Olesha of his birthright, his past; it declared his childhood

impressions irrelevant, crippling his talent by depriving it of sustenance.

This is a radically self-censored self-portrait. Not only does Olesha omit the successes which were in fact his, but even among the failures, he writes only about those, personal and artistic, of which he could say, paraphrasing Kavalero, "It's not my fault; it's their fault."⁴ Olesha's works therefore present us less with a set of autobiographical fictions than with a series of episodes for a fictional autobiography: the autobiography of the artist as victim.

This is, of course, Olesha's perfect right. It is not the place of the reader to make a value judgment about the manner in which the artist sees himself and wishes to have himself seen. As John Cooper Powys says, a man's life illusion should be as sacred as his skin.⁵ Furthermore, it is axiomatic that no one's autobiographical writing can be taken at its face value as an ingenuous rendering of his psychic life, which inevitably undergoes a distortion or stylisation in the process of being verbalized.⁶ Nevertheless whatever we may write, on whatever subject, comprises a constantly revised self-portrait which denounces us. It is with this self-portrait that I will be concerned here.⁷ For whatever the immediate truth of the matter, it must be said that the prediction of failure at the heart of Olesha's fictional autobiography was catastrophically self-fulfilling.

Let us begin with *Envy*. To the extent that Kavalero was indeed endowed with Olesha's sensibility, colors and verbal imagination, *Envy* contains a self-portrait. But it differs from the norm of early, partially autobiographical fiction in that the young writer of a novel usually both interprets himself and invents a situation to reveal what he feels is his *potential* reality.⁸ He can, and very often does, allow his character the fulfillment of which he feels he is intrinsically capable, but of which he has been deprived in real life by accidents of personal appearance or historical circumstance. The author can overcome what is "fortuitous" in his own existence and obey the "sense of life."⁹ Olesha rejects this option, and does not allow Kavalero to fulfill a single dream, positive or negative. Kavalero does not even achieve notoriety or romantic destruction. His descent into indifference is in fact an abnormally early achievement of the final equilibrium characteristic not of early autobiographical fiction but of mature autobiography: the coming to terms

with what has been rather than with what might have been. *Envy*, written by a twenty-seven year old author, at a time when he was well introduced and moving up rapidly in Soviet literary life, already defines the terms of Olesha's own memoirs, written thirty years later.¹⁰

Soviet reality of the NEP period in no way *obliged* Olesha to make Kavaleroev a failure, and at least one work of the period proves this point: the hero of "Love," Shuvalov is a healthy and functioning, but love-smitten Marxist. He is certainly uneasy about the "unscientific distortions" of natural laws caused by his infatuation, but he boldly and resolutely defends his proletarian right to life and love in his final refusal to "eat blue pears."¹¹ So Olesha *could* have used his colors positively and given them to characters who did not resemble his preferred image of himself. He even did so once or twice; but the narrative tone in the other stories is already an almost exclusive identification of the authorial sensibility with failure, and a concomitant resolve to achieve artistic success only by creating and manipulating images of failure.

Given both this early commitment to the depiction of failure and the subsequent difficulties of Olesha's *slozhnyi put'* ("complicated path") for which he was *not* in fact responsible, it is not surprising to find the same images of failure in Olesha's last work, the retrospective, fragmentary *No Day without a Line* (1965).¹² Olesha announced *No Day* as an autobiographical novel of a new, modern kind,¹³ but it remains only a preparatory exercise for such a novel, the flexing of long atrophied artistic muscles. In it he relives events of his own life, and retells passages from the books of others which have become an integral part of his own consciousness.¹⁴ The dominant modes are re-call and re-capitulation, but the book cannot be defined simply as autobiography. It is a strange hybrid. Of course, *No Day* is flawed and unfinished, composed of fragments which Olesha himself did not have a chance to place into a final montage. Yet this unresolved form is so appropriate to Olesha's life illusion of failure that it might as well be deliberate. Any literary self portrait is a metaphor of the self at the moment of composition,¹⁵ and the broken, unfulfilled structure of the book is analogous to the metaphors of artistic destruction of which it is composed.

