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Russian Literary Portraiture in the Twentieth Century:
Collecting and Re-Collecting *Lichnosti* in Criticism and Memoir

by

Daniel Aaron Brooks

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Slavic Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Harsha Ram, Chair
Professor Olga Matich
Professor Irina Paperno
Professor Victoria Frede

Summer 2015

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Abstract

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Professor Harsha Ram, Chair

This dissertation offers a select history of the literary portrait genre in Russian culture from its genesis in the 1890s through the 1960s. I define the literary portrait as a succinct account of a particular author's individual or creative personality – in Russian, *lichnost'* – that readily lends itself to anthologization, in which that literary portrait acquires additional meaning through the comparative or cumulative format in which it participates. In tracing the developments in the genre through a series of representative portrait collections, I focus in particular on two historical moments: 1905-1914, when literary portraiture moved beyond its original Symbolist confines, courted a wider reading audience, and became a key genre for the theorization and explication of Russian modernity; and the post-Revolutionary period, when writers both in emigration and within the Soviet Union repeatedly turned to the genre as a means of shaping narratives about late imperial and early Soviet culture. In the first period, I consider the literary critical portraiture of Iulii Aikhenval'd, Kornei Chukovskii, and Maksimilian Voloshin, and in the second, I consider the memoir-portraits of Vladislav Khodasevich, Kornei Chukovskii, and Iurii Annenkov, as well as Annenkov's work in visual portraiture. I posit that these writers, each in their own way and to their own ends, sought common variables that would unite the heterogeneous literary field of late imperial Russia. In doing so, they created forms of literary historical periodization that focused on cultural continuity rather than aesthetic displacement, and on webs of connections between individual authors rather than distinctions between nominally antithetical movements. These holistic interpretations of late imperial Russian literature demonstrate the pedagogical utility of comparative frameworks that take individuals (*lichnosti*) as their units of observation. In constructing such frameworks, these portraitureists consistently demonstrate that our understanding of dominant aesthetic movements of the time (the Symbolists and Modernists) and the dominant paradigm of cultural periodization that followed it (the Silver Age) are best calibrated against certain figures (especially Leonid Andreev and Maksim Gor'kii) who are otherwise afforded narrow parts in our inherited literary histories. Thus, I aspire to present literary portraiture as a telling artifact of Russian modernity writ large, and a valuable means of re-examining the literary historical narratives that structure our study of early twentieth-century Russian culture.

CONTENTS

	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
	NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, AND SOURCES	iv
	LIST OF FIGURES	v
Part I	Chapter 1.1: General Introduction	1
	Chapter 1.2: The Prehistory & History of Literary Portraiture in Western European Culture	14
	Chapter 1.3: The Genesis & Trajectory of Russian Literary Portraiture	35
Part II	Chapter 2.1: The Literary Portrait as Criticism in Late Imperial Russia	49
	Chapter 2.2: Iulii Aikhenval'd's <i>Silhouettes of Russian Writers</i> : Overcoming Social Criticism Through Impressionism	55
	Chapter 2.3: Kornei Chukovskii's <i>From Chekhov to Our Days</i> : Overcoming Impressionism Through Pinkertonism	76
	Chapter 2.4: Maksimilian Voloshin's <i>Faces of Creativity</i> : Overcoming Life-Creation Through Biographism	100
	Chapter 2.5: Conclusion	123
Part III	Chapter 3.1: The Literary Portrait as Memoir in Post- Revolutionary Russian Culture	126
	Chapter 3.2: Vladislav Khodasevich's <i>Necropolis</i> : Writing Myth out of the Symbolist Life	130
	Chapter 3.3: Kornei Chukovskii's Memoir-Portraits: (Re)writing the Myths of the Russian Writer	151
	Chapter 3.4: Iurii Annenkov's Verbal & Visual Portraits: (De)facing the Russian Writer	172
	Chapter 3.5: Conclusion	200
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	204

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, AND SOURCES

Transliterations throughout this dissertation follow the Library of Congress system, with some exceptions. When I cite a translated work that maintains an alternative transliteration system (e.g. Boris Tomaševskij's "Literature and Biography" in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, or D. S. Mirsky's *Contemporary Russian Literature: 1881-1925*), I maintain that particular spelling in the footnotes, bibliography, and any citations thereof.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. I have provided the original text for all Russian-language citations that are longer than four lines, and citations where the original text contains material that is particularly difficult to render in English translation for reasons of aspect, style, or vocabulary.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: table of contents for third volume of Iulii Aikhenval'd's <i>Silhouettes of Russian Writers</i> (1910)	66
Fig. 2: table of contents for third edition of Kornei Chukovskii's <i>From Chekhov to Our Days</i> (1909)	87
Fig. 3: table of contents for proposed fourth book of Maksimilian Voloshin's <i>Faces of Creativity</i> (1914/1988)	111
Fig. 4: table of contents for Vladislav Khodasevich's <i>Necropolis</i> (1939)	136
Fig. 5: <i>A. A. Akhmatova</i> (1921) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	178
Fig. 6: <i>E. I. Zamiatin</i> (1921) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	179
Fig. 7: <i>Self-Portrait (Avtoportret, 1920)</i> by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	181
Fig. 8: <i>Maksim Gor'kii</i> (1920) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	183
Fig. 9: <i>F. K. Sologub</i> (1921) by Iurii Annenkov. Pencil and ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	184
Fig. 10: <i>V. F. Khodasevich</i> (1921) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	184
Fig. 11: <i>A. S. Lur'e</i> (1920) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	184
Fig. 12: <i>A. Blok on his Deathbed (A. Blok v grobu, 1922)</i> by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Portraits</i> (1922)	188
Fig. 13: <i>Maksim Gor'kii</i> (1920) by Iurii Annenkov. Ink. Reproduced in <i>Diary of My Meetings</i> (1966)	194
Fig. 14: table of contents for Iurii Annenkov's <i>Diary of My Meetings</i> (1966)	196

Ch. 1.1 – General Introduction

In this dissertation I explore the genesis and development of literary portraiture in late imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and post-Revolutionary Russian émigré cultures. The goals of this dissertation are various. First and foremost, I wish to provide a history of the genre of literary portraiture in the twentieth-century Russian context, focusing on why interest in the genre flourished when it did and how it gradually transformed after the 1917 Revolution. Despite the fact that literature portraiture led a robust existence in *fin-de-siècle* Russian culture (as more generally in *fin-de-siècle* Europe), it has been rarely examined in Anglo-American scholarship and has been poorly served by Soviet and post-Soviet Russian scholarship. I wish to present the literary portrait from this period as an important tool of literary historiography and as an object of historical, cultural, and aesthetic interest in its own right.

To do so, I explore the literary portraiture of five authors who operated in different locales and cultural epochs. Their works allow me to trace the contours of Russian literary portraiture's overall trajectory – from a genre of literary criticism in late imperial culture to a genre of memoir in post-Revolutionary culture. I take Iulii Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes of Russian Writers* (*Siluety russkikh pisatelei*, 1906-1910), Kornei Chukovskii's *From Chekhov to Our Days* (*Ot Chekhova do nashikh dnei*, 1908), and Maksimilian Voloshin's *Faces of Creativity* (*Liki tvorchestva*, 1914/1988) to be emblematic of the early period, and Vladislav Khodasevich's *Necropolis* (*Nekropol'*, 1939), Kornei Chukovskii's various collections of memoir-portraits, and Iurii Annenkov's *Diary of My Meetings* (*Dnevnik moikh vstrech*, 1962) as the most characteristic examples of the later period. (Given that Annenkov was also a famous visual artist; I will compare his literary portraiture to his visual portraiture as well.) These representative examples will permit me to trace the genre's evolution within Russian letters and to account for some of the cultural and social factors leading to its significant success.

My second goal is to use these portrait collections as a means of reassessing the inherited literary historical periodization of the Russian Silver Age. The Silver Age is generally considered to be coterminous with literary Symbolism and pre-Revolutionary Modernism more generally. While the historical bookends of the Silver Age are a matter of dispute, it is typically thought to cover the final two-and-a-half decades of Russian culture under Romanov rule (1890-1917) and, sometimes, the first few years of Soviet rule (1917-1921), or even beyond (in the case of individual authors who carry on its heritage and traditions). The appellation less frequently incorporates other contemporaneous literary tendencies that seem antithetical to Symbolism and Modernism yet constitute vital features of the turn-of-the-century cultural field. Such tendencies include a persistent if nominally moribund Realist aesthetic and an ascendant “boulevard” or popular literature. The literary portrait collections I profile are far more holistic in their treatment of the period than many of our literary historical narratives, which are more interested in the evolution and eventual displacement of one dominant current by another. The literary critical portraits contemporaneous to the Silver Age and the later memoir-portraits about its leading figures demonstrate the interpretative and pedagogical potentials of a more expansive and inclusive treatment of late imperial Russian culture in the throes of modernization.

My third goal straddles the first two: I wish to examine the key concept of individual personality, or *lichnost'*, via its specific functions in the late imperial and Soviet periods as it is registered by literary portraiture, a genre that (as I shall demonstrate) is particularly invested in

that concept. The individual's inscription into larger communities of meaning emerged as a topic of great cultural import in late imperial culture, and continued to be relevant, albeit for different reasons, in the Soviet period as well. Viewed from a literary historical perspective (as wider such perspectives remain beyond the purview of this dissertation), the importance of *lichnost'* might be glimpsed in three interrelated phenomena which this dissertation will highlight: Decadent and Modernist fetishizations of aestheticized individuality; the Symbolists' preference for communal aesthetic activity; and motivated post-Revolutionary critiques or memorializations of specific late imperial authors. I seek to unpack my selected portraitists' understanding of *lichnost'*, while also following their lead, for the ultimate goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate what happens when we examine literary history not as a series of aesthetic or formal displacements, but as a web of interpersonal connections.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will explain my conception and definition of the various categories (**literary portrait, modernity, Silver Age, literary field, and *lichnost'***) that inform my inquiry, and summarize the structure of the dissertation's subsequent chapters.

Defining Literary Portraiture

As shall be demonstrated in Ch. 1.2, the codified term literary portrait (with a variety of appellational variants)¹ has existed for nearly two hundred years. It emerged against the background of European Romanticism, although one must trace its conceptual roots and even its generic designation back even further. The general consensus suggests that a literary portrait is a short, discrete,² synthetic written work that reveals the characterological essence of a particular individual, using artistic means distinct from traditional biography's more expansive and chronologically structured inquiry. Indeed, where biography's *siuzhet* remains largely bound by the *fabula* of its subject's life, literary portraiture need not follow such a sequence: in order to articulate its subject's general (and often immutable) characterological features, literary portraiture has the generic prerogative of juxtaposing events and phenomena from various, often disparate periods of its subject's life. It is likewise endowed with the prerogative of blending discussion of an artist's work with discussion of that artist's biography. Up until the late eighteenth century, it was conventional to segregate these two enterprises: adherence to classicist

- 1 Over the years, short, synthetic, characterological texts have acquired a variety of designations in various languages, many of which might seem to trouble uniform definitions of the literary portrait genre. How, for example, is the English *portrait* different from the *sketch*, the French *portrait* different from the *médallion*, or the Russian *portret* different from the *etiud*, *ocherk*, or *siluet*? Are there different depths of characterization implied in each? Does such a text's potential relationships to other artistic media – sculptural, musical, and various visual arts, as their designations variously imply – alter its poetics? Nevertheless, *portrait* seems to be the most capacious and thus most widely used term to designate this particular kind of writing. On such appellational problems in the Russian case, see O. V. Markova, *Literaturnyi portret v sisteme biograficheskikh zhanrov* (Khabarovsk: Izd-vo DVGUPS, 2007), 5-7.
- 2 For lack of a better term, many scholars label as “portraiture” those moments of concentrated ekphrasis and characterization that occur in longer narrative texts such as novels. Such isolated moments in fiction do indeed share common characterological aims and intellectual genealogies (e.g. the influence of Swiss physiognomist Johann Lavater) with self-designated literary portraiture. However, the discrete literary portrait as well as the larger *gallery* of literary portraits possess a different poetics from “portraiture” that is embedded in narrative texts. On portraiture within nineteenth-century novels, see Peter Brooks, *The Novel of Worldliness: Crébillon, Marivaux, Laclos, Stendhal* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1969) and Edmund Heier, *Literary Portraiture in Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose* (Köln: Böhlau, 1993).

aesthetic standards produced good writing; biography had no influence thereupon. The Romantics, however, defied aesthetic categories and took art as the reflection of an artist's inner being. Biography and criticism became mutually reinforcing and mutually illuminating categories of writing, and literary portraiture was among the first genres to blend them.³

While the characterological orientation of literary portraiture remains a foundational feature of the genre, the objective of any individual portrait is no less important than the “gallery” in which that portrait almost inevitably appears. Literary portraiture's orientation towards synthesis and synecdoche yield brief, individual works, which are usually, by design, published within a larger series or volume. The portrait's subject ceases to be a mere individual and acquires a comparative significance amidst the others who populate the gallery, which comes to represent something of a cross-section of a particular cultural epoch or subculture. Consequently, I will focus just as much on the poetics of my chosen portrait collections as I will their individual constituent portraits.

My inquiry assigns interpretative significance and authorial motivation to the sequence that governs each gallery of literary portraits, and I am particularly interested in the non-chronological manner in which most of those galleries are constructed. (By “non-chronological” I mean the ways a given collection violates familiar literary historical narratives, such as the decline of Realism and the novel and the concomitant ascent of Modernism and poetry, as well as the original order in which the writer conceived and wrote the individual portraits.) Comparison with visual portraiture provides conceptual and methodological assistance here. National portrait galleries became something of a vogue in various European countries over the course of the nineteenth century.⁴ Grand, commemorative undertakings designed to enact a patriotic and conservative vision of nationhood, these galleries articulated so-called “Great Men”-based historical narratives. They invited viewers to vicariously experience the historical past and draw lines of continuity between past leaders and current ones. A focused, purposeful structure was instrumental to the political dimension of such galleries: the implied sequence in which the wider public was to bear witness to the portraits necessarily reflected and reinforced extant structures of political and economic power.

To take one example, England's National Portrait Gallery visitors were architecturally compelled to navigate the gallery space in a particular way. One's movement through the gallery “presented a series of stages in a civilizing trajectory of society and nation” and offered a “narrative that [...] served to reinforce the notion of a constitutional continuity with Crown and

3 On the Romantics' originary conception of art “as an index [...] of personality,” see the classic M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 226-262. On early nineteenth-century literary portraiture as an overcoming of the classical tradition of “artists' lives,” see David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 60-1.

4 On the originary conception and ultimate foundations of England's National Portrait Gallery, see Marcia R. Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. 227-244, and Paul Barlow, “Facing the Past and the Present: The National Portrait Gallery and the Search for ‘Authentic’ Portraiture,” in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall, *Critical Introductions to Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 219-38. On Russia's War Gallery of 1812, designed to commemorate the victory over Napoleon and assert the cultural and popular unity of the early nineteenth-century Russian nation, see Luba Golburt, “The Portrait Mode: Zhukovsky, Pushkin, and the Gallery of 1812,” in *Rites of Place: Public Commemoration in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Julie Buckler and Emily D. Johnson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 105-31.

Church in beneficial alliance,” an integral component of Victorian historiography.⁵ Official galleries thus structure and mediate the historical past in order to rationalize the present in a nationalist key. The same conservative component to portrait gallery construction existed even in Russia's commemorative War Gallery of 1812, which could not take a sweeping, centuries-long historical chronology as its basic structuring principle. Instead, Russia's first national gallery of portraits observed a strict spatial poetics. A full-body portrait of Aleksandr I dominated the room, while the remaining portraits of the victorious Russian generals (of a comparatively smaller size) displayed merely their subjects' torsos and heads, allowing them to be better arranged in neat, uniform rows. When no portrait for a particular war hero was available, a black silk screen hung in the most hierarchically appropriate place for that historical persona. According to Golburt, this gallery “[left] unclear the role of the individual within these negotiations of scale and historical durability.”⁶ Even if portraiture quite literally personified Russian history, the viewer's net experience of the gallery reinforced the awesome distance inherent in tsarist social structures.

However, the literary portrait gallery is verbal rather than visual, and a cultural rather than political enterprise (or at least a less overtly statist one). Indeed, for this reason, literary portrait galleries bear intrinsic similarities to literary anthologies and miscellanies, volumes that compile excerpts from multiple literary works, providing readers with a telescoped version of literary history. These texts, as one scholar of early modern British book culture has argued, were typically oriented towards middlebrow and mass readerships: they sought to effect reformulations of existing cultural canons and contemporary literary tastes.⁷ The anthology's primary objective was not to produce in its audience a feeling of marvel and broad, anonymous identification with the state, as was the case with the national portrait gallery. Rather, it sought to inspire a kind of proto-bourgeois sense of self-education and improvement, and the sense that everyone was democratically entitled to access culture. Here, its purposes are more closely aligned with the (portrait) gallery, a tool for developing cultured tastes in the wider public.⁸

The literary portrait gallery arguably carries within itself the generic codes of both institutions, sometimes in contradictory ways. It certainly possesses the national portrait gallery's orientation towards exceptional, often larger-than-life heroes, but also practices the literary anthology's orientation towards ever-changing canons. One could easily imagine these as antithetical tendencies. Nevertheless, literary portraiture articulates its own, peculiar vision of the human personality. Indeed, more so than either the national portrait gallery or the literary anthology, the conventional literary portrait gallery makes the articulation of the individual human personality its central purpose on three particular fronts: the treatment of its subject (the writers of a given historical period, whom it seeks to individuate), the engagement of its

5 Pointon, *Hanging the Head.*, 238, 239.

6 Golburt, “The Portrait Mode: Zhukovsky, Pushkin, and the Gallery of 1812.” 118, 119.

7 Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. 1-33.

8 “The aesthetic disposition, understood as the aptitude for perceiving and deciphering specifically stylistic characteristics, is thus inseparable from specifically artistic competence. The latter may be acquired by explicit learning or simply by regular contact with works of art, especially those assembled in museums and galleries, where the diversity of their original functions is neutralized by their being displayed in a place consecrated to art, so that they invite pure interest in form.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 50. Bourdieu's articulation of public art galleries' function and method (aesthetic education of the masses via disinterested contemplation of heterogeneous artistic forms) perfectly dovetails with the function and method of literary portrait galleries.

audience (the readers whom it seeks to educate and endow with a certain aesthetic *Bildung*), and the advancement of its creator (who seeks self-promotion and notoriety). These features in fact make the literary portrait collection a telling artifact of the condition that we have come to call modernity – and, indeed, a particularly telling artifact of Russia's cultural modernization.

Defining Modernity

It would now be prudent to offer a general definition of modernity and the relation thereof to the individual, given that my subsequent chapters (particularly those that make up Part II) trace such themes in a variety of ways. Conceptual definitions of modernity as such are numerous, and subject to continued debate – not least when the Modernism of pre-Revolutionary and Soviet Russia is compared to the more “normative” Western European versions thereof. Numerous points of continuity, arising out of the incipient capitalist industrialization of the late tsarist era, have been adduced between Russian and European modernity: the rise of a mass culture and the public sphere, new apparatuses for state intervention and the corresponding development of self-disciplinary doctrines within individuals, and a pervasive technologization of everyday life.⁹ Industrial capitalism and its attendant cultural manifestations serve as an important backdrop to the concomitant advent of literary portraiture in Europe and Russia alike. (Chapter 1.2, for example, ties the rise of literary portraiture in France to the development of the newspaper, mass readerships, and self-directed aesthetic education.)

Direct engagement with such complex, long-standing debates about modernity remain beyond the bounds of this dissertation, specifically focused as it is on more literary historical questions. We might nonetheless align our definition of the term with the one put forward in Marshall Berman's influential *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982), a study that not only directly addresses different cultural responses to modernity, but pointedly incorporates Russian history and literature into its interpretative framework as well. Perry Anderson's useful summation (and enhancement of) Berman's ideas insists on connections between modernity and individual experience: “Berman defines the essential characteristic of this modernity as the simultaneous experience of personal liberation and disorientation, exhilaration and anguish, brought on by the destruction of traditional and customary forms of life in the whirlpool of capitalist modernization – the sense of a self at once emancipated and jeopardized, without either the constraints or securities of the pre-capitalist social order.”¹⁰ The analogy between self and society, Anderson suggests, is bridged by the concept of development (economic and self-). This in itself produces another paradox: capitalism destroys old, rigid orders, making individual social mobility and self-expression more feasible while increasing the individual's sense of alienation and atomization within society.¹¹ This process occurs against the background of “a more or less unified public still possessing a memory of what it was like to live in a pre-modern world,” circumstances which serve as the requisite background for both one's sense of living in a modern world and the production and reception of so-called Modernist art.