Given the workings of symbolic memory,¹⁶ imagination is necessarily an element of recollection, and the imagination which recapitulates Olesha's life in *No Day*, is consistently an imagination of fragmentation, deprivation and failure. I should like to look at a few characteristic examples.

In *No Day*, Olesha asserts that the circus was the foundation of his imaginative life. He says that his childhood dream of liberation and glory was to be able to perform a complex somersault, and speculates that perhaps this dream of acrobatic competence was the first stirring of the artist within him (As we shall see shortly, the athletic metaphor is no accident). Although he is never actually able to perform a *salto mortale*, he still tells people he can, and they believe him.¹⁷ He mentions this to us so that we should *not* believe it, so that we should convict him of false boastfulness and should know that his first "artistic" aspiration was crowned with failure. The theme of non-realisation of early aspirations is carried further and becomes more complicated in his discussion of the girl acrobat with whom he had fallen in love: "As she cartwheeled, the girl was transformed into a vision which stunned him, although nothing really happened, except that her hair flew around her head as she cartwheeled."¹⁸ Thus far, the memory follows a relatively standard pattern of reminiscence: the memory of an early love for an untouchable embodiment of almost superhuman grace or beauty. But following the ever-present principle of deprivation, the vision is not only presented as unattainable, it is destroyed as such. One day, Olesha recognizes the girl's two male partners walking towards him, accompanied by a pimply, unattractive youth who spits through his teeth. He realizes that the sickly-looking, disagreeable youth is in fact the "girl acrobat" and that the lovely waves of flying hair were a wig. Although Olesha loyally declares that he is in love with the girl to this day, he also admits to a sudden surge of shame each time he sees such flowing hair. Thus even the image of absolute feminine perfection, of first love, comes to us defiled, transformed into a recollection of deprivation, early disillusionment and shame. Many of the recollections of childhood in *No Day* carry the same stamp of shame as do the stories of the late twenties.¹⁹ Contrary to expectation, one of the few memories of bliss in *No Day* is not a childhood memory at all but belongs to old age. Moreover, it is an imaginary

memory, the memory of an event which Olesha says did not and could not have occurred in real life.

Sometimes, through the real circumstances of my life, through its furnishings, through the objects and walls of my home, the images of a somehow different life show through. It is my life, too, but it is not always perceptible to me; it goes on somehow out of my range of vision.

Suddenly a room appears, bluish because of the twilight and because of the painted walls. It is a clean room, with toys in the middle, with beds along the walls and on the painted walls a frieze, which also depicts toys. A children's room? Whose? I never had any children. Suddenly, for an instant, I feel that these are the children of my daughter. I never had a daughter. I know that, but I have nonetheless come to visit my daughter. I am a father and grandfather. I am a guest at my daughter's and grandsons' house. They had been expecting me for dinner. Maybe I did come for dinner. More probably I didn't make it for some reason . . . that's why I brought a cake. God, how I remember that square cake. How awkward it was to carry!²⁰

The main point of the passage would seem to be to make the reader feel the material weight and bulkiness, the solidity, of an imagined object. Yet the relationship of the two lives merits closer scrutiny. Even in the second, imaginary life Olesha has, for some reason, been prevented from coming to share the dinner. He has disappointed himself and somehow failed his family: that is why he has bought the cake—to make amends. Still, the second life *is* more attractive. There he is not a lonely, isolated, old man; he has the children and grandchildren of whom his real life has deprived him. The net effect of the passage is to make us pity the deprivation of his “real” life.

Here I must pause for a moment to consider certain facts of Olesha's “real” life. He was married, twice, and had a step-son who committed suicide by jumping out of a window in his and his mother's presence.²¹ Olesha never mentions either the existence of the death of Igor. Instead he declares categorically “I never had any children.” Nor does Olesha ever mention his wife.²² Why does he avoid speaking of these and other complexities of his adult personal life? It is a delicate question, and one which I need not pursue very far, as I am interested here in the fictional autobiog-

raphy rather than the "real events." But at least part of the answer would seem to be that much of what Olesha omits is rather strong stuff.²³ It does not fit in with the carefully elaborated picture of sadness, loneliness, and wistful deprivation by life for which he is not responsible. I do not wish to press this point, but merely to note the flattened and isolated quality of the life which Olesha shows us in *No Day*. There is no mention of tragedy, and very little of joy or high spirits.

One reason for this curious principle of selection is that *No Day* is more of a *journal intime*²⁴ than a real autobiography. As Alain Girard notes, it is rare to encounter moments of peace, serenity or simple happiness in a *journal intime*.²⁵ Nor does it usually record the most difficult moments of life either. Many of Girard's general conclusions about *intimistes* apply perfectly to Olesha. For example, the *journal intime* usually comes into being at those moments when the writer feels that there is a spring broken within him. The habit of looking at himself combined with the practice of frequent notations aggravates his sensation of the fragmentation of time and of the decomposition of duration into a series of successive moments. His retrospective attention cannot embrace the whole past, but only those instants which detach themselves in relief. These are usually moments when the personality could have appeared in all its force, but where it has not succeeded in being equal to itself. The *I* of the *intimiste* remains in the past conditional. It seems to him that he is always looking backwards: that something might have been but wasn't. He is weighed down by the consciousness of his body and its fragility. The foretaste of death is within him at every instant. Girard states further that the writer's perception of his persona changes in the process of such writing. The *I* which is in the body, and consequently in affectivity *linked* to the body, exists in time as well as space. Instead of being one, resistant and like unto itself, the *I* feels itself as multiple, crumbling and successive.

Girard's formulations apply point by point to the image of Olesha's talent on which *No Day* insists: the image of the broken statue, the ruined athlete.

I know that a certain powerful athlete is alive within me, or rather the fragment of an athlete. A torso without arms and legs, stirring within my body, tormenting himself and

me. Sometimes I manage to hear what he is saying; I repeat it and people think I am clever But it is the genie, the broken statue, stirring within me, in its chance envelope, expressing together with it the effects of some strange and terrible enchantment, some detail of a myth from which I can understand only one thing: my own death.²⁶

The mutilated and fragmented talent appears as an alien being within Olesha's body. Nowhere is there wholeness.

Almost all the fragments of *No Day* dealing with Olesha's life echo this vision of a disconnected and fragmented being. In his mirror, Olesha sees an old man whom he will not and cannot recognize as himself, since his consciousness of himself is the same as it was when he was young. "Now there are two of us, I and he."²⁷ The old man cannot be accommodated in a continuous vision of himself as the focus of a succession of previous selves: Olesha refuses to admit time, just as his earlier characters have rejected the law of gravity.

Yet Olesha aspires to be like Proust, and several times he places his effort to overcome time under Proust's aegis. Olesha even begins the second section of *No Day* with the explicit statement: "I would like to go backwards through life the way Marcel Proust succeeded in doing in *his* time."²⁸ To compare Olesha and Proust would at first seem unfair, but Olesha brings it up himself, thereby proposing one more contest which he is certain to lose. In fact, a comparison with Proust is very helpful to a better understanding of Olesha's aspirations and limitations. There are some interesting initial similarities between the two writers, particularly the fact that *A la Recherche du temps perdu* is also based in the imagination of failure.

As Roger Shattuck and others have noted,²⁹ Proust insists on the critical importance for the development of Marcel's character of an early victory which was also a defeat and a failure of the will: the night his mother spends in his room, the night "perhaps the saddest of my life, when I had obtained a first abdication from my parents, the night from which I could date both the decline of my health and of my will, my increasingly unhealthy renunciation of a difficult task."³⁰ Through the physical presence at both events of the book *François le Champi*, this first failure is linked to the gathering at the Germantes when Marcel realizes his own

aging, as he ponders the spectacle of the infinitely variegated ways in which the *other* guests and the hosts have both changed and remained the same.³¹ For Proust, the realization of one's own aging is brought not by self-contemplation in a mirror, but by the contemplation of others.