9 For a critical summary of recent Russia- and Soviet-inclusive debates about the definition of modernity, see Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

10 Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London: Verso, 1992), 49. See also Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

11 Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement*, 26-27.

Russian literary portraiture reflects these complex circumstances in a particularly telling way. Its most frequent subjects – the leading authors of the Decadent and Symbolist movements, as well as Maksim Gor'kii, the “singer of personality” and sometimes adherent of Nietzschean thought – privileged highly individual aesthetic sensibilities, and flouted inherited moral and aesthetic conventions. As was the case in contemporary France, these circumstances produced a documentary need which literary portraiture answered: the genre registered the absolute distinctions between each individual writers' aesthetics and performances of the self, while the cumulative “galleries” tied their idiosyncrasies back to their shared experience of modernity. The typical audience for such portraiture – especially once the genre witnessed its popular turn (see Ch. 1.3, 2.2, and 2.3) was itself a byproduct of the Russian modernizing process. The population in the metropolitan centers of St. Petersburg and Moscow spiked in late imperial Russia, and many newly urbanized and (frequently) newly literate individuals found that economic improvement, literacy, and the accumulation of cultural knowledge could not but go hand in hand.¹² Practitioners of literary portraiture presented these novice readers with compact galleries of the most contemporary authors. Such volumes represented a tool of aesthetic self-development and a map for navigating the new, heterogeneous social and cultural space which they occupied. Finally, literary portraitists themselves were exemplary products of modernity. The growth of literacy created new readerships and outlets (e.g. newspapers) for content, and discussions about literary culture extended beyond select thick journals and literary *kruzhki*. A young critic had to stand out within a saturated and diverse cultural market, and literary portraiture – which appealed both to the narrow, more elite circles of the literary Modernists and to the more plebeian tastes of the novice urban readership – offered a viable means of doing so.

Defining the Silver Age

While literary portraiture represents a telling symptom of modernity writ large, it is not coterminous with literary Modernism specifically, nor even the Symbolist culture that originally nurtured the genre (see Ch. 1.3). However, the holistic essence of the genre becomes most clear when we compare these portrait collections' articulations of late imperial literary history to the cultural construct of the Silver Age. The concept of “Silver Age culture” typically pivots around the renaissance of aesthetic and religious thought fostered by Russian Symbolism, and usually makes space for the Decadent and Futurist/avant-garde movements, which, like Symbolism, are all treated as specific facets of European Modernism and products of modernity as such.¹³ The concepts of Modernism and the Silver Age likewise signify a particular attitude towards cultural periodization, even if the constituent variables thereof are calibrated differently. As Jürgen Habermas has noted, the designation “Modernist” marks an “abstract opposition between tradition and the present,” but likewise self-consciously bears the seeds of its own end, given that the newness of a Modernist work “will be overcome and made obsolete through the novelty of the next style.”¹⁴ Russian Modernist culture likewise experienced itself as a reassessment of all

12 For a thorough treatment of this theme, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

13 See the classic study Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987).

14 Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity - An Incomplete Project,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 3–15, 4.

values, a break with the past; at the same time, however, many of its architects also conceived it as a resurrection or reexamination of an earlier moment in Russian literary history, the age of Pushkin.¹⁵ For some, the designation “Silver Age” (infrequently employed in its own time, but consecrated by various cultural figures and scholars after the epoch had ended) implied an intrinsic inferiority with respect to the greater prestige of Pushkin's Golden Age. Notwithstanding the salutatory status implicit in “Silver,” others understood this designation as a positive evaluation of a doomed epoch's noble superiority to the aesthetically degraded and highly politicized Soviet culture that followed it.¹⁶

As I shall demonstrate throughout this dissertation, literary portraiture came to index a much wider vision of late imperial culture than the notion of the Silver Age might permit. To be sure, some literary portrait collections espouse a Silver Age-compatible vision of turn-of-the-century Russian culture; indeed, one of the first texts to explicitly adopt the Silver Age as a term of nomenclature was a 1962 collection of memoir-portraits by Sergei Makovskii, émigré writer and former editor of the Symbolist journal *Apollo* (*Apollon*).¹⁷ The relationship between literary portraiture and the various tendencies of pre-Revolutionary Modernism was largely ignored by Soviet scholarly studies of the genre. Soviet scholars generally sought to establish a more indigenous and politically progressive genealogy for the genre, primarily by tracing its trajectory backwards from Maksim Gor'kii via Aleksandr Gertsen to Vissarion Belinskii.¹⁸ With the exception of Chukovskii, the portraitists profiled in this dissertation are generally ignored in this genealogy. Consequently, such a vision of the genre remains unalloyed by the influence of a wider *fin-de-siècle* European culture.

As I will argue, the truth lies somewhere between these two positions, the first narrowly Modernist and the second broadly progressive. It is indeed my goal to acknowledge the literary historical trends that both tend to occlude. The genre of literary portraiture is intimately connected to multiple aesthetic traditions, and indeed seems to transcend the gaps that separate them. Moreover, examining contributing factors to the genre's genesis must necessarily take into

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- 15 See Boris Gasparov, “Introduction: The ‘Golden Age’ and Its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism,” in *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 1–16, for a useful summary of the Golden/Silver Age comparison.
- 16 On the muddy development of the term “Silver Age,” see Omry Ronen, *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Pub, 1997). On the diverse valuations of that term, as well as its post-mortem sanctification of its adherents in émigré and Soviet culture, see Galina Rylkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety: The Russian Silver Age and Its Legacy* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).
- 17 Sergei Makovskii, *Na Parnase “Serebriianogo veka”* (Munich: Tsentr ob“edineniia politicheskikh emigrantov iz SSSR, 1962). This was Makovskii's sequel of sorts to his portrait collection Sergei Makovskii, *Portrety sovremennikov* (New York: Izd-vo im. Chekhova, 1955).
- 18 See, for example, V. S Barakhov, *Literaturnyi portret: Istoki, poetika, zhanr* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1985), V. S Barakhov, *Iskusstvo literaturnogo portreta: Gor'kii o V. I. Lenine, L. N. Tolstom, A. P. Chekhove* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976) and V. Ia. Grechnev, *Zhanr literaturnogo portreta v tvorchestve M. Gor'kogo: vospominaniia o pisateliakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1964). Such interpretative lacunae have been somewhat corrected by post-Soviet Russian scholars; see the variety of subjects and interpretative strategies on display in V. Perkhin, ed., *Russkii literaturnyi portret i retsenziia v XX veke: kontseptsii i poetika* (St. Peterburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2002). Iurii Pavlov, ed., *Kritika XX-XXI vekov: literaturnye portrety, stat'i, retsenzii* (Moscow: Literaturnaia Rossiia, 2010). See also Frederick White, *Memoirs and Madness: Leonid Andreev Through the Prism of the Literary Portrait* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), one of the few works of Anglo-American scholarship on Russian literary portraiture.

account the wider cultural ferment of late imperial Russia, a ferment that extends beyond the useful but narrow concept of the Silver Age. For example, the literary portrait collections that I individually profile in Part II routinely trace the origins of distinct Realist and Symbolist aesthetics – and even so-called “boulevard literature” – back to common sources (e.g. urban experience, the crisis of individualism, etc.). Following their authors' lead, we might widen the definition of the Silver Age to accommodate certain individuals not particularly oriented towards Symbolism, as one of the period's premier scholars has recently suggested,¹⁹ and thereby trouble the literary historical paradigm that leads from Realism to Modernism. That wider culture provides an essential context for the genre's development, for even if Russian literary portraiture originated in a *Zeitgeist* saturated by Symbolist ideas, it also found purchase among middlebrow readers who were as much a byproduct of this modernizing process as literary Modernism itself.

Defining the Literary Field

For the above reasons, this dissertation frequently uses the designation “late imperial culture” in place of the comparatively narrower “Silver Age.” A corollary to this essentially historical term is the notion of the literary – or sometimes cultural – field. I borrow this concept from the works of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly as it is reflected in his collection of translated essays *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). Bourdieu defines the field of cultural production as “the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated.”²⁰ In practice, any attempt to map this field is inherently relational, and must acknowledge that the various kinds of symbolic prestige or financial capital that works of art might accrue are thoroughly implicated in one another, and are mediated not only by the internal logic of the cultural field (e.g. artistic questions of genre, medium, etc.) but by the larger fields to which they are homologous and into which they are inscribed (e.g. the fields of power, class, etc.). Certain works of art might be more able to garner their producers *financial* capital (the popular novel, plays produced for bourgeois theatergoers) but little *symbolic* capital (e.g. staying power, official recognition by academies, etc.). Each kind of capital represents one particular means by which a certain group or individual seeks to establish a dominant principle of hierarchization within the field.

Indeed, Bourdieu suggests that these various kinds of capital operate in inverse relation to one another, and French Symbolist poetry furnishes him with proof for this theory. The Symbolists created abstruse works precisely so the *fewest* possible people (i.e. neither the proletariat nor the petty bourgeois) might understand and laud it. They thus attempt to institute a “loser wins” cultural model in which low sales (an absence of financial capital) are related to high prestige, which becomes a good indicator of future canonization (a surfeit of symbolic

19 See the article “Serebriannyi vek: opyt ratsionalizatsii poniatiia” in N. A. Bogomolov, *Vokrug “Serebriannogo veka” : stat'i i materialy* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010), where he discusses the cases of Maksim Gor'kii and others as figures who occupy the margins of Silver Age culture. See also Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death : A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), which writes one of Gor'kii's stories into the corpus of turn-of-the-century “salvation myths,” which was largely occupied by Symbolist thinkers.

20 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production : Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 78.

capital).²¹ These cultural actors thus defined themselves not only by their immediate *kruzhok*, but also by the audience which that *kruzhok*'s preferred genre generally (but certainly not exclusively) courted. Literary portraiture is of course a reflective, critical creation rather than an original one, and we must judge it differently than we judge Symbolist poetry or the middlebrow novel. Nevertheless, as creative works that make statements and seek an audience, Russian literary portraits occupy a significant swath of the literary field that is, in Bourdieu's system, defined by narrower, more straightforward alignments of artist, literary circle, privileged genre, targeted readership, and (type and magnitude of) capital. Literary portraits appealed to elite and middlebrow readers in the late imperial period, and to proletarian readers in the Soviet one. In their consideration of the creative personality, literary portraitists cared little whether their subjects wrote prose, poetry, or plays: these critics flattened differences between genres and media in the name of a more unified vision of Russian culture. In transcending the immanent categories of the late imperial literary field, literary portraiture presents its tensions as the cultural constructs that they are.

I should stress, however, that I do not intend to apply my materials to the kind of consistent sociological analysis that Bourdieu puts forward in *The Field of Cultural Production*. I stop short of doing so because this dissertation seeks not more than to provide a genre history of literary portraiture, and a reassessment of Russian literary-historical periodization. The concept of a wider cultural field remains methodologically and rhetorically useful for both of these endeavors. It compels us to move beyond the cloistered confines of Symbolist *kruzhki* that so often direct our conceptions of late imperial literary culture, and further reflects the consistently holistic methods of these literary portraitists. Their decision to integrate various aesthetic tendencies and both major and minor writers alike into unified interpretative frameworks represents precisely the “heuristic efficacy of relational thinking”²² that Bourdieu deems essential to his method. Examining and comparing these portraitists' holistic models of Russian culture and methods of relational thinking thus represents but the first step in a more informed and rigorously sociological reassessment of late imperial culture which I hope to pursue in the future.

Defining *Lichnost'*

In examining these portrait writers' contemporaneous and retrospective renderings of the late imperial literary field, one is struck by the consistency with which they engage the specific theme of *lichnost'*, the last term I shall define in this chapter. Directly translating the word into English presents us with some difficulties. Comprised of the adjective *lichnyi* (personal) and the abstract noun suffix *-ost'*, the word would seem to correspond to the English word “personality.” Nevertheless, as scholars have pointed out, Russian usage of the word (especially in juridical contexts) originally suggested and often continues to suggest something slightly more physical, a concept closer to the English “person.”²³ Viktor Vinogradov notes that some eighteenth and early nineteenth-century uses of the word do indeed suggest a definition along the Rousseauian lines of “personal qualities of someone, a particularity inherent to a person or entity.” By the mid-

21 Ibid., 39.

22 Ibid., 29.

23 Raymond Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 166 and Oleg Kharkordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 184-5.

nineteenth century, under the influence of Belinskii, Gertsen, and various German philosophers, the word acquires a new dimension, signifying the indivisibility and dignity of the individual in a more pointedly political sense.²⁴ During the 1860s, it acquires a particular meaning in the lexicon of Russian progressive thinkers, for whom the possibility of social progress as such was closely related to the opportunity for the free development of *lichnost'*.²⁵ Nevertheless, Vinogradov does admit that the literary usage of the term continues to oscillate between such definitions, and indeed “continued to develop the abstract philosophical meaning of 'the individual, personal qualities of someone.’”²⁶

Tracing such developments in the concept of *lichnost'* in detail remains beyond the scope of this dissertation, but given the word's semantic complexities and contingent connotations, I often find it prudent to let the untranslated Russian word stand. Nevertheless, when I encounter the term *lichnost'* in citations and am compelled to render it into English, I try to maintain a fluid rather than absolute perspective on its translation: it becomes “character,” “personality,” “individual,” “self,” etc., depending on the context of the original citation. This is my way of acknowledging the word's flexibility, which made it so attractive to the portraitists I profile here. Take, for example, the following quote from Khodasevich's *Necropolis* about the all-too-mannered Symbolist life-creative lifestyle:

Отсюда – лихорадочная погоня за эмоциями, безразлично за какими. Все «переживания» почитались благом, лишь бы их было много и они были сильны. В свою очередь, отсюда вытекало безразличное отношение к их последовательности и целесообразности. «Личность» становилась копилкой переживаний, мешком, куда сыпались накопленные без разбора эмоции [...]»²⁷

Hence the feverish pursuit of emotions, regardless of their kind. All “experiences” were worshiped as a blessing, so long as they were numerous and powerful. From this in due turn arose the indifferent attitude to their sequence and expedience. “Personality” [*lichnost'*] became a moneybox of experiences, a sack into which the indiscriminately accumulated emotions were stuffed [...]

In theory, one could imagine either “person” or “personality” in this particular context, and I could indeed imagine someone preferring the former. One of the larger points of Khodasevich's *Necropolis* is that Russian Symbolists sacrificed their individual will in the name of communal life-creative projects, subverting the older, Romantic cultural construct of *lichnost'* as a person whose dignity rests upon their innate indivisibility. (This communitarian ethos is but one phenomenon that connects the Symbolists' seemingly esoteric practices with those of the more materialist 1860s generation.)²⁸ As scholars suggest, this is the most normative usage of the

24 V. V. Vinogradov, *Istoriia slov: okolo 1,500 slov i vyrazhenii i bolee 5,000 slov, s nimi svyazannykh* (Moscow: Institut russkogo iazyka im. V.V. Vinogradova RAN, 1999), 272-3.

25 Ibid., 300-1.

26 Ibid., 288.

27 V. F. Khodasevich, *Nekropol': vospominaniia; literatura i vlast'; pis'ma B.A. Sadovskomu*, ed. N. A. Bogomolov (Moscow: SS, 1996), 22.

28 On behavioral echoes between the Symbolist and 1860s generations, see Olga Matich, “The Symbolist Meaning of Love: Theory and Practice,” in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. Irina Paperno

word, one we would typically translate as “person.” However, the particular portrait from which this citation is taken (a damning account of the life of the minor Symbolist writer Nina Petrovskaia) routinely has recourse to theatrical metaphors, suggesting that *lichnost'* is here a matter of false performance rather than immanent ontology, as the scare quotes around the word suggest. Furthermore, the implied antonym of Vinogradov's *lichnost'* – a group of unindividuated people – pivots around a question of community (e.g. the incorporation of separate persons into a larger, unified body). As this passage suggests, Khodasevich is just as concerned with *time*, and specifically the corruption of developmental, biographical time that the Symbolist lifestyle engenders. Symbolists don't have “lives”; they have a static repertoire of poses, which is better captured by the more characterologically-oriented English word “personality.” Nevertheless, the tension between these two possible translations of *lichnost'* demonstrates why the word is so pivotal to literary portraiture, orientated as the genre is towards the representation of ontological specificity *and* stable behavioral qualities.

I will conclude our discussion of *lichnost'* by noting its broad cultural importance for the Russian *fin de siècle*, the very moment when the literary portrait genre witnessed its Russian flowering. Panic over a so-called epidemic of suicides in Russia's metropolitan centers centered around discussions of *lichnost'*. The critic-philosopher Vasilii Rozanov defined suicide as a “catastrophe of *lichnost'*”; others labeled suicide a product of the inability to properly construct the individual self (*lichnost'*) amidst political repression, or the dangerous isolation of the individual from the wider public body.²⁹ The concept of *lichnost'* likewise remained a primary concern of numerous contributors to the 1909 collection *Landmarks (Vekhi)*, one of the most important philosophical documents of the late imperial period. Its various contributors, primarily Russian liberals disenchanted with Russian Marxism, championed the doctrine of individual *lichnost'* as a corrective to the sins of the intelligentsia. Nikolai Berdiaev stated that the intelligentsia “cherished the individual [*lichnost'*] and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for the individual”;³⁰ Sergei Bulgakov noted the intelligentsia's disdain for “the development of the personality [*lichnost'*]” in the face of a nominally more pressing social obligations;³¹ and Mikhail Gershenzon everywhere speaks of the dangerous consequences of severing consciousness from *lichnost'* and instead filling it with “truth.”³² In sum, a concern for *lichnost'* and the proper degree of its inclusion within or separation from larger forms of community define the era I will be exploring.³³ Literary portraiture, with its attendant focus on

and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 24–50.

29 Mark D. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 151-3; see too *Samoubiistvo: sbornik statei* (1909), to which Rozanov contributed alongside future literary portraitists Anatolii Lunacharskii and Iulii Aikhenval'd. On nineteenth-century Russian conceptions of suicide as an individual's violation of ecclesiastical and juridical law, see Irina Paperno, *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), esp. 45-73, and Susan K Morrissey, *Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

30 Nikolai Berdiaev, “Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth,” in *Vekhi. Landmarks*, ed. Marshall Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 1–16, 14.

31 Sergei Bulgakov, “Heroism and Aecticism: Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia,” in *Vekhi. Landmarks*, ed. Marshall Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 17–49, 33-4.

32 Mikhail Gershenzon, “Creative Self-Consciousness,” in *Vekhi. Landmarks*, ed. Marshall Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 51–69.

33 For a thorough account of the mediation between autonomous individuality and collectivity in turn-of-the-century Russian religious thought – including that of the *Vekhi* contributors and Merezhkovskii – see Bernice

both of these interpretative axes, thus again becomes a particularly symptomatic document of late imperial culture, and *lichnost'* must consequently remain a persistent object of my inquiry.

Dissertation Structure

I have divided this dissertation into three separate parts, each with its own goal, material, and method. Each part is broken down into discrete chapters that will allow me to focus on the individual poetics of specific portrait collections, and the various concerns that motivate each individual portraitist in his given place and time.

Part I contains two subsequent chapters. Ch. 1.2 sketches a broad history of literary portraiture that stretches from ancient Greek and Roman comparative biography to turn-of-the-century literary criticism and memoir in England and France. Its function, broadly speaking, is to develop a critical vocabulary and set of thematic concerns germane to my subsequent explorations of individual portrait collections. Furthermore, in contrast to prevalent, “nativist” treatments of Russian literary portraiture's genealogy, Ch. 1.2 focuses on two Western European figures, the English writer Walter Pater and French critic Remy de Gourmont, who arguably provided turn-of-the-century Russia with the blueprints for the literary portrait genre. Ch. 1.3 follows up on this assertion, uncovering the influence of Pater and Gourmont on early Russian Symbolist writers. Having suggested an immediate point of origin for the literary portrait genre in Russia, it fleshes out the general story of its development in Russia, from the *fin de siècle* through the middle third of the twentieth century. The primary themes of that history – including the genre's shift from the enterprise of criticism to memoir, which I trace to the influence of the 1917 Revolution – will provide a vital backdrop for the more specific observations I make about individual portrait collections.

Part II, focused on literary critical portraits in late imperial Russian literary culture, consists of three chapters bookended by a short introduction and conclusion. Ch. 2.1 argues for and explains a demonstrable “popular turn” in the literary portrait genre, and contextualizes the genre within contemporaneous developments in literary criticism, while tracing some of the conclusions about late imperial culture (such as the pivotal comparative function of the writer Leonid Andreev) that consistently emerge across individual portrait collections. Ch. 2.2 discusses Iulii Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes of Russian Writers*, the most popular collection of literary portraits produced at that time. While his aesthetic philosophy and Symbolist associations make him a characteristically Silver Age figure, Aikhenval'd nevertheless distinguishes himself by marrying that philosophy to a literary critical method designed for a wider middlebrow audience. *Silhouettes* remains as skeptical of Symbolist poetry as it is of Realist prose, and attempts to articulate an alternative vision of Modernism that does not break with Russia's cultural past. Ch. 2.3 discusses Kornei Chukovskii's *From Chekhov to Our Days*, which positions itself as a response to Aikhenval'd's work. Chukovskii takes his orientation towards the a mainstream audience one step further, borrowing from the language of popular detective fiction and using the portrait format to offer “criminological” profiles of various authors and their aesthetic idiosyncrasies. Chukovskii remains content to “diagnose” the cultural maladies of the modern

Glatzer Rosenthal, “Religious Humanism in the Russian Silver Age,” in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary Hamburg and Randall Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 227–47.

era rather than put forth a positive vision of Russian culture, à la Aikhenval'd. However, his ultimate goal involves fostering in his newly urbanized readers the mental apparatuses to navigate modern life. Ch. 2.4 focuses on Maksimilian Voloshin's *Faces of Creativity*, an expansive critical collection that was not fully realized until after the author's death. Voloshin's literary portraits are more Symbolist-oriented than either Aikhenval'd or Chukovskii's collections: indeed, it is their very Symbolist orientation which likewise permits Voloshin to offer holistic, comparative statements about Russian culture. Voloshin's greatest innovation, however, was to incorporate biographical context – for both the author and the subject of the literary portrait – into the genre, hinting at its future development as a vehicle for memoir writing. Ch. 2.5 provides a general summary of Part II's conclusions, and gestures towards such future developments.

Part III, focused on memoir-portraits in the post-Revolutionary Soviet and émigré literary communities, likewise consists of three chapters that are bookended by a short introduction and conclusion. Ch. 3.1 acknowledges the influence of Maksim Gor'kii on developments in Russian literary portraiture, while rationalizing his works' exclusion from this dissertation. However, it also notes how (like Leonid Andreev in Part II) Gor'kii emerges as an integral cipher for the late imperial period in many memoir-portrait collections, and points to Gor'kii and the Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok as inevitably entwined in conceptions of late imperial and early Soviet literary history. Ch. 3.2 focuses on Vladislav Khodasevich's *Necropolis*, which is frequently read as the author's damning account of Symbolist life-creation. I provide context for the inception of this collection and demonstrate how its sequence is an integral part of its critique, while underscoring the heretofore unacknowledged structural importance of non-Symbolist authors within *Necropolis'* structure. Ch. 3.3 returns to Chukovskii, examining his continued work in the portrait genre as a means of professional self-fashioning. Rather than looking at Chukovskii's specific portrait collections (he produced many), I examine the editorial changes that the author made to the portraits of his mentors Blok and Gor'kii *across* those collections, thereby tracing the vicissitudes of Soviet cultural thought and Chukovskii's own changing position within it. Ch. 3.4 examines two works by Iurii Annenkov: *Portraits*, a compendium of visual portraits that he produced in early post-Revolutionary Russia, and *Diary of My Meetings*, a collection of literary portraits that he produced in emigration some forty years later. This chapter affords me the chance to make interart-based observations on the characterological essence of portraiture, and to further reflect on how changes to literary canons and periodizations reflect changes in representations of *lichnosti*. Ch. 3.5 summarizes these various points, and further serves as a general conclusion to the dissertation.

Ch. 1.2 – The Prehistory & History of Literary Portraiture in Western European Culture

As explained in Ch. 1.1, literary portraiture is founded on two essential features: within an individual portrait, a synthetic representation of individual personality, based on references to select specific literary works or life events; and, within a portrait gallery, a larger architectural principle that invites juxtapositions of and even reconciliations between these heterogeneous individuals. The poetics of literary portraiture largely eschews time and chronology in favor of a fixed, consistent articulation of that individual's creative essence and personality traits; within the wider galleries that these individual portraits constitute, temporal distinctions between specific people (e.g. their existence in distinct time periods) and aesthetic movements (e.g. literary Realism that is supplanted by literary Modernism) give way to larger arguments about recurrent features about the society or culture in which they are situated. Portraiture's primary orientation, then, is toward spatial categories rather than temporal ones.

While these features of the genre can be consistently observed in Russian literary portraiture from the late 19th century on, they of course did not emerge from out of thin air. We can reasonably trace these works' immediate precedent back to French and English literary portraiture of the mid-to-late 19th century, particularly those works penned by French and English members of the Symbolist and Aestheticist movements. However, these western European models were not without precedent themselves: they drew inspiration from centuries' worth of experiments with comparative life-writing originating in Greek and Roman antiquity. Such points of continuity are rarely explored in scholarship on the literary portrait.

Russian scholarship has its own reasons for failing to chart such connections between literary portraiture and older biographical forms, but even within western European scholarship that lacuna is understandable. Articulating this genealogy presents one with numerous difficulties: tracing intellectual and aesthetic genealogies between figures as culturally and historically remote as, say, the Greek biographer Suetonius (69-122 AD), the Italian art historian Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the French critic Charles Augustine Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), English author Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939); cataloging the different kinds of endeavors to which such forms of life-writing were put, including morally edifying biography, biographical dictionaries, literary criticism, memoir, creative writing, and salon-based recreational literature; and considering the heterogeneous subjects that are treated in all of these works – from historical figures of renown who lived centuries before their biographers were born, to the otherwise unknown and unremarkable individuals who populated a given writer's life and, subsequently, memoirs.

Nevertheless, it is worth engaging in just this kind of genealogical inquiry into the origins of literary portraiture, even in condensed form. Despite their status as entries in larger collections, it is all too easy to read literary portraits individually, as isolated works – say, as discrete pieces of literary criticism or compact sources of biographical information. By contextualizing them within older forms of comparative biography, we gain insight into the poetics of literary portrait galleries and the ways that aggregated biographies articulate particular visions of (or tensions within) a historical epoch or cultural moment. In considering such variables, we will better understand why Russian literary portraiture flourished when it did. Furthermore, given the fact that Russian literary portraiture is most often a vehicle for writing about belletrists and artists, we must also consider its place within the more specific comparative

biographical tradition that is frequently designated as artists' lives. Methods of critically calibrating an author's life and works vary historically; one century's celebration of biographical determinism is decried as biographical fallacy in the next. The degree to which an artist's life is culturally significant – and the rationalizations for *why* that life is culturally significant – are likewise historically variable; such is the case even for the short period of Russian history that I examine in this dissertation. Examining the vicissitudes of the artists' lives genre in Western European culture will thus provide insight into the formal and sociocultural modulations undergone by Russian literary portraiture in the late imperial and Soviet epochs.

Consequently, I will provide below a brief but dedicated inquiry into the development of comparative biography in Western European culture. I focus in particular on the classical and Renaissance periods, when the comparative biographical format was developed and modified for narrow didactic purposes, and the period between the late Renaissance and early twentieth century, when such biographical texts were modified for new media, new audiences, and new, wider cultural functions, including artists' self-promotion. I dedicate particular attention to the oeuvres of Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) and Walter Pater (1839-1894), two writers who greatly contributed to the codification of literary portraiture's generic features, and who, I argue, were most responsible for transmitting the form into Russian literary culture. Finally, in profiling these specific authors, I demonstrate how the literary portrait evolves from a genre of criticism into a genre of memoir – a trajectory that likewise manifests itself in the Russian case.

Biographical Collections in Greek & Roman Antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, and Post-Renaissance European Culture

Biographical collections first became a vital genre of life-writing in ancient Greece and Rome, where it was known by the straightforward designation “Lives,” or in its Latin incarnation, the *Vitae*. Most of these profiled either exemplary individuals from various public spheres (politicians, military leaders, authors, etc.) or provided compendia of imagined individuals who represented specific character traits. Prominent examples of the *Vitae* include Theophrastus' (371-287 BC) *Moral Characters (Ethikoi Characteres)*, whose entries detail numerous human “types” (flatterer, chatterer, etc.) in positive and negative lights; Suetonius' (69-122 AD) *On the Lives of the Caesars (De Vita Caesarum)* and *On Illustrious Men (De Viris Illustribus)*, which glorify the lives of political leaders and grammarians, rhetoricians, and great poets, respectively; and perhaps one of the most well known today, Plutarch's (46-120 AD) *Parallel Lives (Bioi Paralleloi)*, which compares the lives of Greek and Roman statesmen.³⁴

The collected biography of antiquity typically presents a didactic vision of the moral life, whether its subjects are historical persons or invented types. The individual entries in Theophrastus' *Moral Characters*, for example, each begin with a broad definition of a human character trait (dissimulation, flattery, loquacity, etc.) that is then followed by a more detailed account of the particular behaviors that this trait manifests. As Russian classics scholar Sergei Averintsev indicates, the function of the type is to navigate between the general and the particular, a binary system of thought inherited from Aristotelian philosophy. Thus, the

34 For a concise overview of the cultural and literary status of biography in antiquity, see Sergei Averintsev, “From Biography to Hagiography: Some Stable Patterns in the Greek and Latin Tradition of Lives, Including Lives of the Saints,” in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, ed. Peter France and William St. Clair (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2002), 19–36.

individual entries in Theophrastus' work serve as synthetic, ideal examples by which readers might recognize and classify the real people around them. Indeed, inasmuch as the exemplary entries in a biographical collection traded in virtue as well as vice, they might be considered not merely descriptive, but prescriptive as well. Such was the case with didactic biographies of great men (such as those written by Plutarch) which glorified just, worthy rulers and, by extension, imparted an imitable pattern of behavior for readers to follow in their own lives.³⁵ This focus on character and behavior tends to supersede the interests of chronological narrative, and it is not for nothing that Plutarch, in a frequently cited passage from *Parallel Lives*, likens such texts to portraits:

Just as painters get the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression of the eyes, wherein the character shows itself, but make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men...and by means of these to portray the life of each.³⁶

Plutarch's analogy underscores an essential feature of both visual and literary portraits: both focus on character, which is realized through economy of detail and synecdoche. Such techniques might be opposed to those of longer, more traditional biographies, which realize their subject's character through a more exhaustive, pedantic, and above all syntagmatic account of that individual's actions and statements.

Twentieth-century scholars have frequently used Plutarch and Suetonius to distinguish between synecdochic and syntagmatic approaches to life-writing. Turn-of-the-century German classicist Friedrich Leo suggested that these two writers represented two divergent schools of biographical representation: Plutarch embodies the Peripatetic trend, in which an individual's life is presented chronologically, thereby allowing the biographer to narrate those exemplary and historic actions that best illuminate the evolution of the subject's personality; Suetonius embodies the Alexandrian trend, in which the subject's life is organized around a series of thematically unified rubrics (mainly virtues and vices). Suetonius' technique privileges everyday behavior and biographical minutiae but largely jettisons his subjects' larger historical backdrop, and presents character as a more static, unchanging entity thereby.³⁷ Though modified by subsequent scholars (including Mikhail Bakhtin, who seems to have independently identified a similar distinction between antiquarian schools of biography),³⁸ this comparison remains a frequent reference point in modern works on Greek and Roman biography. Notwithstanding Plutarch's reference to

35 Ibid., 21-25. As Averintsev notes, the literary genealogy of the saint's lives (which similarly presents its lives through the prisms of moral didacticism) can likewise be traced back to this antiquarian genre.

36 qtd. in Ibid., 25. The quote specifically comes from the opening paragraph to Plutarch's biography of Alexander the Great.

37 Friedrich Leo, *Die Griechisch-römische Biographie: Nach Ihrer Literarischen Form* (Leipzig : Druck und Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1901), 316-320.

38 In his essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin makes a very similar claim about the distinction between the Plutarchian/Peripatetic and Suetonian/Alexandrian models of biography, although he names them "energetic" and "analytic," respectively. The former, which is structured upon a succession of chronologically sequenced acts and statements, gradually "fills in" the subject's character by the end of the text; the latter eschews chronology as such and instead reveals the subject's innate qualities, implicitly fully formed and firmly established from birth, through representative moments in the subject's life. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 140-2.

portraits, it is Suetonius's method, which prefers synthetic characterization over biographical accretion, whose generic features most resemble those of literary portraiture.

Antiquarian biography constructed meaning not only within but also across individual lives, thanks to the comparative format in which individual works appeared. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* pairs Greek public figures with their ostensible Roman counterparts (e.g. Alexander and Julius Caesar) in order to illuminate the moral, political, and military commonalities between the two. However, the distinction between general and particular remains in force within *Parallel Lives*: such juxtapositions threw into relief each figure's individual essence, insofar as different historical circumstances produced contingent and variable manifestations of standard moral traits.³⁹ Plutarch did not invent this parallel format, but his attention to how the structure of a biographical collection shapes the reader's reception of its constituent lives represents a significant, and influential, step forward in the evolution in biography.

Suetonius' legacy – the synthetic and non-chronological construction of character – proved equally influential. Insofar as his method privileges minor and trivial detail over Plutarch's grand, exemplary action, it permitted lives to be treated in a more neutral, informative, and less narrowly moralistic way.⁴⁰ However, Suetonius' works influenced not only biographical form, but biographical content as well: alongside politicians and military leaders, he famously detailed the lives of artists. His *On Illustrious Men*, which preceded and conditioned his approach to the more famous *On the Lives of the Caesars*, contains biographical portraits of Roman grammarians, rhetoricians, and poets. Again, it must be stressed that this is not new: Suetonius was drawing inspiration for these collections from Greek models. However, the significance of artists' inclusion in *On Illustrious Men* lies precisely in the Roman Empire's newfound embrace of the theretofore shunned Greek methods of education. In the final century BC, knowledge of rhetoric and grammar (i.e. knowledge of literature and history, respectively) was recognized as advantageous in personal development and the maintenance of bureaucracy. Mastering these fields represented a means of professional advancement, given the high premium placed of speech and persuasion in Roman political life, and a means of unifying the far-flung regions of the empire under a centralized banner of education.⁴¹

If *Of Illustrious Men* represents a historically significant treatment of artists' lives, it is still far from the life-and-works biographical model employed in modern times. Its constituent entries are not so much concerned with what we might call “literary criticism” as they are with poets', rhetoricians', and grammarians' professional interrelations and their privileged status in public life.⁴² Nevertheless, Suetonius' text contends that men of letters are just as worthy of individuation and recognition as statesmen, we might reasonably interpret *Of Illustrious Men* to be among the first instances where lives of past artists become an instrument of oblique professional self-promotion and self-definition for contemporary biographers.

The traditions of classical biography exemplified by Suetonius and Plutarch were rediscovered and embraced during the Renaissance, particularly in Italy. *On Illustrious Men* (*De*

39 See Philip Stadter, “Plutarch’s Comparison of Pericles and Fabius Maximus,” in *Essays on Plutarch’s Lives*, ed. Barbara Scardigli (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 155–64, for a useful explanation of the parallel formatting in Plutarch's work.

40 Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: The Scholar and His Caesars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 25.

41 *Ibid.*, 30-8.

42 *Ibid.*, 55, 60.

Viris Illustribus) by Petrarch (1304-74), to name but one prominent, early example, employed just such a collective format, (generally) maintained the principles of brevity and economy within its constituent biographical entries, and glorified noble figures from the past (including Biblical and Christian figures, unlike the wholly secular examples of the genre from classical antiquity). By the middle half of the fifteenth century, however, collected biographies began to embrace more contemporary figures, including authors and artists, on the grounds that these individuals could serve just as well as moral exemplars, and that figures from antiquity were too distant from the lived realities of the present day. Giorgio Vasari's (1511-1574) seminal 1550 treatise *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors (Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori)*, while hardly the first of its kind, remains the best-known and historically decisive entry in the genre of "artists' lives."⁴³

Vasari's importance to the tradition of life writing, particularly for the writing of artists' lives, can hardly be overstated. His greatest contribution is the invention of the "life and works" model that sees the artist's biography and creative output as legible phenomena that mutually reinforce one another. By contrast, in Suetonius' works, the subject's individual manifestation of general behavioral and moral principles are revealed through anecdotes and references to other texts, such as preserved private correspondence to, from, and about them. However, Suetonius gives little to no consideration to the artists' *works* as such; his lives are just "lives" in the narrow sense of the word. Furthermore, Suetonius' physical descriptions borrow liberally, though inconsistently, from ancient schools of physiognomic thought: someone's appearance – itself legible within a catalog of physical archetypes – reflects or even determines the nature of his soul. Creative activity, however individuated it might be, is still defined by moral typology, and is hence less historically valuable than an account of a writer's professional connections.⁴⁴

To be sure, Vasari continued to think of artists as possessing natural, recognizable inclinations, and he viewed their artworks as yet another exteriorized sign of their true, inner selves; he simply did not calibrate those inclinations in accordance with a rigorous moral typology, and thus presented his subjects with a greater degree of individuation. In the end, however, Vasari described most artists as highly moral individuals, and his biographies were nigh hagiographic: his subjects worked within a Christian paradigm, and to paint the divine, one needed to be pure. Vasari's ultimate innovation in the artists' lives tradition was to draw suggestive correspondences between content of an artist's life and the character of his work, rather than absolute similarities between an artist's appearance and his moral character.⁴⁵ The entwining of stylistic evolution and biographical narrative had other, characterological consequences: artists were perpetually in a process of changing, of *becoming*. Thus, Vasari's artists came to possess a more fluid and complex character than their oft-static forbears whose inclinations, as rendered by the Suetonian school, remained relatively consistent from birth to

43 See Martin McLaughlin, "Biography and Autobiography in the Italian Renaissance," in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, ed. Peter France and William St. Clair (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2002), 37–65, esp. 38–46.