It is at this very moment that Marcel also discovers that he is "the bearer of a work of art." Like Sarah, he has received the announcement of an almost impossibly late parturition: He must bear and bring to term the work which is he himself, reborn. But for Olesha, old age brings no rejuvenation, only degeneration. Duration has no value save that it has allowed a ruin of his former self to survive. Even when Olesha does write, composition is felt to be the painful repossession of something already written sometime in the past and then destroyed:

I have completely lost my ability to write. To write one line after another in unbroken succession is becoming impossible for me. I compose separate lines I don't compose, striding forward; I write as if I were looking backward. I don't create, shading, structuring, pondering; I remember. It is as though what I had intended to write had already been written. Written, and then had somehow fallen apart, and I want to gather the fragments again into a whole.³²

This is not creation but a joyless salvage operation. Proust can tranquilly admit the existence of successive *I*'s because the "real *I*" is not the boy or the adolescent or the old man, but the one who experiences the joy that is the first crucial sign of the re-emergence of time past, the *I* whose activity links and integrates a series of successive *I*'s. An interminable snake of memory links the current sensation, the past event, its recall and its contemplation anew. Olesha, deprived of the sensation of new creativity, must insist he is still the *same* as the boy that he was because of his anguished consciousness of otherwise unbridgeable gaps and irreducible fragmentation.

This tendency to fragmentary perception, a persistent characteristic of Olesha's talent from the beginning, also determines Olesha's vision of what Proust was trying to do.³³ He has misunderstood Proust's procedure. Proust does not really "go backwards through life," as Olesha says he does.³⁴ Proust brings past time *forward* to

Fiction and Autobiography in the Works of Iurii Olesha 131

the present. All of Combray bursts out of that soggy madeleine, and the scene in Combray when the father has led them to an unknown place which suddenly reveals itself to be the totality of a familiar world is an analogue of the whole work. Furthermore, while for Olesha the original sensation is primary, for Proust the value lies in the *remembered* sensation: the first time around, Aunt Léonie's madeleine or the feel of the paving stones of Venice did not make a particularly strong impression.

Not only does Olesha misplace Proust's locus of value, in doing so, he also misconstrues the working of involuntary memory in accordance with his own practice. Olesha deliberately closes his eyes and says, "Now I am going to remember something from my childhood," and then an unexpected fragment, a moment, a scene, swims up to the surface of memory.³⁵ What is involuntary in Proust is only the *joy* caused by the chance coincidence of a present sensation with a lost one. Beyond that moment of grace which provides a temporary sensation of immortality, the writer must concentrate and *work* to liberate lost time, to attempt to find the guiding string, thinner than a hair which passes through it all, discovering through the glass of memory a meaning in his experience which was *not* there before and exists now only as a present creation.³⁶ With the exception of one fragment,³⁷ Olesha persistently refused the revaluation of experience in *No Day*, as he refused the transformation which is fundamental to Proust's project and which is defined in *Le Temps retrouvé* (1927):

Wasn't the creation through memory of impressions that one then must deepen, illuminate and transform into their intellectual equivalents one of the conditions, indeed, almost the very essence, of the work of art as I had conceived of it just now in the library?

... ..

I suddenly thought that if I still did have the strength to complete my work, then this "matinée" (as formerly, certain days in Combray had an immense influence on me), this *matinée*, which had on this very day given me both the idea of my work and the fear that I would never be able to complete it, would certainly bear in that work the form that I had glimpsed long ago in the church at Combray, a form which usually remains hidden from us; the form of Time.³⁸

Because he felt his talent broken within him, Olesha bore only fragments; because he rejected the old man in the mirror as an alien clown, Olesha could never accept the accretions of time as they affected his own individual life. He never made his peace with time, continuing to present us with the portrait of the artist as a talented young man betrayed by circumstance. That, I think, is the source of the irreparable sadness which overcomes the reader upon completion of *No Day without a Line*, a sadness which Proust never evokes.