44 David Rohrbacher, "Physiognomics in Imperial Latin Biography," *Classical Antiquity* 29, no. 1 (2010): 92–116.

45 To be sure, there was no absolute identification of behavior with physiognomy in classical physiognomics; it was common knowledge that the famously ugly Socrates was possessed of a "good soul." *Ibid.*, 100. Nevertheless, Vasari was more inclined to use the surprising contrast between an artist's less than beautiful features and singularly beautiful works as a means of advancing the biographical traditions he inherited from antiquity. See Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and Its Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 28–9.

death.⁴⁶

However, Vasari's primary concern was not so much individual artistic development as it was an individual's artistic masterpieces, the description of which occupies a significant portion of *Lives*. Compositionally speaking, this ekphrastic imperative presented a novel variable in the representation of artists' lives, insofar as it made economy all the more important. Vasari treated an artist's typical, early, and imitative works in a compact, consolidated manner, while reserving more space and greater description for his masterpieces (a method that probably likewise reflected the contingencies of *Lives*' publication and the manner in which Vasari conducted on-site research of specific artworks and buildings).⁴⁷ This privileging of an artist's later, more original works would seem to represent the Renaissance-era permutation of classical biography's didactic orientation: if Suetonius' illustrious grammarians and rhetoricians exhibited an exemplary and imitable moral character, then Vasari's *Lives* celebrated individual artists' exemplary, but perhaps *inimitable*, aesthetic achievements. Vasari's ekphrasis encourages readers to recognize and catalog that which is typical or exceptional, crude or masterful, within each individual work, all without the aid of illustrations.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the development of such discriminating tastes could not but be a comparative endeavor: Vasari, in his own words, had to teach his readers to understand how the sculptors, painters, and architects of the time "differed from one another."⁴⁹

In advancing a notion of aesthetic achievement, texts such as Vasari's *Lives* likewise present a tool for professional advancement, for artists and their biographers alike. Even more so than their classical predecessors, such Renaissance-era biographical collections provide insight into artists' individual self-fashioning in the midst of a rapidly changing world. According to modern scholars, the quantitative surge in biographically-oriented writing witnessed in the Renaissance had a two-fold origin: humanist authors' jockeying for position and prestige in metropolitan cultural centers, and artists' desire to be seen not as faceless artisans, but unique talents (i.e. to acquire the individual recognition that had long been available to writers).⁵⁰ Such dynamics are no less present in Vasari's work: between the first and second (1568) editions of his *Lives*, he acquired a position within the court of the powerful Florence-based Medici family. All parties had a vested interest in the wider circulation of *Lives*: the text flatteringly presented the Medicis' extravagant patronage as the motor of artistic progress, while Vasari and his fellow artists stood to benefit socially and financially from the aggrandizement and advertisement of such patronage networks. The numerous changes to the second edition of *Lives* thus provide material evidence for biographical collection's enhanced status as a tool of personal and professional advancement in the Renaissance era.⁵¹ Similar struggles for social and cultural legitimacy, and a similar interplay between representations of the individual and the group, in the

46 Guercio, *Art as Existence*, 31-33.

47 Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 158-9.

48 *Ibid.*, 233.

49 Guercio, *Art as Existence*, 24.

50 See Enenkel, Karl and Peter Liebrechts, "Introduction," in *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance; with a Critical Edition of Petrarch's Letter to Posterity*, ed. Karl Enenkel, Betsy de Jong-Crane, and Peter Liebrechts (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 1-10, esp. 2-3.

51 In the second edition, the geographical, chronological, and technical boundaries of Vasari's *Lives* were extended such that it might become a more "universal history" of the arts, and historical facts are shaped such that the money and, indeed, mere presence of the Medici serve as the midwives to their era's greatest artistic innovations. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, 193; 201.

portrait collections of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. However, the portrait collections of this period distinguish themselves from their Renaissance-era forebears in several crucial ways. Many were compilations of independently conceived pieces which were published in newspapers and journals that courted a wider, often more middlebrow readership – one whose economic clout obviated the need for aristocratic patronage, and provided artists and critics alike with alternative avenues to money and influence.

In the post-Renaissance world, the most vital developments in the collected biography tradition seem to take place in France and England. This is not to say that French and English culture severed ties with the classicist tradition that had theretofore driven the generic evolution of life-writing. Indeed, one of the most prominent examples of the “lives” – or rather, the “characters” – genre in seventeenth-century France, Jean de La Bruyère's (1645-1696) *Les Caractères* (1688), consciously modeled itself on Theophrastus' *Moral Characters* from nearly two millennia prior. La Bruyère's collection similarly consisted of particular personality types (the egoist, the absent-minded man, the pedant, etc.) who were supposedly based on real-life individuals whom the author had himself encountered (even if La Bruyère disavowed any such identification). These archetypes represented something different from simple morality qua morality, however, insofar as their moral failings were relevant primarily for (and originated specifically within) seventeenth-century court life.

This degree of locational, cultural, and political specificity (as opposed to a broader moral typology or particular professional identity) was a driving force behind other contemporary developments in collected biography. Of particular note are the genre's connections to salon culture generally and to the works of Anne Louise d'Orléans de Montpensier (1627-1693) specifically. In addition to providing their compiled works with their most modern appellation (*portrait*), and being the first female author (and subject) of literary portraiture, her contributions to the genre exhibit profound reconsideration of the genre's function. For example, Montpensier was the first French author to consider the portrait as a self-sufficient literary work rather than (as was standard for her contemporary and fellow author Madeleine de Scudéry [1607-1701]) a “*portrait-à-clef*” interlude in a chivalric novel. The volume *Divers Portraits* (1659) that she organized and contributed to while in exile was provocative for other reasons. Its subjects were almost exclusively female: they were the members of her salon, and not the (male) members of the court, as per the conventions of contemporary “propaganda portraits.” Similarly, its authors were from the nobility, rather than the bourgeoisie who acquired their work via systems of patronage, and hence had to engage in greater flattery of their subjects. Consequently, these portraits foregrounded the skill of their authors rather than the ostensibly virtuous character of France's ruling subjects, thereby presenting an alternative, more critical counterpoint to the political powers that be. Finally, *Divers Portraits* replaced state-sponsored “general history” with a more intimate, personalized comprehension of historical events, a feature that has provided these works with enduring historiographical value.⁵²

52 On the portrait's genesis in women's salon culture, see N. Ekstein, “Women's Images Effaced: The Literary Portrait in Seventeenth-Century France,” *Women's Studies* 21, no. 1 (1992): 43–56. On *Divers Portraits*, see Allison Stedman, “A Gallery of Authors: The Politics of Innovation and Subversion in Montpensier's *Divers Portraits*,” *Genre* 33, no. 2 (2000): 129–49. On the function of the portrait within the seventeenth-century novel, see Faith Beasley, “Rescripting Historical Discourse: Literary Portraits by Women,” *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature* 14, no. 27 (1987): 517–35.

Portraiture's growing popularity in mid-seventeenth-century French culture can largely be attributed to the salon culture that was orchestrated by enterprising, artistic women. However, subsequent literary historiography – unjustifiably, as one scholar has argued⁵³ – credits its climax and continued development to male authors, including La Bruyère, but also Louis du Rouvroy (Saint-Simon) (1675-1755). Saint-Simon, for his part, continued the scrambling of “general” and “private history” (as well as individual and type) that his seventeenth-century predecessors initiated, and used the portrait form as a narrative interlude in his memoirs, violating long-held aesthetic conventions.⁵⁴ While seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portraiture initiated these trends, it was nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in the genre that took the blending of public and private and destruction of inherited classicist forms to their logical conclusion. It was not only social circumstances (a widening readership, the rise of the periodical, etc.) that conditioned such advancements, but the work of several innovators and popularizers of the literary portrait form. It is to these figures that we now turn.

Literary Portraiture in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Literary portraiture might have begun in earnest when the term itself was standardized. We might credit this standardization to the French author Charles Augustine Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), who, in most scholarship, is said to have coined the term *portrait littéraire* (although he merely appended the adjective to the *portrait* that had already been generically codified in seventeenth-century salons).⁵⁵ He employed the genre both as an exercise in historical writing (*Portraits de femmes*, 1844), biography (*Portraits contemporains*, 1846), but most notably biographically-oriented criticism (*Critiques et portraits littéraires*, 1836-46) that he first wrote for various French journals and later used as materials for university lectures. However, his literary portraits were as much a product of Sainte-Beuve's own aesthetic philosophy as they were products of mid-century French literature and journalism. Ann Jefferson credits these works with the ultimate downfall of Classicist criticism, the latter type represented by Nicolas Boileau's influential text *L'Art poétique* (1674).⁵⁶ Sainte-Beuve expanded the Romantics' notion of literary genius, transforming it into an entire critical program. He believed that the critic's task was not to judge a writer's work against a codified aesthetic standard, but rather to seek out, define, and propagate that which made each worthy writer unique – a task for which, in Sainte-Beuve's estimation, the critic was better equipped than the writer.⁵⁷ His criticism privileged significant biographical facts (e.g. an author's lineage, lived experience, and – most importantly – social circumstances) that could theoretically explain the idiosyncrasies of his or her oeuvre.⁵⁸

53 Ekstein, “Women’s Images Effaced,” 52-54.

54 On Saint-Simon's use of literary portraiture in his memoirs, see Lydia Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 112-5.

55 Ann Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 128.

56 *Ibid.*, 113-7

57 *Ibid.*, 131.

58 Even if Sainte-Beuve effectively eliminated the influence of stuffy Classicist criticism, he too came to be criticized by novelists and scholars alike for his own critical allegiance to biographical fallacy. Sainte-Beuve has likewise been ill-served by his unforgiving evaluations of many now-revered authors of his day, Balzac, Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Stendhal among them. Such caveats abound in modern scholarship on Sainte-Beuve; a useful account thereof can be found in Christopher Prendergast, *The Classic: Sainte-Beuve and the Nineteenth-*

Sainte-Beuve's portraits occupy a pivotal place in the history of life-writing for several reasons. In the first place, even if they seek to undermine Classicist criteria for the assessment of art, Sainte-Beuve's varied *portraits littéraires* bear the genealogical stamp of Vasari's *Lives*, Suetonius' *De Viris Illustribus*, and other collected biographies of creative individuals. Indeed, the formal resemblance between the *Vita* and the *portrait littéraire* go beyond their social function; one could argue that they exhibit a degree of structural and conceptual similitude.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Sainte-Beuve helped the literary portrait become not only a respectable critical genre, but also a counterweight to the standard academic *biographie*, a densely chronological account of the life of any important individual.⁶⁰ This was not an aesthetic distinction between linear, Plutarchian biography and synthetic, Suetonian biography, nor was it a formal distinction between analytical portraiture and chronological narrative which complemented each other in Renaissance-era life-writing.⁶¹ Indeed, the brevity of the *portrait littéraire* is partially a circumstantial product of the journalistic sphere (with its short deadlines, frequent mandate of linguistic economy, and striving for readability) in which Sainte-Beuve worked.

One cannot overstate the continued importance of portraiture's engagement with the arch-bourgeois and quintessentially nineteenth-century formats of the newspaper and the journal. Many of Sainte-Beuve's literary portraits were written independently of one another and originally conceived as separate texts – a feature that distinguishes his work from most of the biographical collections which precede it. Only later would his isolated journalistic portraits be compiled into book format, undergoing not only editing and revision, but also a magical transformation into a kind of “gallery” – one that seems more cohesive and intentionally structured than its original constituent parts would in isolation. This newspaper-to-book trajectory also applies to the critical portraits written by Sainte-Beuve's successors, especially the critic Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) and poets Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). In these writers' more modest but also more polemical turn-of-the-century portrait collections, aggregated individual works acquire the aura of a manifesto or a programmatic statement about literature.⁶²

This was never more the case than *Livre des masques: Portraits symbolistes* (1896, 1898), two volumes of literary portraits by the influential *fin-de-siècle* critic, novelist, and literary theorist Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915). *Livre* was a manifesto in all but name: its preface included a strident defense of individualism in art, and its entries chronicled the oeuvres

century Culture Wars (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. the introduction and ch. 11.

- 59 Sainte-Beuve's *portraits littéraires* actually seem to bear a formal resemblance to Renaissance-era analytic portraiture; compare Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France*, 130, Karl Enenkel, “Modelling the Humanist: Petrarch's ‘Letter to Posterity’ and Boccaccio's Biography of the Poet Laureate,” in *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance ; with a Critical Edition of Petrarch's Letter to Posterity*, ed. Karl Enenkel, Betsy de Jong-Crane, and Peter Liebrechts (Ams: Rodopi, 1998), 11–50, esp. 22-4. Common to works of both centuries is a condensed biography that begins with a celebratory account of the given subject's lineage, followed by a similarly glorified account of his geographical and social milieu. Even in cases where the direct influence of one portraitist on another remains murky, such similarities demonstrate a kind of genre memory that connects modern literary portraiture to more historically remote biographical forms.
- 60 The distinction between *portrait* and *biographie* likewise involves the previously discussed issues of economy and brevity: a *portrait* is synthetic and short (and thus amenable to anthologization); a *biographie* is all-inclusive and long (and thus stands on its own).
- 61 Enenkel, “Modelling the Humanist,” esp. 13-22.
- 62 Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France*, 114, 102-7.

of the nascent Symbolist movement's leading figures. De Gourmont's book likewise bears a more detailed elaboration here – not necessarily because he was a great or frequent practitioner of literary portraiture, but because his *Livre des masques* exemplifies an important stage in the development of the genre. This volume illuminates the *fin-de-siècle* iterations of several themes – such as the individual versus the collective, the legitimacy of social groups and aesthetic camps, the relationship between portraiture and journalism, etc. – that exerted a profound influence on the first Russian practitioners of literary critical portraiture.

Like his predecessor Sainte-Beuve, de Gourmont worked primarily as a journalist and essayist (although he was more prolific and successful in his literary pursuits than Sainte-Beuve), and he produced numerous volumes of collected essays and articles in his lifetime.⁶³ He also professed a similarly grand estimation of the critic's function in the cultural sphere. In a 1904 article dedicated to Sainte-Beuve, de Gourmont states, “Poets and artists create phantoms which sometimes become immortal in the traditions of mankind. The critic, like the philosopher, creates values. The work of art does not conclude. Wherever there is conclusion, there is criticism.”⁶⁴ For both de Gourmont and Sainte-Beuve, the critic forges connections and draws conclusions which the unguided audience cannot see and which the unmoored author cannot adequately articulate. De Gourmont's designation of Sainte-Beuve as “almost the only critic of the nineteenth century, the only creator of values”⁶⁵ speaks to de Gourmont's immense respect for him.

However, Sainte-Beuve's aesthetic and political programs were far removed from de Gourmont's turn-of-the-century sensibilities. Many of de Gourmont's essential critical works were published in *Le Mercure de France*, the literary journal that de Gourmont, the prominent art critic Albert Aurier, and others founded in 1890.⁶⁶ In addition to works of criticism, the journal published not only fiction and poetry, but also historical realia and philosophy (including the letters of Vincent van Gogh and the first French translations of Nietzsche). This combination of original content and secondary material made *Mercure de France* something of an “explanatory mechanism” and “translator” for – and thus the banner periodical of – the young Symbolist movement.⁶⁷ De Gourmont himself could be described in similar terms, insofar as his early work is largely dedicated to the task of establishing a philosophical, and not merely aesthetic, foundation for Symbolism.

The introduction to de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* exhibits just such an explanatory impulse – and, coincidentally, shows both what de Gourmont borrows from Sainte-Beuve and what he casts aside:

63 *Livre des Masques*, an essential Symbolist manifesto in its own time, continued to exercise influence on post-Symbolist literary movements, in particular the Imagists in England. However, later, more ambitious collections of critical articles – which were informed by Gourmont's developing interests in natural science, philology, and the history of ideas – garnered him his largest number of followers and admirers. See Glenn S. Burne, *Remy de Gourmont: His Ideas and Influence in England and America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), esp. ch. 5.

64 Remy de Gourmont, *Selected Writings* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 205

65 *Ibid.*, 206.

66 For a brief history of *La Mercure de France* and Gourmont's place within it, see Erin M. Williams, “Signs of Anarchy: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Symbolist Critic at the *Mercure de France*, 1890-95,” *French Forum* 29, no. 1 (2004): 45–68.

67 *Ibid.*, 46-7

...M. Nordau, who, with a bizarre patience, has read all contemporary literature, has propagated the notion, so villainously destructive of all intellectual individualism, that “nonconformism” is a capital crime for a writer. We are of a violently different opinion. The capital crime for a writer is conformism, imitativeness, submission to rules and teachings. The work of a writer must be not only the reflection, but the enlarged reflection, of his personality. The only excuse a man has for writing is to write himself – to reveal to others the kind of world reflected in his individual mirror. His only excuse is to be original. He must say things never said before and say them in a form not yet formulated. He must create his own aesthetic – and we must admit as many aesthetics as there are original minds, and judge them according to what they are rather than what they are not.⁶⁸

This statement, as de Gourmont indicates elsewhere in the introduction, encompasses both his definition of Symbolism and the essence of art in general. As scholars have suggested, this stance proceeds from de Gourmont's aggressive – and, much like those of his contemporaries, frequently inaccurate – adaptation of Schopenhauer's philosophy,⁶⁹ particularly the notion of the world as (individual) will and representation. These tendencies guided de Gourmont to an anarchic political and aesthetic philosophy, one that coincided well with the eclectic program of *Mercure de France*. Thus, while de Gourmont's vocabulary and ethos would seem to trade in Sainte-Beuve-like concepts (“individual/ism” and “nonconformism” being equivalent with “genius” in a post-Romantic worldview), profound differences exist between the two critics. Sainte-Beuve's understanding of genius reflected a profound political conservatism: he esteemed the Napoleonic era before all other periods, defined as it was by charismatic individuals *around whom* particular cadres – artistic and political – formed. He respected this top-down approach to literary collaboration, an approach that, in his opinion, had been destroyed by the subsequent overvaluation of individualism in nineteenth-century literature.⁷⁰ De Gourmont's position, on the other hand, gave primacy to the unique, not the similar; it valued the artist's work, not the environment that originally fostered it.⁷¹ As a consequence, *Livre des masques* dispenses with Sainte-Beuve's biographical fallacy, and instead solely examines literary style and personality, offering portraits that are synthesized exclusively from the author's oeuvre – a progenitor of the Russians' focus on what I call “life *as* works” (see Chs. 2.2 and 2.3). De Gourmont's portraits of Maeterlinck, Mallarmé, Husymans, and nearly thirty other contemporary poets, playwrights, and novelists rarely mention their subjects' familial background; they instead speak in superlative epithets, concisely laying out the essence of each author's aesthetic, and relying on Félix Vallotton's accompanying woodblock portraits to impart a sense of each author's character.

De Gourmont's compilation thus undoes much of the foundation of past collected

68 De Gourmont, *Selected Writings*, 181-2

69 See Burne, *Remy de Gourmont*, 22-3.

70 Prendergast, *The Classic*, 265-7, 280-1. Sainte-Beuve particularly admired the circles that formed around Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël, and other charismatic literary figures from early nineteenth-century France, and suggested that these circles themselves constituted a society overseen by the arch-charismatic Napoleon I.

71 Again, in the article “Sainte-Beuve, Creator of Values,” de Gourmont seems to recognize this essential distinction between himself and his predecessor: “[Sainte-Beuve] had the sense of relationships and relativity. He knew how to dissociate men and works, although his method seemed, on the contrary, to unite them much more closely than anyone – except perhaps the ancients – had ever dared to do before.” De Gourmont, *Selected Writings*, 206.

biographies. The figures chronicled in *Livre des masques* are united not by their common membership in a particular social formation or hereditary lineage, nor by their stated affinity for a set of philosophical or aesthetic principles; rather, they are united merely by how superlatively new and individuated they are. As a consequence, the comparative framework that undergirds the typical portrait collection becomes weakened in *Livre des masques*.⁷² For de Gourmont, this decline of dominant collectives (and the complementary ascent of individual will) was an admirable feature of turn-of-the-century France; for others, it represented a disappointing and foreboding sign of social disintegration.⁷³ Whether celebrated or lamented, however, such tensions between individual and group identity were widely symptomatic of cultural life in *fin-de-siècle* Europe – nowhere more so than Russia – and the contemporary flourishing of literary portraiture provides particular insight into this phenomenon.

De Gourmont's insistence upon the limited benefits of comparison, and its complementary impulse to illuminate difference rather than similitude, would be modified in the years following the publication of *Livre des masques*. However, this stance reflects another feature of *fin-de-siècle* literary culture that bears upon the development of the literary portrait: the advent of so-called Impressionist criticism, or subjective criticism. This particular school (with which de Gourmont and several critics of the *Mercure de France* were associated) extended the theme of absolute individuality beyond the confines of artistic creation and into the enterprise of criticism as such. Aesthetic judgment is not rational, directed, or beholden to common standards; rather, it is arbitrary, subjective, and relative, reflecting an individual's peculiar sensibilities and inclinations toward certain kinds of pleasure.⁷⁴ The portrait lends itself well to Impressionist criticism: its brevity and the compositional freedom it affords, post-Sainte-Beuve, allow the critic to capture fleeting impressions left on him by a certain work – or, increasingly, the personality of a given individual with whom the critic was on intimate terms.

Early twentieth-century Russian critics (most of whom spoke and read French fluently) embraced this confluence of literary portraiture and subjective Impressionism primarily under de Gourmont's thrall. Nevertheless, the influence of the literary portraiture created by English writer Walter Pater also bears mention in this context. That influence is, perhaps, more indirect or oblique, given the few English speakers among the Russian creative intelligentsia of that time,

72 The introduction to *Livre des masques* demonstrates Gourmont's reluctance to develop a truly comparative framework: "Aesthetics has become itself a personal talent. No one has the right to impose it, ready-made, on others. One can compare an artist only to himself, but there is profit and justice in noting dissimilarities. We will not try to indicate wherein the 'newcomers' resemble one another, but wherein they differ – that is, in what way they exist, for to exist is to be different." Ibid. 182. Consequently, while numerous portraits at some point suggest their subjects' similarity to an influential predecessor (Baudelaire, Verlaine, etc.), the next sentence ("But...") will stress the incommensurability of the pairing's styles and poetic worlds. See, for example, the portrait of Mallarmé which does the above in Remy de Gourmont, *The Book of Masks* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967).

73 Stéphane Mallarmé's own portraits of his current and recent contemporaries, compiled in the volume *Quelques médallions et portraits en pied* (1897), exhibits a more sombre take on the decline of "collective literary life" at the turn of the century, and accords with some of the poet's earlier statements about whether such an "unstable" society can benefit art. Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France*, 108.

74 For de Gourmont's place within impressionist criticism, see Burne, *Remy de Gourmont*, 70-3. This school of French criticism is associated more closely with Anatole France, who in his *La vie littéraire* (1888) infamously and solipsistically declared that "the good critic tells the adventures of his soul among masterpieces." On France, see René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 24-26.

and consequently it remains harder to trace (as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter). Nevertheless, Pater was championed by Oscar Wilde, one of the most popular Anglophone writers amongst the Russian Modernists, and his contributions to Modernist iterations of literary portraiture are pivotal. For this reason, he deserves mention here.

The creative output of Walter Pater (1839-1894) was perhaps less voluminous than that of de Gourmont, but it was no less varied, and his earlier literary portraits might be seen as the Decadent seeds from which de Gourmont's more Symbolist contribution to the genre sprang. Pater's originary influence on turn-of-the-century culture can be traced back to his 1873 text *The Renaissance*,⁷⁵ a series of fluid, impressionistic portraits dedicated primarily to the life and works of French and Italian artists between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, was particularly vital in this regard. Although the content of these essays was (nominally) far removed from the cultural moment, the preface and conclusion to *The Renaissance* became something of an ur-text for both English Aestheticism of the 1880s and 90s and the literary Impressionism of the early twentieth century.⁷⁶ These appendages to the central material of *The Renaissance* celebrate individual subjectivity and the vicissitudes of individual perception; they relish passion, pleasure, and sensation before all else.⁷⁷

As René Wellek notes, Pater's understanding of the critic's task did not stop there. His ultimate aim was to use his impression of an artwork as a gateway into the artist's mind, to illuminate the mental and spiritual forces that molded the artist's oeuvre.⁷⁸ This project was distinct from that of Sainte-Beuve, insofar as Pater's concern is less the artist's environment than, to use Pater's own words, "what is unique in the individual genius which contrived after all, by

75 The first edition of this work was entitled *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Pater shortened the original title in subsequent editions: there was little actual history at work in the text. Altered, too, was the work's conclusion, which was received, in its own time, as a document of lascivious, improper (read homosexual) hedonism. Pater felt compelled to excise it from the second edition of *The Renaissance*, though he restored it, in a slightly more muted form, to the third.

76 For one such treatment of Pater as a precursor for tendencies in turn-of-the-century English literature, see Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. ch. 1. For an account of the Paterian concepts and vocabulary that can be found in the texts of Russian modernism in general and in Mikhail Kuzmin's 1905 novel *Wings (Kryl'ia)* specifically, see Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 175-79.

77 Two quotations from *The Renaissance*, ubiquitously cited in scholarship on Pater, will be sufficient to convey the essence of his aesthetic philosophy. From the preface, a modification of a well-known dictum by Victorian art critic Matthew Arnold: "...In aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals – music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life – are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me?" Walter Pater, *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 17. From the conclusion: "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight for intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us, – for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." *Ibid.*, 60

78 Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, 383

force of will, to have its own masterful way with that environment.”⁷⁹ Pater occupies himself with artistic personality rather than biographical fact because, in his mind, that criticism which aspires to reproduce the mental, rather than physical, life of an artist represents the best entry into the art itself.

These fluid visions of Renaissance artists and their artwork ultimately have much in common with Pater's oeuvre as a whole; indeed, many of his works could be reasonably described as portraits, and often bore that very generic appellation. *The Renaissance* was soon followed by the short work of prose fiction “Imaginary Portrait: The Child in the House” (1878). A glimpse into the aesthetic awakening of a young boy, “Child” represents not only the most autobiographically inspired text in Pater's oeuvre, but also the clearest example of his peculiar aesthetic. The text consists of a series of moments that contain no dialogue and do not cohere into an obvious plot. They do, however, convey the protagonist's feelings and impressions and point to his presumed future as a creative mind; as Pater himself said of “Child,” “I...mean readers, as they might do on seeing a portrait, to begin speculating – what came of him?”⁸⁰. Such synecdochal and anti-narrative visions of the self typify Pater's writing, and demonstrate the affinity between his aesthetic concerns and the generic features of the literary portrait.⁸¹

The question of what kind of meaning such works produce in aggregate is addressed in another of Pater's projects, *Imaginary Portraits* (1887). While this volume adopted the generic appellation from the earlier experiment “Child,” its spirit was more akin to *The Renaissance*, which was a collection of literary and/or historical portraits in all but name. *Imaginary Portraits* consisted of a series of forays into the minds of various individuals – some authentic, some invented, all hailing from various periods and locales in modern European history – each of whom undergoes an epiphanic experience before a work of art. These works generally lack dialogue and action: they trade in character rather than biography, and subsist on vivid moments of perception rather than the forward momentum of plot. Even if these works resist narrative on an individual basis, however, the discrete entries of *Imaginary Portraits* are part of a larger architecture that remains purposefully opaque. Pater's statement concerning the manuscript of “Child” could well serve as *Imaginary Portraits'* epigraph: “[“Child”] is not, as you may perhaps fancy, the first part of a work of fiction, but is meant to be complete in itself; though the first of a series, as I hope, with some real kind of sequence in them...”⁸² In Pater's comment we see the poetics of the literary portrait gallery at work: each entry is a discrete text that, by virtue of its dense synecdoche, at once invites speculation about its alluring subject and draws power from comparisons with the other texts that are contiguous, though not necessarily continuous, with it.

Much like the joint case of the *portrait littéraire* and Sainte-Beuve, the imaginary portrait is frequently supposed to be Pater's invention, although precedents for both the term “imaginary portrait” and the generic features of the texts that fall under that rubric exist. Scholars have conjectured about the potential influence of such generic predecessors with particular reference

79 qtd. in Gerald Monsman, *Pater's Portraits: Mythic Pattern in the Fiction of Walter Pater* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 37

80 qtd. in Saunders, *Self Impression*, 39.

81 The same description could be applied to Pater's only novel, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Harold Bloom notes that Pater had “no gift for narrative, or drama, or psychological portrayal, and he knew this well enough,” and suggests that *Marius* should be included in Pater's series of imaginary portraits, its generic status as novel notwithstanding. See Bloom's introduction to Pater, *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*, xxii-xxiii.

82 Saunders, *Self Impression*, 39, fn. 32

to Pater's personal library, which included copies of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Vasari's *Lives*, and Sainte-Beuve's portrait collections.⁸³ However, Pater's portraits demonstrate a new vista – one characteristic of the *fin de siècle* – within the winding history of literary portraiture as I have outlined it above. In the words of one scholar, Pater's contributions to the genre collapses the boundary between “forms traditionally valued for their truth-telling – portraiture, history, essay, biography, autobiography – [and] the counter-factual energies of fiction, imagination, and myth.”⁸⁴ With Pater, a conscious combination of objective fact and subjective impression enter the critical and historical tradition: portrait collections become just as much, perhaps *more*, about the critic than his varied subjects. In other words, biography becomes a muted form of autobiography and criticism becomes a creative act.⁸⁵ Whether such a fluid understanding of life, art, and criticism comes directly from Pater or from other sources, this tension drives many of the innovations in Russian Symbolist (and post-Symbolist) literary criticism of the *fin de siècle*.

The blending of subject and object, of biography and autobiography, of art and criticism: these qualities of the literary portrait, initiated by Pater, become more intensified in Anglo-American literature during the shift to high Modernism. Scholars have explained this intensification in numerous ways, often making recourse to the Modernists' perpetual fascination with, and aspiration to, the visual arts – a particularly apt set of circumstances for the ascent of literary portraiture, given its generic origins as a verbal analogue to painting.⁸⁶ Laura Marcus has

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- 83 See Eliza Bizzotto, “The Imaginary Portrait: Pater’s Contribution to a Literary Genre,” in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams (Greensboro, NC: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 213–23, esp. 218–19. See also Martine Lambert-Charbonnier, “Poetics of Ekphrasis in Pater’s ‘Imaginary Portraits,’” in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams (Greensboro, NC: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 202–12, esp. 208. The latter scholar contends that Pater borrows the term “imaginary portrait” from a frequent practice in Renaissance painting. This practice involved the representation of a historical figure whose features had not been recorded for posterity by making recourse to a current-day sitter whom the painter believed to (or rather, whom the painter imagined to) resemble the subject.
- 84 Saunders, *Self Impression*, 42. Saunderson's treatment of Pater is more complex than this statement indicates; in his argument, Pater's peculiar art treats “personality” in such a way that it poses a “self [that] exists only in its disappearance, or as a process of weaving and unweaving” (47) and ultimately “calls into question the ontology of our impressions, feelings, ideas, and memories: in short, of our subjectivity” (51). Saunders thus treats Pater as the initiator, or at least a precursor, to the (Anglo-American) modernist ideal of impersonality in art, rather than a figure whose relevance is restricted to the Aesthetic movement.
- 85 Some of the most famous echoes of Pater's blurred boundaries between biography (or criticism) and autobiography occur in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). The epigram-laden preface, added in 1891 to the novel's first printing in book format, contends that “the highest as the lowest form of criticism is a mode of autobiography” (48), and in the text itself, Basil Hallward, the creator of the titular picture, states that “every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist and not the sitter” (52). See Oscar Wilde, *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works*, ed. Isobel Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 86 Anna Viola Sborgi, “Ford Madox Ford’s Literary Portraits,” in *Ford Madox Ford and Visual Culture*, ed. Laura Colombino (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 119–34. Sborgi suggests that the portrait occupies a pivotal place in avant-garde art because it “amplif[ies] the issue at the heart of Modernism of the (im)possibility of representing human subjectivity” and “mirror[s] the movement's concern for the possibility of representation itself” (120). Gertrude Stein's portraits – especially those of her artist friends, including Picasso and Matisse – are exemplary in this regard. For detailed account of Stein's contributions to the genre of literary portraiture, see Wendy Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978). I will neglect to speak at greater length about Stein here because her works represent some of the most outlying examples of the genre, and illuminate little in the more normative Russian context.

convincingly argued that modernist skepticism toward the late Victorian model of national biography led to a greater recognition of the biographer's subjective position within the text,⁸⁷ and this trend bears upon the changing function of the literary portrait as well. However, we ought also to acknowledge a simpler cause for the genre's transformation during the early twentieth century: that the portraitists' subjects had simply become less historically remote. Indeed, many were alive when their portraits were produced. If Pater (almost uniformly) and Sainte-Beuve (often) wrote about literary figures or artistic works that existed long before they themselves did, then twentieth-century literary portraitists would turn their gaze to more contemporary figures. The (historical, social) proximity between the portraitist and the subject of the portrait becomes an important feature of the text,⁸⁸ and thus transforms the portrait into a typically Modernist vehicle of creative exchange between sitter and subject,⁸⁹ or even a tool of legitimation and self-definition for the portraitist operating within the confines of modernity.⁹⁰

Yet for all of the intimate and presumably objective knowledge that the portraitist might have of his/her subject, a Paterian tension between fact and imagination is maintained in such works. The literary portraits written by critic and novelist Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939) both demonstrate this tension in twentieth-century portraiture and make for a felicitous conclusion to the short history of the genre that has been outlined here. Pater's spurned legacy in English post-Wilde literary culture notwithstanding,⁹¹ recent scholarship has demonstrated Ford's indebtedness to – and even his conscious embrace of – Pater's art.⁹² However, whereas Pater's imaginary portraits utilize the lives of long-dead or fictitious figures to create his own displaced autobiography, Ford's memoir-portraits do much the same with the author's contemporaries.

Ford's engagement with the literary portrait genre extends back to the first decade of the twentieth century, when he contributed works under that designation to various English periodicals. These pieces, dedicated to authors both living and dead, would resemble standard works of literary criticism were it not for their consistent bipartite structure. The first half of each text considered the writer's character, and the second served more as a review of a specific

87 Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), esp. Ch. 3

88 Ed Block, "Walter Pater, Arthur Symonds, W. B. Yeats, and the Fortunes of the Literary Portrait," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 26, no. 4 (October 1, 1986): 759–776, 768.

89 Sborgi, "Ford Madox Ford's Literary Portraits," 132.

90 Charles Caramello, *Henry James, Gertrude Stein, and the Biographical Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1. Henry James' prolonged engagement with literature portrait, practiced as both a genre of critical writing and a novel oriented around the characters' inner lives, is another subject that bears mentioning but for which there is insufficient space here.

91 Lesley Higgins, "No Time for Pater: The Silenced Other of Masculinist Modernism," in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams (Greensboro, NC: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 37–54. Lesley Higgins details how Oscar Wilde's scandalous trial caused Pater's concomitant decline in the eyes of arch-modernists such as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

92 In "Mapping the Private Life and the Literary Canon: Ford Madox Ford's 'Mightier Than the Sword,'" in *Ford Madox Ford and "The republic of letters"* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002), 73–79, Maurizio Ascari demonstrates how in his literary portraits, Ford treats the details of his associates' lives with a novelist's eye and imagination that are not distant from Pater's "imaginative sense of fact." In addition to the affinity between the portraits of Ford and those of Pater, Ascari also illuminates passages from Ford's critical works that are more sympathetic to the Bloomsbury group, to the point where they (re)enshrine Wilde (and, by extension, his mentor Pater) into the prehistory of English high modernism.

work⁹³ – a formula we will see in certain examples of Russian literary criticism. However, Ford continued to use the designation “literary portrait” for his later memoirs, the most prominent of which is *Portraits from Life* (1937).⁹⁴ The portraits included in *Life* possess a different character than Ford's previous works; they also perform almost the reverse function of Sainte-Beuve's *portraits littéraires* a century prior. Whereas Sainte-Beuve used an author's biography and family history to illuminate his or her fiction, Ford instead treats fiction as a means of accessing the author's true self. The aggregated works within a writer's oeuvre serve as a composite portrait⁹⁵ of the writer. Ford believed that an author was activating multiple selves when engaged in the creative process; hence, fact-driven and nominally “objective” biographies of an author cannot but tell an incomplete story.⁹⁶ Ford makes this point most explicitly in his portrait of the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev:

It was a misfortune for [Turgenev's] biographers and for those who believe that biographies can ever illuminate anything. For the biographer and the consumer of biographies, looking only for what they seek, find what they want and play all the gamut of their sympathies or hatreds. But Turgenev was by turns and all at once, Slavophil and Westerner, Tsarist and Nihilist, Germanophile and Francophobe, Francophile and Hun-hater, insupportably homesick for Spasskoye and the Nevsky Prospekt and wracked with nostalgia for the Seine bank at Bougival and the rue de Rivoli. All proper men are that to some degree – certainly all proper novelists. But Turgenev carried his vicarious passions further than did anyone of whom one has ever heard. He would meet during a railway journey some sort of strong-passioned veterinary surgeon or some sort of decayed country gentleman...And for the space of the journey he would be them...And so we have Bazarov – whom he loved – and the Hamlet of the Tschigri district...whom perhaps he loved too.⁹⁷

This statement alone makes Turgenev's portrait one of the most self-reflexive and thus pivotal entries in Ford's entire volume. Such circumstances might seem unusual, given how little personal contact Ford actually had with Turgenev: unlike the other figures profiled in *Portraits*, the Russian author was a creative mentor to him, but someone whom he encountered only once as a child.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Turgenev's centrality within the volume make a great deal of sense

93 Sborgi, “Ford Madox Ford’s Literary Portraits,” 123-4.

94 It is also frequently known as *Mightier Than the Sword*, the title under which the volume was printed in England in 1938.

95 The metaphor of the composite photograph – itself a legacy of turn-of-the-century eugenic “science” performed by Francis Galton – is Ford's own, although the scholar Max Saunders uses it to great effect. See Saunders, *Self Impression*, 232-38. My subsequent points about Ford, and the discussion of Ford's portrait of Turgenev, draw from Saunderson's analysis.

96 As Ascari points out in “Mapping the Private Life and the Literary Canon,” Ford foreground his artistic, rather than strictly factual, portrayal of his contemporaries in *Portraits from Life*. To quote from the original source: “I determined, that is to say, to erect to my – nearly all dead – friends not so much a monument more sounding than brass, but an, as it were, intimately vignettted representation that should force the public to see that circle of strong personalities as I want them to be seen. I am, that is to say, a novelist, and I want them to be seen pretty much as you see the characters in a novel...” Ford Madox Ford, *Portraits from Life* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), v.

97 Ford, *Portraits from Life*, 158; ellipses in the original.

98 The portrait recounts how an eight-year-old Ford eagerly presented a chair to Turgenev, although the youth had mistaken the Russian author for his first English translator, W. R. S. Ralston. Aside from listening to several

given Ford's conception of the fiction-biography dynamic. If Turgenev is the superlative novelist, preeminently capable of transforming raw life into impassioned art, then his oeuvre, more than that of any other author, *would* provide the most illuminating “biography” of its creator.

For Ford, then, Turgenev's dispersed personality and capacity for contradiction – the intense empathy that allows him to maintain multiple ideological and emotional positions – does nothing to undermine the portrait. Indeed, this passage, highlighting the novelist's mandate to be, as Ford puts it, “by turns and all at once,” shows just how amenable the literary portrait became to Modernist conceptions of biography and the self. The author is not a unified subject, but rather an actor who maintains a repertoire of poses that can be consciously or unconsciously called forth, activated, and then set aside once more.⁹⁹ He becomes a fluid entity, changing himself to accommodate different experiences, different circumstances, different times; an all-encompassing, totalizing perspective on him does a disservice to his complexity as a subject (as Ford himself states). Consequently, the literary portrait – a synthesis of discrete, sometimes contradictory impressions rather than a series of linearly organized facts – provides a more tenable perspective on an author's life.¹⁰⁰

These principles that define the literary portrait reflect an early twentieth-century understanding of the *writing* subject as well as the written one. The Modernist subject is similarly constructed through juxtapositions, conscious or unconscious, of different times and places (as in the paradigmatic Proustian moment); so too can Ford's self be best constructed out of the discrete and discontinuous pieces in *Portraits from Life*. The sequence of *Portraits from Life* is defined not by a linear historical or biographical sequence; if it were, then the adventures of an eight-year-old Ford with the elder Turgenev, not those of the adult Ford with his mentor Henry James, would begin the collection. The synecdoche and achronological operations that structure the individual portrait are thus at work in the portrait collection itself: Ford's own complex and contradictory essence emerges across and between its constituent entries. Denied a totalizing access to his life (or rather, freed from the tyranny of chronological sequence), the reader of *Portraits from Life* instead acquires a more profound knowledge of Ford's character. Thus, in its ultimate manifestation as a type of memoir, the literary portrait collection becomes one of the premier genres of auto/biography at the turn of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

De Gourmont and Pater remain the primary points of transmission between western European traditions of literary portraiture. However, behind each of these author's works stand centuries' worth of experiments in biography, criticism, and, most importantly, the comparative format that drives the so-called “lives” genre. What can this genealogical inquiry into such forms of life-writing – as diverse in purpose as they are in appellation – contribute to a dedicated study of sixty years of Russian literary portraiture?

As I will explain in subsequent chapters, there are certain features of Russian literary

stories while seated on Turgenev's lap, the rest of the portrait consists of musings on the author's fiction and the respect accorded to it by Ford's parents.