Both Proust and Olesha could join T. S. Eliot in saying: "In my beginning is my end / . . . In my end is my beginning."³⁹ Proust, like Eliot, might also say of his work: "Here the impossible union of spheres of existence is actual. / Here past and future are conquered and reconciled."⁴⁰ But for Olesha, fishing in his memory for privileged moments, the most appropriate concluding lines would seem to be these:

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage.
Quick now, here now, always —
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.⁴¹

NOTES

¹ For example, writing in the manuscript almanac *Chukkola* in February 1930, Olesha affirmed: "Fiction is condemned to death. It is shameful to compose. We thirty year old intellectuals should write only about ourselves. We must write confessions, not novels." Quoted in M. O. Chudakova, *Masterstvo Iuriiia Oleshi* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", 1972), p. 79.

² The formulation "people told me" recurs constantly, as though self-definition must be prompted from outside. Olesha accepts what "they" say about Kavalero as, in *No Day without a Line*, he accepts "people's" desire that he write an "autobiographical novel." See *Ni dnia bez strochki* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskaia Rossiia," 1965), p. 10.

³ "Rech' na pervom vsesoiuznom s'ezde sovetskikh pisatelei," in Iurii Olesha, *Povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Khudozhestvennaia literatura," 1965), p. 426.

⁴ *Zavist'* in *Povesti*, p. 49: "It's not my fault; it's his fault."

⁵ Quoted in Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 71.

⁶ See Boris Eikhenbaum, *The Young Tolstoi* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1972), p. 7.

⁷ Other opinions as to the relationship of Olesha's life to his works can be found in Chudakova, in Arkady Bilinkov's *Sdacha i gibel' sovetskogo intelligenta: Iurii Olesha* (Madrid: private publisher, 1976), and in William Harkins', "The Theme of Sterility in Olesha's *Envy*," *Slavic Review*, No. 3 (September, 1966), pp. 444-57.

⁸ Pascal, *Design and Truth*, p. 178.

⁹ At its most elaborate, as in *A la Recherche du temps perdu*, it can show the multiple modifications possible to the author.

¹⁰ The sixty year old Olesha bears a striking resemblance to Ivan, extemporizing in bars, spinning tales, as does Ivan in the beginning of the second part of *Envy*, creating the fictional autobiography of a failed magician.

¹¹ "Liubov'," in *Povesti*, p. 278.

¹² Large parts of *Ni dnia bez strochki* had appeared under the title "Iz literaturnykh dnevnikov" in *Literaturnaia Moskva*, II (1956), pp. 721-51. Another selection containing some of the same texts appeared under the title "Ni dnia bez stroki" [sic] in *Oktiabr'*, No. 7 (1961), pp. 135-56 and No. 8, pp. 135-56. Selections from *Ni dnia* were also included in Olesha's *Izbrannnye sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956) and in the 1965 *Povesti i rasskazy* under the heading "Iz zapisei 'Ni dnia bez strochki.'" The book *Ni dnia bez strochki* contains some fragments which had not, to my knowledge, been printed before, and leaves out certain others, notably a paen of praise to Khrushchev on the occasion of seeing a newsreel covering his enthusiastic reception in Paris. (*Oktiabr'*, No. 8, pp. 155-56.)

¹³ *Ni dnia*, pp. 10-11, p. 69.

¹⁴ On the importance of *pereskazanie*, see Chudakova, p. 88 ff.

¹⁵ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 35.

¹⁶ E. Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, quoted in Pascal's *Design and Truth*, p. 35.

¹⁷ *Ni dnia*, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ni dnia*, pp. 105-6.