99 Saunders, *Self Impression*, 237-38.

100 Sborgi, “Ford Madox Ford's Literary Portraits,” 128. Sborgi again shores up her point by making reference to the painted portraits of Cubism and Futurism that combine different spatial and temporal perspectives on a single subject.

portraiture that self-consciously peer backwards into this tradition; Soviet biography's open aspiration towards Plutarchian moral didacticism is only the most obvious. In this sense, Soviet literary culture effectively excised the more recent strains of literary portraiture inspired by Pater and de Gourmont, Symbolism and Decadence, and returned the genre to the more classicist mode of admirable collected lives discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Thus, the content of Ch. 1.2 provides us with broader insights into the rhythms of portraiture's generic development – as well as the language to describe those rhythms – that we witness even in the brief sixty-year period with which this dissertation is concerned. By way of a conclusion to this chapter, then, I shall offer some clusters of topics and concepts that will recur in my discussion of individual Russian portraitists' works.

In the first place, the question of how best and most accurately to represent human life *in time* remains problematic. Should the biographer's *siuzhet* mirror the subject's *fabula*, as in the case of an exhaustive, linear, syntagmatic biography that yields an evolving, dynamic vision of a given individual? Or, on the other hand, is an individual defined by a persistent characterological essence that does not change in time, and is hence best represented by a synthesis? The former perspective is first codified in the Plutarchian model of life-writing, the latter in the Suetonian. The literary portraitists profiled in this chapter demonstrate the essential differences between these two tendencies: Sainte-Beuve focuses on the determining influence of a writer's origins, tending towards the Plutarchian method; on the other hand, de Gourmont highlights the most essential, consistent features of an author's oeuvre, tending towards the Suetonian. I would contend that Russian portraiture, on the whole, tends to follow de Gourmont's Suetonian example, but certain writers – Maksimilian Voloshin and Vladislav Khodasevich in particular – foreground the potential collision between biographical evolution and characterological stasis in their work. Indeed, their critiques of Symbolist authors rely on these authors' quixotic attempts to forge a monolithic *lichnost'* in the face of changing biographical and historical circumstances. Keeping these two compositional paradigms in mind is thus quite useful for a consideration of which life events a portraitist chooses to focus on and the order in which those events are sequenced.

Equally important are the compositional paradigms that operate *across* portraits – namely, the order in which a series of lives are sequenced within a particular “gallery.” If an individual literary portrait is *potentially* synthetic in its makeup, then an effective *collection* of literary portraits is almost certainly synthetic in its construction. Such are the lessons of collected biography: Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* packages its moral typology in a series of pairings that collapse the historical divide between Greek and Roman Empires, pointing to their continuity; Sainte-Beuve's clusters of portraits around charismatic personalities articulate a particular aesthetic and political vision of early nineteenth-century culture. The reader may certainly pick and choose which individual works to read; however, the format is selectively comparative rather than universally encyclopedic by design. Thus, literary portraitists typically sequence the constituent entries of their “galleries” with an eye towards the particular conclusion that such a sequence can produce; as I shall demonstrate, Russian portraitists are no exception.

The composition of a given gallery sequence is typically informed by the particular relationship between individual and type (or group) that the portraitist wishes to articulate. As we have seen, this question of synthetic type is intrinsic to the collected lives genre from its very inception, and its influence persists in various permutations. Broadly Theophrastan inquiries into

invented moral archetypes become refined for more historically, socially, and culturally specific circumstances (e.g. the seventeenth-century French court, and – as I shall soon suggest – the eugenicist visions of criminal types in the *fin de siècle*), and are likely sublimated into the representation of authentic individuals after the collected biography begins to shed its didactic function. At the same time, the complete disavowal of types and tendencies, coupled with the concomitant turn towards absolute individuation, can be a historically conditioned aesthetic and political statement in and of itself; such is the case with de Gourmont's *Livre du masques*. Such typologies – and even articulations of typelessness – are reflected in the sequence a portraitist chooses for their collection. Some may draw attention to this structure, as Kornei Chukovskii and Iulii Aikhenvaľ'd pointedly do in the prefaces to their works: they outline the common themes and motifs that govern the particular clusters of portraits. In other cases, such as Voloshin and Khodasevich, no such articulation of type or group is provided; the reader must gradually intuit the dialectic of similitude and distinction that undergirds the collection's sequence.

Finally, such statements about the individual personality's allegiance to or disavowal of a particular characterological typology have supra-aesthetic consequences. Any repertoire of personalities, from Theophrastus' fictional moral archetypes to de Gourmont's superlatively individual Symbolists, suggests a kind of canon, and the articulation of a canon cannot but be connected to the question of legitimacy. In their orientation towards the political or cultural fields, we might describe such canons as centripetal (invested in the continuity of the status quo) or centrifugal (invested in the expansion or destruction thereof). For example, Vasari's profiles of Renaissance-era artists shore up the status quo, requiring that readers pay fealty before these artists' aesthetic innovations – and to justify the Medicis' acquired cultural and political capital. Montpensier's *Divers Portraits*, on the other hand, advocates a more personal vision of history that distinguishes itself from official historiography, while de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* advocates the destruction of inherited aesthetic systems on the basis of a new canon of incomparable poets. In each case, it is the individual personality, and its inclusion in or alienation from a particular group dynamic or typological archetype that refracts the portraitist's particular drive toward complacency or rebellion – the recognition or destruction of a given kind of legitimacy. Against such a historical backdrop, Russian portraitists seem similarly sensitive to how different collections of canonized literary personalities, presented in different ways, can be marshaled as either a centripetally legitimating or centrifugally de-legitimizing force. Indeed, such features of literary portraiture become particularly important for post-1917 memoirs, where they can be used to critique long-held sacred cows (Khodasevich's *Necropolis*, which savages the Symbolist writers whom émigrés held so dear), unite a diverse field of writers against the excesses of Soviet power (Annenkov's *Diary of My Meetings*, which treats Maksim Gor'kii and Nikolai Gumilev as victims thereof), or weave a delicate path between the two in the name of one's own self-fashioning (Chukovskii's various portrait collections, which marshals Chukovskii's connections to the “insider” Gor'kii and “outsider” Aleksandr Blok for different professionalizing purposes during various periods of Soviet history).

Thus, all told, this chapter's genealogical inquiry into collected biography provide us with the language and conceptual framework to more rigorously discuss twentieth-century Russian literary portraiture, and demonstrates the ways in which that literary portraiture might be read as a valuable continuation of centuries-long experiments in life-writing. With these larger, pan-European generic features of collected biography in mind, we should now turn to the Russian

texts themselves in order to explore the historical and cultural circumstances that condition the *fin-de-siècle* flowering of literary portraiture in Russia.

Ch. 1.3 – The Genesis & Trajectory of Russian Literary Portraiture

The earliest Russian practitioners of literary portraiture drew inspiration for their work from turn-of-the-century Western European writers who were themselves influenced by centuries' worth of experiments in collected biography. De Gourmont and Pater remain the primary agents of this European-to-Russian transmission: their particular understanding of the individual personality – an understanding that privileged the literary portrait as the premier chronicler of that personality – dovetailed perfectly with the aesthetic and philosophical inclinations of the early Modernists. As stated in Ch. 1.1, it is this heritage of the literary portrait, steeped in the waters of Decadence and Symbolism, that most Soviet-era scholars ignored outright. They instead sought to establish a more exclusively Russian, more progressive vision of the genre's evolution, on that traced a line of continuity from Gor'kii's portraits back to the works of Aleksandr Gertsen and Vissarion Belinskii. This perspective compelled such scholars to expand the genre beyond discrete texts with specific formal features and appellations (*portret*, *siluet*, etc.): under the umbrella of “portraiture” they now also included ekphrastic moments in longer narrative works.¹⁰¹

These two genealogies – Modernist and progressive – need not be mutually exclusive, however. Both have insights to offer, and neither one necessarily contradicts the other. To be sure, the former genealogy remains correct in its insistence that the *discrete* literary portrait was originally assimilated from Modernist European authors by early Russian Symbolists. The Symbolists treated the genre as means of representing the singular personality, the genius. They effectively filtered the form of the Sainte-Beuve-de Gourmont-Pater portrait through the prototypically turn-of-the-century philosophical valuation of the superhuman individual, the preeminent models of which were Oscar Wilde and Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁰² Thus, the genesis of Russian literary portraiture is undoubtedly a product of Russian Modernism. However, neither the genre nor the outsized individualism that it privileges remain the exclusive province of the Russian Modernists. Maksim Gor'kii's literary works and manner of self-presentation clearly put a premium on heroic, arch-individualist *lichnost'*¹⁰³ – as do his literary portraits of non-Modernist figures (e.g. Lev Tolstoi, Leonid Andreev), which often employ a Nietzschean tone. Marxist ideologues from the early Soviet period likewise appropriated Nietzsche for their own, more political purposes,¹⁰⁴ and correspondingly transformed literary portraiture into a cottage industry that celebrated Soviet cultural and political “supermen.” Thus, both genealogies privilege *lichnost'*, and both make empirically valid claims about the genre's development: Symbolism births the discrete literary portrait; Gor'kii elevates literary portraiture to a robust, privileged position in Soviet life-writing. However, both perspectives still fall short, insofar as they fail to acknowledge the literary portrait's vigorous engagement with the *entirety* of the late imperial

101 This expansive definition of literary portraiture is not a uniquely Soviet phenomenon, of course; see fn. 2.

102 On the mutual identification of Wilde and Nietzsche in the Russian Modernist imagination, see Evgenii Bershtein, “The Russian Myth of Oscar Wilde,” in *Self and Story in Russian History*, ed. Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 168–88. See also Betsy F. Moeller-Sally, “Oscar Wilde and the Culture of Russian Modernism,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 34, no. 4 (1990): 459–72.

103 See Mary Louise Loe, “Gorky and Nietzsche: The Quest for a Russian Superman,” in *Nietzsche in Russia*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 251–74.

104 See the various entries in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*, Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

cultural field and the heterogeneous complexities of Russian modernity. The best-known literary portraitists operating between 1905 and 1917 purposefully bridged distinctions between an esoteric Modernism and a progressive Realism, and further sought to engage the expanding middlebrow audience of late imperial Russia. For obvious reasons, this pivotal moment of development in Russian literary portraiture is occluded in both the Modernist and progressive visions of the genre's evolution. It is precisely this lacuna that Part II of my dissertation will seek to address, thereby restoring literary portraiture's status as a phenomenon deeply rooted in the expansive ferment of late imperial culture.

It would be useful here to flesh out some of the pivotal concerns of the Modernist origins and progressive (or rather Soviet) perspectives on the evolution of literary portraiture to demonstrate both their validity and their lacunae. When combined, these ostensibly distinct but ultimately compatible genealogies create a vital background for my later, more in-depth examinations of specific literary portrait collections. To that end, we must explore the Russian literary portrait's esoteric Symbolist origins, the contours of its existence between 1905 and 1917, its weathering of the 1917 Revolution and its attendant reassessment of *lichnost'*, and its continued development in both the émigré and Soviet contexts.

Early Russian Symbolist Portraiture

We might point to Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's (1865-1941) *Eternal Companions: Portraits from World Literature* (*Vechnye sputniki: portrety iz vseмирnoi literatury* 1896) and Zinaida Vengerova's (1867-1941) multi-volume *Literary Portraits* (*Literaturnye kharakteristiki*, 1897, 1905, and 1910) as the prime foundational examples of dedicated literary portraiture in Russia. Both of these volumes foreground their status as portrait collections and closely resemble (or even directly acknowledge the influence of) their Western European forbears. They thus exemplify a more traditionally Modernist assimilation of the literary portrait model, one that other, subsequent authors would eventually transport beyond its narrowly Symbolist origins.

Merezhkovskii's *Eternal Companions* collected articles that the author had published between 1888 and 1896 in various turn-of-the-century journals, including *The Northern Messenger* (*Severnyi vestnik*), which became an early organ of the Symbolist movement when Akim Volynskii assumed its editorship, and *Russian Thought* (*Russkaia mysl'*), which maintained a more eclectic character. Merezhkovskii's articles concerned various cultural figures whom the author considered to be, for various reasons, “great strangers” to the Russian reading public. Some of these figures, such as Marcus Aurelius, lived in ancient times, while others – such as Henrik Ibsen and Gustav Flaubert – were more contemporary. To these portraits Merezhkovskii juxtaposed short works on Dostoevskii, Goncharov, and Apollon Maikov, and he rounded out the collection with an extended essay on Pushkin. As indicated in the 1896 foreword to the volume, Merezhkovskii expected the ostentatious eclecticism of the collection – as well as, one might imagine, the suggestion that Pushkin and Dostoevskii were “strangers” to the contemporary Russian reader – to provoke some degree of controversy or critical ire.¹⁰⁵ He seeks to forestall such judgments by stating that “every age and every generation demands an explanation of the great writers of the past in its *own* world, its *own* spirit, from its *own* point of view.” He likewise expresses the hope that his readers will see “not the external, but the subjective internal

105 Dmitry Merezhkovsky, *Vechnye sputniki: portrety iz vseмирnoi literatury* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2007), 6

connection [between the portraits] in the *I* itself, in the worldview of the critic.”¹⁰⁶

Merezhkovskii's incorporation of various individuals into a greater community updates the “families” that defined Sainte-Beuve's portraiture. The latter author had profiled individuals who jointly operated in a particular time and place under the sway of a charismatic personality. For the former, however, the unity that exists between writers is a product not of social formation or philosophical affinity, but of individual readerly sensibility.¹⁰⁷ Yet Merezhkovskii also tempers this solipsism by referring to *Eternal Companions* as “notes, a diary of a reader at the end of the nineteenth century,”¹⁰⁸ suggesting that his ostensibly unique experience of these authors' works nevertheless reflects his age. He expounds on a similar sentiment several paragraphs prior: “First and foremost, the critic desires to show the living soul of the author behind the book [...] and then depict the effect of this soul [...] on the mind, the will, the heart, on the entire internal life of the critic, who stands as a representative of a certain generation.”¹⁰⁹ Significantly, this statement blends two seemingly opposed phenomena: aestheticist, Pater-like sentiments about the critic's method and individualized response to a given work of art; and a more quintessentially Russian gesture towards a larger group mentality (“a certain generation”) into which this arch-individualist reader is inscribed.

It is possible to find in Merezhkovskii's portraiture additional stamps of Pater's influence,¹¹⁰ which is particularly reflected in his frequent employment of the word “impression” (*vpechatlenie*). As noted in Ch. 1.2, Pater's preface to *The Renaissance* frequently uses this term in reference to the critic's passive and passionate reception of a given artwork, which gives him unique insights into the creative mentality of that artwork's creator – insights unavailable to, say, sterile scholarly biographism and vulgar Marxist reductionism. Compare this to the following passage from the beginning of Merezhkovskii's portrait of Cervantes:

Субъективная критика именно потому, что в ней есть сочувственное волнение, потому что она отражает живые *впечатления* читателя, в которых всегда до некоторой степени воспроизводится творческий процесс самого автора, может иногда открыть внутренний смысл произведения лучше и вернее, чем критика исключительно объективная, которая стремится только к бесстрастной исторической достоверности.¹¹¹

Because there is a sympathetic excitement in it, because it reflects the living *impressions* of the reader, in which the creative process of the author himself is always reproduced to some degree, subjective criticism can sometimes reveal the

106 Ibid.

107 This would seem to accord with statements from Merezhkovsky's earlier, now more renowned text, the 1892 lecture “On the Reasons for the Decline and New Tendencies of Russian Literature” (“O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury”), in which he chastises Russian literary culture for its lack of genuine *kruzhki*. In the absence of such social affiliations, it becomes the critic's task to forge connections between different artists and their works.

108 Merezhkovsky, *Vechnye sputniki*, 6.

109 Ibid., 5.

110 *Eternal Companions* was published in the same year as the first book of de Gourmont's *Livre des masques*. Its Symbolist orientation notwithstanding, *Livre des masques* exercised greater influence on post-Symbolist Russian critics than it did on early Russian Symbolist writers.

111 Ibid, 86; Merezhkovskii's italics

internal meaning of a work better and more faithfully than exclusively objective criticism, which aspires only to dispassionate, historical authenticity.

Merezhkovskii's *vpechatleniia* produce similar insights into the author's inner world, but also inadvertently yield a curious sedimentation of time. The work produces *living* impressions in its modern audience, while simultaneously *reproducing* the creative process of its long-dead author. This mixing of temporalities resembles Pater's own vision of the Renaissance, populated as it is by clairvoyants, exiled Gods, vampires (to which he notoriously compared the Mona Lisa), and other figures that “radically confuse the boundaries between historical eras, and between what is living and what has passed on.”¹¹² Merezhkovskii's eclectic juxtapositions of nineteenth-century Russian authors and figures from more distant centuries and countries produce a similar effect. All of this hinges on the particular sensitivities of the uniquely capable Impressionist critic.

Notwithstanding his use of the Russian *vpechatlenie* here, Merezhkovskii employs words of more self-evident foreign origin elsewhere in *Eternal Companions*. For example, he refers to the critic's “impressionism” (*impressionizm*) and the “subjective” (*sub"ektivnyi*) nature of his work. Such terminology wears its foreignness and novelty proudly, proclaiming its distance from the Russian critical tradition – a distance that reviews of *Eternal Companions* were quick to point out. Arkadii Gornfel'd, a theoretician of literature and critic for the populist journal *Russian Wealth* (*Russkoe bogatstvo*), immediately equated Merezhkovskii's position with that of modern French critics. He further accused Merezhkovskii of misrepresenting the so-called “objective,” native critical tradition to which these new trends were opposed. For Gornfel'd, there is one profound difference between the two methodologies: true, objective literary criticism consists not in “showing the writer behind the book, but explaining the book through the writer, saturating the artwork with its creator and thereby deepening and complicating its content, strengthening its allegorical nature (*inoskazatel'nost'*).”¹¹³ Critics who belonged to the new school – whose work Gornfel'd explicitly identifies as “all of these portraits, silhouettes, and *kharakteristiki*”¹¹⁴ – are interested solely in the writer's “personality as such”; as a consequence, they treat their portraiture as an end in itself, rather than as a means of explaining other phenomena in a historical context.¹¹⁵ Here we see both distaste for Merezhkovskii's solipsism (a common refrain of Western European responses to so-called subjective or Impressionist criticism) coupled with a more typically Russian plea for socially grounded commentary on literature. For Gornfel'd, these three processes – the intrusion of foreign critical methods, the decline of native ones, and the

112 Jeffrey Wallen, “Alive in the Grave: Walter Pater's Renaissance,” *ELH* 66, no. 4 (1999): 1033–1051, 1043.

Wallen repeatedly demonstrates that Pater sees the Renaissance as a cultural moment that reconciles or unifies antithetical phenomena (such as life and death, present and past) and transgresses temporal boundaries.

Merezhkovskii seems to extend that principle to the origins of European culture itself. His abovementioned comment about the aim of subjective criticism is preceded by a brief musing on the myth of Prometheus, which, in the author's estimation, contained “combinations of feelings, images, and ideas” that were “contained in the breast of,” though not fully cognized by their creators, but were instead “only for distant generations of of readers to appreciate.” Merezhkovsky, *Vechnye sputniki*, 85.

113 qtd. in Merezhkovsky, *Vechnye sputniki*, 620

114 The word *kharakteristika* does not have a truly adequate equivalent in English, given that “characterization” is typically used to describe an activity rather than a genre. Nevertheless, as it implies a description of someone or something's essential characteristics, we might take it to mean “character study,” or perhaps even “portrait,” one of the most frequent translations of the word that I have observed.

115 qtd. in *Ibid.*, 621

advent of literary portraiture – go hand in hand.

One can see this dynamic at work in the writings of Zinaida Vengerova, which are less ostentatiously but more evidentially linked to the influence of Pater than Merezhkovskii's *Eternal Companions*.¹¹⁶ Vengerova, the sister of the famous literary historian Semyon Vengerov, was in fact a literal fellow traveler of European Modernism, having lived significant portions of her life in England and France (and after the Revolution, in Germany and America). One would be hard-pressed to locate that Modernism in Vengerova's style: she is sober and reserved where Pater and Merezhkovskii are ecstatic and expressive. Vengerova's objective was different than theirs, however: she sought to inform the Russian public of the most contemporary trends in foreign literature. A literary critic who might be more accurately described as a cultural intermediary, Vengerova wrote numerous essays that were published in *The Messenger of Europe* (*Vestnik Evropy*) at home and in English and French periodicals (including de Gourmont's *Mercur du France*).¹¹⁷ She also wrote entries for the Brockhaus and Efron encyclopedia, which further suggests her concern for relating objective facts, rather than subjective impressions, to her audience. While these articles do not outwardly resemble Merezhkovskii and Pater's portraits, they are undoubtedly linked to them not only by their name, *Literaturnye kharakteristiki*, which we might reasonably translate as *Literary Portraits*.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, they point towards a future development in the genre: eclectic compilation that simultaneously serves as an assessment and a theorization of the current literary field.

Literary Portraits was a three-volume collection published over the course of thirteen years, and it cemented Vengerova's influence on Russian Modernism. That influence must certainly be traced back to her article "Symbolist Poets in France" ("Poety simvolisty vo Frantsii"), which first appeared published in *The Messenger of Europe* in 1892,¹¹⁹ as well as her

116 Jeffrey Wallen speaks intriguingly about Merezhkovskii's 1901 novel *Leonardo da Vinci* (*Voskresshie bogi, ili Leonardo da Vinchi*) and suggests that its themes, as well as those of Pater's portrait of Leonardo in *The Renaissance* and Freud's essay on narcissism, are intimately connected. Jeffrey Wallen, "Reflection and Self-Reflection: Narcissistic or Aesthetic Criticism?," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34, no. 3 (1992): 301–22. Wallen makes note of Paterian references in Merezhkovskii's novel, but – not being a Russianist by profession – he does not offer any remarks about the possibility of Pater's influence on the Russian author. However, Babel' scholar Philip Ross Bullock also makes a passing observation about the similarities between Pater and Merezhkovskii's treatments of Leonardo, while acknowledging that Pater would be but one among many sources of inspiration for Merezhkovskii's fascination with all Renaissance-related subject matter. Philip Ross Bullock, "The Cruel Art of Beauty: Walter Pater and the Uncanny Aestheticism of Isaak Babel's 'Red Cavalry'," *The Modern Language Review* 104, no. 2 (2009): 499–529, 500.

117 Vengerova's role as an impressively multilingual and well-traveled cultural intermediary between Russia and Western Europe thus extends in both directions, and makes her an extremely interesting and regrettably understudied figure in the history of pan-European Symbolism. For a thorough account of Vengerova's biography and creative work, see Rosina Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova: In Search of Beauty: A Literary Ambassador between East and West* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2004); for some of Vengerova's efforts to publicize contemporary Russian authors abroad, see 83-86 specifically.

118 I have found that scholars from various disciplines tend to leave this and similar words in the original: those who write in English about La Bruyère's often prefer to leave his *Caractères* untranslated, rather than rendering it as the feasible awkward *Characterizations*. Nevertheless, the Greek root of the Russian *kharakteristika* in Vengerova's title makes for a fortuitous connection between and earlier instances of biographical collections and portraiture, including Theophrastus' *Ethikoi Characteres*.

119 Vengerova's article is often credited with awakening various Russian authors, in particular Valerii Briusov, to contemporary French poetry and thereby initiating the Decadent movement in Russia. Georgette Donchin, *The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton, 1958) remains one of the best accounts

complementary article on modern English poetry and painting, “New Tendencies in English Art” (“Novye techeniia v Angliiskom iskusstve,” 1895). She synthesized the observations of these articles into *Literary Portraits*' first volume (published in 1897), which contained short profiles of contemporary Western European authors, as well as several earlier figures (Dante, Francis of Assisi, and Sandro Botticelli) who might be read as their predecessors. Nevertheless, in her private correspondence Vengerova referred to *Literary Portraits* as her “book on Symbolism.”¹²⁰

Notwithstanding its measured tone, the first volume of *Literary Portraits* was met with confusion by critics, who were unable to fathom the eclecticism of its content,¹²¹ a refrain which was frequently marshaled against subsequent collections of literary portraits. Admittedly, Vengerova's preface to *Literary Portraits* provides a weaker justification for the inclusion of its more historically remote materials than does Merezhkovskii's Impressionist *Eternal Companions*.¹²² Ultimately, however, this stretching of historical and conceptual boundaries again shows the affinity of *Literary Portraits* to contemporary Western European portrait collections. Pater's *The Renaissance* begins with two short sketches of life in twelfth-century France and ends with a reflection on the work of eighteenth-century art historian Johann Winckelmann; de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* similarly extends the definition of Symbolism beyond the *fin de siècle*, characterizing it as both a novelty and a deeper philosophical orientation that manifests itself throughout human history.¹²³ Furthermore, Vengerova's *Literary Portraits* embodies – more so than most – the didactic function of portrait collections. Its specified goal is to define contemporary Western cultural phenomena for readers who are presumably unfamiliar with them. It seeks to prescribe a kind of behavior or attitude in those readers – namely, a more opening, welcome stance on novel, challenging, and otherwise esoteric aesthetic phenomena that need more glossing than most. Though Vengerova was not in her own time the only Russian champion or explicator of Symbolism, Decadence, and Wilde-inspired dandyism, we can reasonably conclude that her works of literary portraiture, interconnected with and mutually informed by one another, presented a uniquely cohesive vision of modern European art to an eager audience.

of French influence on turn-of-the-century Russian culture; for Vengerova's place in this story, see 11-15.

120 Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova*, 27.

121 *Ibid.*, 29

122 “The title of 'second Renaissance' has been conferred upon Western European art and literature of the most recent decades. In fact, much in the ideas of the newest artists is reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance by virtue of its idealistic character and similarly by the discord between the thirst of belief and pessimism inherited from previous generations. We have attempted to trace this connection between two epochs, divided from one another by entire centuries, in several sketches dedicated to the literature and art of the Italian Renaissance.” Z. A. Vengerova, *Literaturnye kharakteristiki* (St. Peterburg: A.E. Vineke, 1897), iii. Vengerova obviously accounts for Renaissance-related materials in the content of her actual essays: her explorations of the English authors' affection for Graeco-Roman, medieval, and Renaissance-era material primes her readers for the portraits of Dante and Botticelli. This gives the book an oddly achronological scheme: roughly speaking, the deeper into *Literary Portraits* one goes, the further one is transported back in history.

123 “...We must not allow the insinuation that Symbolism is only a new form of an old allegorism or of the art of personifying an idea in a human being, a landscape, or a narrative...A history of Symbolism would be the history of man himself, since man can assimilate ideas only in symbolized forms.” De Gourmont, *Selected Writings*, 180. The similarly wide definition of Symbolism that Vengerova's *Literary Portraits* puts forth actually proved to be quite prescient: she was among the first literary critics, in either Russia or Western Europe, to characterize William Blake's now widely-recognized status as a spiritual precursor to the Symbolist movement. Neginsky, *Zinaida Vengerova*, 30-31.

Vengerova and Merezhkovskii are undoubtedly Modernist authors, and their literary portraits are undoubtedly Modernist creations. *Eternal Companions* and *Literary Portraits* are the purest intermediaries between *fin-de-siècle* Western European and Russian literary portraiture – pure because they are still primarily assimilating both Modernist content (Vengerova's profiles of Symbolist poets) and Modernist form (Merezhkovskii's Impressionism) for a Russian readership. Nevertheless, their collections exemplify the spectrum within which turn-of-the-century Russian literary portraiture would continue to operate after it shed its exclusively Modernist origins. Her *Literary Portraits* aspires to an objective and holistic perspective on contemporary European culture, while his *Eternal Companions* gives itself over to a subjective and impressionistic perspective of one reader's peculiar proclivities – tendencies that define the literary portrait collections profiled in Part II. Charges of solipsism and incoherence likewise persisted even in the reception of portrait collections *not* authored by Symbolists. Although the Modernists pioneered the literary portrait form in turn-of-the-century Russia, subsequent portraitists turned to that form for a more expansive purpose: developing holistic accounts of modern, rather than exclusively *Modernist*, Russian culture.

Permutations of Literary Portraiture Between the Revolutions

Merezhkovskii and Vengerova's portraiture (to say nothing of Pater and de Gourmont's) continued to exert influence on writers who were variously connected to the Symbolist movement, such as Andrei Belyi and Innokentii Annenskii.¹²⁴ However, the most important subsequent developments in the genre occurred beyond the confines of Symbolist aesthetics. Indeed, the wider social and cultural changes witnessed by the final twelve years of tsarist Rule provided fertile ground for literary portraiture's continued growth. Portraiture's primary orientation towards Symbolist- and Nietzschean-inspired *lichnost'* did not so much shift direction as it accommodated a new, urgent set of inquiries into the relationship between personhood and modernity.

From a literary historical perspective, the most important variable in this equation is the Russian literary portrait's originary orientation towards the individual personality. If early examples of the genre privileged various turn-of-the-century models of the archly performed individualism (the aesthetic martyr, the Decadent dandy, the Nietzschean and/or Wildean superman, the uniquely sensitive Impressionist critic), then subsequent portrait collections penned by Symbolists and non-Symbolists alike began to foreground the interrelation *between* the portrait subjects and, correspondingly, their relationship to the wider social sphere in which they operated. Such portraiture continued to acknowledge its subjects' individual aesthetics and authorial *lichnosti*; however, these are shown to be distinct in degree, not in kind, from those of other contemporary authors.

¹²⁴ For example, one can see its traces in Andrei Belyi's *Arabesques* (*Arabeski* 1911), which compiled a variety of the author's writings on Symbolism into a single volume. One section of this work is "On Russian Writers," where Belyi provides a series of *siluety* (silhouettes) of authors whom he either admired from afar or met with individually. These pieces trade in ekphrasis and individual characterology in an attempt to complement the more intellectual content of Belyi's articles. Innokentii Annenskii's *Books of Reflections* (*Knigi otrazhenii*, 1906 and 1909) were arguably the apotheosis of so-called Impressionistic or "subjective" criticism as it was practiced in Russian Modernism. Contemporary commentators likewise called the works of Mikhail Gershenzon, a critic and historian who ran in Symbolist circles, impressionistic portraits.

These comparisons frequently traverse boundaries that were still fluid in the literary field of the time, but have become ossified in subsequent literary history. The Symbolist poet Blok, the Realist prose writer Gor'kii, and Artsybashev's purveyor of "ethical pornography" (to use Chukovskii's phrase) are shown to be just as alike as they are different. Russia's changing political landscape, rapid advancements in technology and urban life, shifting understandings of the integral self as a social and psychological phenomenon – in short, the conditions of modernity – simply produce a different aesthetic response in each of them. Thus, we see a decisive turn away from Merezhkovskii's solipsism, in which individual sensibility provides a contingent linkage between authors, times, and cultures. This brand of criticism is replaced by a complementary (re)engagement with contemporary history and society, and a (re)focusing on the features of a shared existence. In advancing this vision of homogeneity through heterogeneity, portrait collections frequently acquire a more obviously foregrounded comparative structure, an architectural principle that motivates the particular sequence of portraits: the way one moves through the "gallery" conditions one's understanding of the cultural field.

I intend to speak more about this immediate topic in the individual chapters that constitute Part II of this dissertation. Portrait collections by Iulii Aikhenval'd (Ch. 2.2) and Kornei Chukovskii (Ch. 2.3) develop culturological and sociological orientations for their portrait galleries, and use them to argue for a deeper unity underlying a multifaceted contemporaneity – one that might be intelligible to Russia's burgeoning urban, middlebrow readership. So too is Maksimilian Voloshin's (Ch. 2.4) literary portraiture defined by a kind of holistic inquiry into (and critique of) the Symbolist subculture: it situates the Symbolists' literary oeuvres and life-creative mythmaking within a comparative framework, showing how these authors constructed a group identity and refashioned their original, individual selves, often in a false or potentially misleading manner. I will discuss such issues in greater depth in Part II, but we might now consider two other inter-Revolutionary developments in the literary portrait genre that will guide our subsequent interpretation – and further indicate the kinship between the ostensibly incompatible Modernist and progressive genealogies of the genre.

If literary portrait collections are driven by a holistic impulse, then that holism often falls short, and remains prone to selection bias, as one sees in the idiosyncratic analytic frameworks of particular portrait "galleries." One of the most exemplary manifestations of this trend is the biographical and critical anthology *Russian Literature of the Twentieth Century: 1890-1910* (*Ruskaia literatura XX veka: 1890-1910*, 1914). Edited by Semen Vengerov, who had theretofore been a scholar and historian of nineteenth-century Russian literature, this volume consisted of both critical essays and auto/biographical portraits penned by and about contemporary Russia's leading authors of most every genre and aesthetic tendency. As Vengerov's preface states, *Russian Literature* represents "an attempt to indicate the unity of literary psychology of the years 1890-1910."¹²⁵ He goes on to suggest that the designation "Neo-Romantic" is the most accurate, most all-embracing epithet for the culture of the moment, encompassing the work of Konstantin Bal'mont and Maksim Gor'kii alike.¹²⁶ This designation

125 S. A Vengerov, *Ruskaia literatura XX veka: 1890-1910* (Munich: Fink, 1972), ix.

126 The seams in Vengerov's holism show. For many, Anton Chekhov, the greatest writer of that time, was (and remains) a figure who effectively straddled the Realist and Modernist movements. Vengerov, however, finds Chekhov entirely alien to his vision of turn-of-the-century culture, and he labels Chekhov the "representative of an old literary dynasty" (33). Consequently, Chekhov is present in *Russian Literature* only in the introduction, where he is labeled as an exception; he receives no portrait.

remains an extremely telling one: it is an umbrella for pivotal turn-of-the-century tropes resembling those of early nineteenth-century Romantic culture (the reassessment of all values, God-searching, etc.). These bubble up throughout *Russian Literature*, and, I would argue, are largely meant to unite Gor'kii, practitioner of Romantic hero worship,¹²⁷ with the Symbolist poets and prose authors, whose Silver Age metaphysics and aesthetics were deeply indebted to the earlier Golden Age of Russian literature.¹²⁸ The wider, three-volume structure of *Russian Literature* was meant to reify such connections between these nominally diverse figures and argue for the overall unity of the late imperial literary field. However, Vengerov's "Neo-Romantic" epithet seems both too reductive and too reliant on the past. The governing holism of the portrait collections profiled in Part II are often far subtler and more expansive: they typically focus not just on matters of aesthetics and philosophy, but on the social conditions that produce individual authors' aesthetics and on the market factors (e.g. the rise of almanacs and miscellany) that influence people's readings thereof.

We might pause on the case of Maksim Gor'kii, who occupies a vital and contradictory position in the history of literary portraiture, and remains a lynchpin in the progressive genealogy thereof. He is both a keystone in multiple critics' portrait galleries and one of the foremost *authors* of literary portraiture himself. His literary portraits were mostly compiled and published together following his death, which means that they have little relevance for any discussion of portrait collections' architecture, at least as far as the matter of authorial intent is concerned. However – as Soviet critics were correct to point out – Gor'kii's literary portraits exerted a great deal of influence on the way subsequent Russian portraitists constructed *lichnost'*, both their subjects' and their own. His monumental piece "Lev Tolstoi" is memoir-portrait, and helped move the genre beyond its theretofore predominantly literary critical mode. It remains the most highly regarded and widely imitated portrait in this regard. Gor'kii worked on "Lev Tolstoi" throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, but did not publish the piece until 1919, whereupon it was hailed as a masterpiece and continued to garner praise of various twentieth-century Russian writers and critics.¹²⁹

The allegorical dimension of "Lev Tolstoi" as Gor'kii's *self*-portrait was also widely imitated by subsequent Soviet portraitists. In critiquing Tolstoi's personal treatment of women and scorn for literature (among many other topics), Gor'kii employs takes on a quasi-Oedipal tone: Tolstoi is the father figure whom Gor'kii adores, who furnishes him with fitful respect and esteem, but who remains an obstacle to be overcome if Gor'kii is to be his own person. The ostensibly biographical "Lev Tolstoi" ultimately serves a more autobiographical purpose for Gor'kii: it becomes a tool of self-definition and self-advancement, a means of situating oneself vis-a-vis one's idols and contemporaries¹³⁰ who are possessed of cultural capital that one might

127 This is to say nothing of Leonid Andreev, Ivan Bunin, and other writers who, like Gor'kii, operated on the aesthetic margins of Modernism and occasionally ran in Symbolist circles, but still maintained a more generally Realist/nineteenth-century orientation towards their work's content and/or tendentious fiction.

128 On connections between Russian literature's so-called Silver and Golden Ages, see Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, eds., *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (University of California Press, 1992).

129 As Donald Fanger notes, the work was praised as one of the most exemplary treatments of Tolstoi by figures such as Boris Eikhenbaum and Lidiia Ginzburg, but Kornei Chukovskii as well; Maksim Gorky, *Gorky's Tolstoy & Other Reminiscences: Key Writings by and About Maxim Gorky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 15.

130 On this feature of literary portraiture, see Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s,"

deploy for oneself. Admittedly, subsequent Soviet portraitists articulated their personal intellectual genealogies and professional connections without the largely Oedipal edge of “Lev Tolstoi.” (See Chukovskii’s grappling with this problem in Ch. 3.3). However, Gor’kii’s portrait nevertheless opens up space for subsequent portraitists to construct authorial *lichnost’* not merely on the basis of an aggregate literary oeuvre, but on the fissures between literature and life, between public and private personae (see Khodasevich and Annenkov, Chs. 3.2 and 3.4).

Even if it inspired anti-Modernist trends in subsequent Soviet literary portraiture, “Lev Tolstoi,” was steeped in turn-of-the-century and even explicitly Modernist traditions, a fact that the Soviets’ progressive genealogy of literary portraiture was keen to ignore. Gor’kii’s subject is a larger-than-life individual, one who is unbound by tradition and fate, a god (as Gor’kii refers to him at several points in the text). Indeed, “Lev Tolstoi” is as aggressive a portrait of Nietzschean individuality as one can hope for. This alone distinguishes Gor’kii’s portrait from Russian Marxist perspectives on Tolstoi, whom Lenin famously treated as an artistic genius who was nevertheless blinded by his landowning gentry milieu. Nevertheless, Gor’kii presents his reader with a harsh critique of what we might facetiously label Tolstoi’s late “body of work” – the towering public image that he cultivated for himself in the final two decades of his life.¹³¹ “Lev Tolstoi” opens up space for ironizing and distance, not only between an author’s life and works (which Voloshin’s literary criticism anticipates; see Ch. 2.4), but between contradictory, irreconcilable, but still essential facets of an integral *lichnost’*. In this, Gor’kii’s portrait of his mentor resembles the biography and counter-hagiography produced by high Modernist English writers such as Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey,¹³² another sign that the progressive and Modernist genealogies of literary portraiture need not contradict one another.

We lack space to discuss Vengerov and Gor’kii in greater detail, but moving into subsequent chapters, we should nevertheless remain cognizant of what their pivotal, inter-Revolutionary examples of the literary portrait genre represent. Vengerov shows that literary critical holism remains a consistent (if often quixotic) feature of pre-Revolutionary literary portraiture: individual *lichnosti* might be more readily compared than the divergent aesthetic trends to which those *lichnosti* adhere, but one must then look to the fabric of a given society at a given for a consistent analytical framework. Hence my preference for the designation of “late imperial culture” over “Modernism” or “the Silver Age.” Gor’kii shows us that the synthetic operations of literary portraiture might be marshaled for memoir as well as criticism. However, “Lev Tolstoi” demonstrates that life-writing virtually demands a more complex vision of *lichnost’*, one that embraces contradiction and the irreducible components of individual personality. Indeed, we shall see such complexities of representation swirl around portraits of Gor’kii in Part III.

Permutations of Literary Portraiture After the 1917 Revolution

Literary portraiture flourished in the hothouse of Silver Age salons, but then began to treat a variety of non-Modernist figures and gained traction among the wider, more middlebrow

Russian Review 59, no. 3 (2000): 327–52.