¹⁹ Consider in this connection the discussion of the "bad habit" of which the boy was wrongfully suspected ("Ia smotriu v proshloe," in *Povesti*, pp. 276-277), the shame and vengeance in "Tsep'" or the following passage from "Notes of a Writer": "Even mother, even that beautiful figure mother was distorted in that terrible world of lies." ("Notes of a Writer," in *International Literature*, No. 3 [July, 1934], p. 151.)

²⁰ *Ni dnia*, p. 171.

²¹ Igor's suicide is discussed by his cousin, Vsevolod Bagritskii, in *Dnevnik, pis'ma, stikhi* (Moscow, 1964), p. 48. I am indebted to Professor Richard Sheldon for calling my attention to this text.

²² Olesha was married successively to two of the sisters Suok. He does use the family name as the given name of the charming heroine of his first work, the *Three Fat Men*, but neither of the women is mentioned in *Ni dnia*. While there are laudatory memories of Bagritskii, Olesha does not say that he and Bagritskii were brothers-in-law.

²³ Perhaps Kavalero's comment to himself about his resemblance to his father is of some relevance here. Seeing this resemblance in his reflection in a mirror, Kavalero remembers that as a boy he had felt sorry for his father who was "cooked, finished, not famous for anything," able to be only what he already was. The sudden perception of this "sexual resemblance" to his father is for Kavalero like being told: "You're cooked, fin-

ished, nothing more will happen: produce a son." (*Zavist'*, p. 34). Even this fulfillment is denied.

²⁴ I retain the French term as more accurate than "diary" because the genre is characterized less by the daily recording of physical events than by a somewhat more irregular collection and compilation of meditations, introspections and comments on reading.

²⁵ Alain Girard, *Le Journal intime* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 529, 517-519, 528.

²⁶ *Ni dnia*, p. 170.

²⁷ *Ni dnia*, p. 172. "*Teper' nas dvoe — Ia i tot.*" The use of *tot* here is reminiscent of Andreev's in "He Who Gets Slapped."

²⁸ *Ni dnia*, p. 59.

²⁹ See Shattuck's article in the *New York Review of Books* (September 19, 1974), p. 34. See also Serge Doubrovsky's *La Place de la Madeleine* (Paris: Mercure, 1974), particularly for the scatological interpretation and an extraordinary elaboration of the theme "I eat Mama."

³⁰ *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1956), pp. 886-87, repeated and elaborated on p. 1044.

³¹ *Le Temps retrouvé*, pp. 921-22.

³² *Ni dnia*, p. 59.

³³ See my discussion of the Golo episode in *The Invisible Land* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1970), pp. 181-82. Although Olesha does not remember it as such, the episode of Golo and the magic lantern is in fact an image of deprivation, the deprivation of the comfort of habit, rather than an illustration of the fullness of childhood sensation and wonder. The two experiences seem inextricably linked in Olesha's memory.

³⁴ *Ni dnia*, p. 59.

³⁵ *Ni dnia*, p. 4.

³⁶ Interesting here is Proust's description of the "glass" used: Olesha makes the common error: "Même ceux qui furent favorables à ma perception des vérités que je voulais ensuite graver dans le temple, me félicitèrent de les avoir découvertes au "microscope," quand je m'étais au contraire servi d'un télescope pour apercevoir des choses, très petites en effet, mais parcequ'elles étaient situées à une grande distance, et qui étaient chacune un monde. Là où je cherchais les grandes lois, on m'appelait fouilleur de détails." (*Le Temps retrouvé*, p. 1041).

³⁷ *Ni dnia*, p. 115.

³⁸ *Le Temps retrouvé*, pp. 1044-1045. It is interesting that there is no spatial image of time anywhere in Olesha comparable to that of the church at Combray.

³⁹ T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "East Coker," I l. 1; V l. 38.

⁴⁰ Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "The Dry Salvages," V ll. 33-36.

⁴¹ Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "Burnt Norton," V ll. 33-39.