131 On this cult of personality and its influence on public perception of Tolstoi’s last days, see William Nickell, *The Death of Tolstoy: Russia on the Eve, Astapovo Station, 1910* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

132 On the role of biography in English Modernism, see Saunders, *Self Impression* and Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses*.

audience of late imperial Russia. What relevance did the literary portrait have for post-Revolutionary culture? If Russian literary portraiture as practiced between 1905 and 1917 was already amenable to articulations of a shared cultural identity, then one would think that it could be readily adapted to the conditions of Soviet letters. One could equally expect that Soviet culture – especially as it moved towards the Gor'kii-inspired Socialist Realist model of the early 1930s – would have continued need of Nietzschean supermen, inspiring individual *lichnosti* on who might lead the masses out of darkness. This turns out to be true, but only to a certain extent. We might now consider some of these developments, as they occur in both the Soviet and émigré contexts, so that our exploration of post-Revolutionary literary portraiture in Part III might take place against some semblance of a historical backdrop.

Aleksandr Voronskii's literary portraiture is extremely relevant in this respect. An editor of and literary critic for the eclectic thick journal *Red Virgin Soil* (*Krasnaia nov'*) from the years 1921 to 1927, Voronskii was thoroughly familiar with the most contemporary authors and their works. He wrote two two-volume collections of literary portraiture in this period – the second, *Literary Portraits* (*Literaturnye portrety*, 1928), being a fuller, more comprehensive version of the first, which was published under the title *Literary Types* (*Literaturnye tipy*, 1925). Voronskii profiled everyone from Andrei Belyi, Maksim Gor'kii, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Vsevolod Ivanov to, intriguingly, Knut Hamsun and Marcel Proust. In the preface to *Portraits*, Voronskii notes that *Types* occasioned “criticism for his predilection for literary portraits,” in which some had found grounds for the author's “betrayal of Marxism.” To these critics Voronskii responded that “the literary portrait possesses one quality: it compels the critic to constantly remember that ideas and feelings in an artistic work live a concrete, objective life, that they are individually refracted and must be *aesthetically* sensed.”¹³³

The conflict reflected in these comments can be readily mapped onto early post-Revolutionary debates about the role of the individual in Soviet society. Stalin, for example, railed against any doctrine that placed the primacy of *lichnost'*, the liberation of the individual, as a necessary precondition for the advancement of a socialist society. Such a perspective harkened back to the more originary Russian Marxist perspective on individuality professed by Georgii Plekhanov, who famously claimed that masses, rather than individuals, make history. More pragmatic and culturally inclined figures of the 1920s, such as Lev Trotskii and Anatolii Lunacharskii (with whom Voronskii was associated), instead saw *lichnost'* as something to be instrumentalized: the creative personality, developed *within* the collective, would stand as a testament to the richness of the society that birthed it.¹³⁴ Thus, while certain more orthodox Bolsheviks treated the literary portrait as a deviation from Marxist doctrine, someone like Voronskii treated it as a pragmatic, diagnostically necessary reflection of a literary historical moment that was still in development. Voronskii repeatedly labels this moment a renaissance (*renessans*), suggesting that Soviet Russia has pioneered an exit from another “dark ages,” one dominated by capitalism's stranglehold on culture and everyday life. Such echoes across distinct cultures and epochs are pleasingly reflected in Voronskii's championing of the literary portrait collection. If cultural rebirths in Renaissance Italy and Soviet Russia both produce scholarly and critical interest in individual creative personalities, then the collected biography format most

133 Aleksandr Voronskii, *Literaturnye portrety* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1928), v. 2, 10; italics in original.

134 On these post-Revolutionary debates, and the Soviet updating of German Romanticism-derived notions of *lichnost'*, see Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, 190-4.

capable of cataloging those personalities likewise flowers during both cultural moments.

Russian literary critical portraiture from this period tends to be in line with that of Voronskii: it is produced by figures who express a pragmatic position vis-a-vis pre-Soviet culture, and who retain a positive orientation towards individual *lichnosti*. Il'ia Erenburg likewise produced a volume called *Portraits of Russian Poets* (*Portrety russkikh poetov*, 1922) that presents itself as a primer on Russian Modernism, stretching from Anna Akhmatova to Marina Tsvetaeva: after a brief ekphrasis and personal assessment of a particular poet's aesthetic, Erenburg samples a variety of short poetic works written by that individual. Even more tellingly, Lunacharskii penned his own *Literary Silhouettes* (*Literaturnye siluety*, 1925) that presented a sympathetic, if still critical gallery of (almost) exclusively eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian authors. The collection was largely concerned with establishing a corpus of proto-revolutionary literary figures, and Lunacharskii's tone consequently often resembles that of a confident, orthodox Marxist orator. However, he also speaks about the “dangerous absurdity” of waging wars on past authors whose revolutionary credentials are lacking. He favors a “serious Marxist re-evaluation of our cultural past” rather than absolute rejection, recalling how Marx could simultaneously rail against bourgeois culture while appreciating Balzac.¹³⁵ He cautions against the absolute dismissal of *lichnost'* from consideration, saying (of Aleskandr Pushkin, naturally) that “a great time can receive its reflection only in a great person.”¹³⁶ This dual emphasis on individuation and the integration of distinct epochs and cultural communities thus persists into the Soviet period.

Similarly minded scholars also found in literary portraiture refuge from otherwise objectionable critical trends. Leonid Grossman, author of pioneering works on Dostoevskii and Pushkin, was loath to give himself over entirely to Formalism. While adopting his contemporaries' vocabulary, he refrained from conducting exclusively Formalist analysis of literary works, to which the introductory essay of his portrait collection, *From Pushkin to Blok* (*Ot Pushkina do Bloka*, 1926), testifies. He objected to the Formalists' “monism,” and insisted that an author's individuated style necessarily collapses differences between technical matters of form and more biographical (and inescapable) matters of content.¹³⁷ In this focus on individual style, we hear echoes of pre-Revolutionary Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's formally-oriented literary critical portraiture (Chs. 2.2 and 2.3), as well as Khodasevich and Chukovskii's post-Revolutionary marshaling of literary portraiture against the perceived excesses of Formalism (Chs. 3.2 and 3.3). In each of these cases, just as post-Revolutionary criticism seeks to mediate between the old and the new, the conventional methodology of literary portraiture seeks a more mediated path between technical examinations of form and fallacious biographism.

As mentioned in conjunction with Gor'kii's “Lev Tolstoi,” the most vital transformation witnessed by post-Revolutionary literary portraiture is its adaptation to the needs of memoir writing. Among Russian émigré authors, this trend was fairly pronounced, and emerged fairly early. Literary portraiture lent itself well to memorializations of the Silver Age, and this was again facilitated by the genre's serendipitous relationship with periodicals – primarily those Berlin- and Paris-based literary journals, such as *Contemporary Notes* (*Sovremennye zapiski*), and newspapers, such as *The Rudder* (*Rul'*), that had small but dedicated and extremely culturally

135 Anatolii Lunacharskii, *Literaturnye siluety* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 33.

136 Ibid., 45.

137 L. P. Grossman, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka: etiuudy i portrety* (Moscow: Sovremennye problemy, 1926), 5-6.

literate Russian readerships. One can point to a number of Symbolist-associated authors – Zinaida Gippius, Georgii Ivanov, Vladislav Khodasevich – whose memoir-portraits of their contemporaries populated these periodicals. As suggested by the title of *Necropolis*, Khodasevich's 1939 compilation of memoir-portraits, many of these works effectively functioned as obituaries for individual authors and, indeed, the entire culture that they represented. Portrait collections that specifically considered the leading figures of the late imperial and early Soviet periods continued to be published by émigré Russians well into the twentieth century. Such works included Sergei Makovskii's *Portraits of My Contemporaries* (1955), which came out under the auspices of the Chekhov Press in New York, and Iurii Annenkov's 1962 *Diary of My Meetings* (*Dnevnik moikh vstrech*), which I will specifically consider in Ch. 3.4.

However, memoir-portraits represented a no less important part of Soviet literary culture, in which they served a rather different function. In the hands of Soviet authors, they represented not merely as a means of memorialization, but also an instrument of professionalization. Most such memoir-portraits fall under the rubric of what Barbara Walker has labeled the “contemporaries genre,” in which “the author seeks self-understanding and self-explanation not by looking inward [...] but rather by focusing outward with an intense gaze on one particular community as it is located in time: that highly complex and divided social group which is often called the Russian intelligentsia.”¹³⁸ Walker is concerned less with the poetics of this genre than with its sociological function, which (particularly in the immediate post-Revolutionary context) was to build up and maintain patron-mentor networks that pivoted around particularly charismatic and connected individuals, such as Gor'kii and Lunacharskii. To this end, many of these memoir-portraits are only incidentally concerned with *lichnost'*, and focus more on anecdotes demonstrating the author's association with the person or people being represented. (Chukovskii's memoir-portraits, which otherwise resemble Walker's paradigms, are an exception to this rule, as I will explain in Ch. 3.3.) As a constructively gossipy instrument for the maintenance of intergenerational continuity,¹³⁹ rather than a means of marking one's absolute distance from a past (Silver) age, the Soviet memoir-portrait possessed a different set of functions than its émigré equivalent.

Memoir-portraits proved to be quite durable – and malleable – amidst the vicissitudes of Soviet culture. Gor'kii's contributions to the genre, compiled into galleries after his death and canonized by their inclusion in the *Lives of Remarkable People* series, were prominent examples. As per the progressive genealogy of the genre, Gor'kii's portraits inspired the many prominent writers who turned to the genre in the 1960s and 70s.¹⁴⁰ Among them we find Kornei Chukovskii, Valentin Kataev, Veniamin Kaverin, Fyodor Gladkov, Konstantin Paustovskii, and others.¹⁴¹ While the sheer number of such works testify to the genre's vitality, our discussion of Soviet memoir-portraits will focus almost exclusively on Chukovskii. I choose to limit my material for reasons both practical and conceptual. My primary interest lies in literary portraiture's relationship to late imperial culture, which Chukovskii's work evidences more than others'.

138 Walker, “On Reading Soviet Memoirs,” 329.

139 Ibid., 336-7.

140 Walker further notes that the contemporaries genre somewhat faded after various *kruzhki* were consolidated into the official writers' union in 1932, and notes that, from the early 1930s to Stalin's death in 1953, the personality cult that sprung up around the Soviet leader left little space for alternative such cults. A similar dearth of memoir-portrait collections in seems to follow suit.

141 See Barakhov, *Literaturnyi portret* for considerations of their work.

Furthermore, Chukovskii's evolving personal engagement with the genre felicitously bridges the multiple divides of this dissertation: between Parts II and III, between contemporary and retrospective considerations of late imperial culture, and between literary criticism and memoir. Chukovskii returned to the genre throughout his life, tracing the contours of its larger development thereby. Notwithstanding Gor'kii's nominal centrality to progressive accounts of Russian literary portraiture's evolution and Chukovskii's distance from the Symbolist milieu that birthed the genre, Chukovskii might be the most characteristic practitioner of Russian literary portraiture, as he himself seemed to know: "I (perhaps too late) understood that my most basic calling is character studies, literary portraits, and it was wonderful to work on them."¹⁴²

Conclusion

Such is the general trajectory of the literary portrait genre in its twentieth-century Russian context. The particular case studies that I have chosen to examine more closely in subsequent chapters describe that very trajectory. Furthermore, they demonstrate the points of continuity with the late imperial moment that was foundational for the genre's Russian incarnation. While they share common concerns and motifs, they each possess idiosyncratic, arresting qualities all their own that merit unpacking. Most importantly, they remain in dialog with one another – quite directly in some cases, more obliquely in others – thereby allowing us to see the generic development of literary portraiture not as a series of isolated data points, but as a struggle for how the genre might be defined and to what subject matter and which *lichnosti* it might be applied. Much of this conflict centers on the best way to understand the leading lights of Symbolism and what we now call the Silver Age of Russian culture. We should recognize, however, that these collections repeatedly find the means to best understand the Symbolists Aleksandr Blok and Valerii Briusov *outside* their Symbolist *kruzhki*: they are better examined against the backdrop of late imperial Russia's wider literary field, and calibrated not against one another, but against figures like Leonid Andreev and Maksim Gor'kii. These writers' connection to the aesthetic and philosophical phenomenon of Russian Symbolism is tenuous at best, but literary portraitists found points of continuity in between Blok, Briusov, Andreev, and Gor'kii's construction of their individual *lichnosti*. In recognizing this common ground between ostensibly irreconcilable writers, we in turn recognize the potential for the literary portrait genre to productively remap literary history.

142 qtd. in Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Pamiati detstva* (Moscow: Vremia, 2012), 210.

Chapter 2.1: The Literary Portrait as Criticism in Late Imperial Russia

In Chapter 1.3, I asserted that the first true literary portrait collections in Russia were characteristic documents of the Decadent and early Symbolist movements. Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's *Eternal Companions* fetishized individual *lichnost'* in various ways: the volume's constituent portraits celebrated specific artists as willful creators of their own poetic worlds; Merezhkovskii gave free reign to his idiosyncratic aesthetic sensibilities; and, by eschewing the social bent typical of his nineteenth-century critical forbears, the author privileged a subjective kind of literary criticism that was pejoratively labeled "Impressionist." Zinaida Vengerova's *Literary Portraits*, on the other hand, sought to present its subjects in a more objective light. Vengerova's travels through England and France exposed her to numerous strains of modern European culture, and her portraits of contemporary authors became something of a cultural survey. Turn-of-the-century Russian authors turned to *Literary Portraits* as a source of inspiration and influence, a means of engaging with the most modern – and Modernist – trends in European culture.

This dialectic between impressionistic subjectivity and classificatory objectivity persisted into the literary portraiture of the early twentieth century. However, the tenor of the dialectic changed, insofar as portrait collections moved beyond the esoteric confines of their Decadent- and Symbolist-inclined readerships. Indeed, the *portret* (and works bearing the metonymically related appellations *siluet* and *kharakteristika*) acquired a place in the wider market as a specific type of literary criticism, broadly applicable to the heterogeneous literary phenomena of the cultural moment and palatable to a wide audience. We will explore this trend via three collections of literary portraiture: Iulii Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes of Russian Writers*, Kornei Chukovskii's *From Chekhov to Our Days*, and the portraits that were to be compiled in Maksimilian Voloshin's wide-ranging collection *Faces of Creativity*. Before examining three portrait galleries on an individual basis, we should briefly situate this popular turn of the literary portrait genre its social and historical context so that the stakes of the genre's evolution might become clearer.

The first and most obvious reason for the portrait's colonization of the wider literary market was that, as a discrete text, it was short and compact. Merezhkovskii's portraits, as they were published in *The Northern Messenger* (*Severnyi vestnik*) and *Russian Thought* (*Russkaia mysl'*), could run twenty pages or more – not long, certainly, but still more essay than article. However, the essentially synthetic nature of the portrait genre – that is, its ability to fashion a vision of authorial *lichnost'* from a selection of representative literary works – allowed for even greater degrees of economy. This feature thus made the form amenable not only to declining thick journals, but to their ascendant cousin, the newspaper. Many of the portraits in Kornei Chukovskii's *From Chekhov*, for example, were originally published in the Kadet newspaper *Speech* (*Rech'*); much of Maksimilian Voloshin's portraiture first appeared Aleksei Suvorin's daily *Rus'*.

At the same time, other developments in the literary market created opportunities for portraits to be compiled and published in a discrete volume, the compendium (*sbornik*). Compendiums of literary criticism were, again, an established facet of Modernist literary culture; one could point to not only Merezhkovskii and Vengerova's collections, also but Konstantin Bal'mont's *Mountain Peaks* (*Gornye vershiny*, 1904), Innokentii Annenskii's abovementioned *Books of Reflections*, and Briusov's *Distant and Close* (*Dalekie i blizkie*, 1912) as the premier

examples. However, these sumptuous Symbolist texts were produced for a select readership, frequently at a financial loss to the publisher. Critical compendiums soon became a viable (and financially tenable) enterprise for more popular critics, who cultivated wider readerships via their work for newspapers and often courted controversy in their skewering of Russian culture's sacred cows. Chukovskii, whose mocking tone and accessibility made him something of an *enfant terrible* on the critical scene, saw his *From Chekhov* released by the publishing arm of the M. O. Vol'f company, which owned many prominent bookstores in pre-Revolutionary Petersburg and catered to a broadly middle class and urban audience. Iulii Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* courted middlebrow audiences, whose demand helped the collection acquire no fewer than five pre-Revolutionary reprintings, some in runs as large as 3000 copies. Symbolist writers who objected to Aikhenval'd's treatment of their compatriots could not hope to achieve such numbers; nor could the socially-inclined critics who objected to Aikhenval'd's dismissal of their enterprise's Belinskiian heritage.

Finally, the portrait collection's wide availability was mirrored by its wide accessibility and, by extension, its educational utility. The esoteric concerns of the Decadent and Symbolist portrait collections often precluded any audience save the cultural elite. The self-proclaimed enlightener Chukovskii instead saw the portrait collection as an ideal means of reaching the increasingly literate, but not particularly discriminating, Russian populace. The compact and synthetic portrait introduced an author's oeuvre in a straightforward and often entertaining fashion; the portrait gallery format permitted the novice reader to digest a telescoped version of contemporary Russian literary history and develop their ability to draw distinctions between authors, camps, and movements. The same might be said of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, whose constituent portraits were originally published not only in the Kadet-directed *Russian Thought*, but also the pedagogical journals *Educated Discourse* (*Nauchnoe slovo*) and *The Education Messenger* (*Vestnik vospitaniia*). In such circumstances, the literary portrait's connection to critical Impressionism¹⁴³ took on a different valence. The mass reader could not be expected to possess the cultural erudition or historical knowledge of a Merezhkovskii or Vengerova; the necessity of avoiding deeply historical or biographical context precluded the investigation of anything but the surface features of a given body of texts, and the reader's sheer experience of a particular author took center stage as a result. These factors yielded the more popular brand of so-called Impressionist criticism nominally practiced by Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and even

143 The designation "Impressionism" bears some historicization outside of its literary critical context, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Its self-evident origin is in the French *impressionnisme*, the appellation premier artistic movement in French painting of the 1870s and 80s. The word soon shed its exclusive roots in French language and painting, expanding into a catchall term for both visual and literary art of the period that sought to portray the vicissitudes of human perception. Scholars have argued that literary and artistic Impressionism forged a path from the traditional aesthetic of Realism towards the formal experimentation of Modernism. In Russia, the appellations *impressionizm* and *impressionist* seem to have emerged in the early 1890s, when Dmitrii Merezhkovskii used them (alongside the more etymologically native *vpechatlitel'nost'*) to describe literature that exceeded the aesthetic of Realism. In his famous 1892 essay "On the Causes of Decline and New Trends in Contemporary Russian Literature," Merezhkovsky designated Anton Chekhov, Vsevolod Garshin, and (most curiously) Ivan Turgenev evidencing *impressionizm* or *vpechatlitel'nost'*; see Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, *Estetika i kritika: v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), v. 1, 137-231, esp. the extended footnote on 210-211. Although such designations are comparatively rare in modern scholarship (Anglo-American scholars occasionally label Chekhov and Garshin as Impressionists), it had a lively cache in turn-of-the-century culture.

Voloshin.

Thus, literary portraiture proved quite amenable to the literary market of late imperial Russia, which was defined by (amongst many other features, obviously) the financial feasibility of discrete collections of previously published works (miscellanies, almanacs, collected works, etc.)¹⁴⁴ and a growing audience of middlebrow or novice readers that Russian intellectuals, educators, and publishers sought to enlighten (and profit from thereby). In other words, the popular turn of the portrait collection was produced by the felicitous harmony of the portrait's longstanding generic features with the peculiar socioeconomic conditions of the cultural market of late imperial Russia. Conversely, we should also consider, from a literary historical perspective, what these portrait collections *themselves* produced, which was a holistic perspective on the late imperial Russian literary field. Recent scholarship has sought to widen the concept of the Silver Age beyond its traditionally Modernist- and Symbolist-dominated treatments. Turn-of-the-century portrait collections can be particularly helpful in this regard, not only because their holistic treatments of the literary field were already widely inclusive, but because the pivotal figures in them (such as Maksim Gor'kii and Leonid Andreev) are often those in whose name the concept of the Silver Age is being widened today.¹⁴⁵

To recover that perspective, I wish to explore in this chapter the three portrait collections mentioned above: Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes of Russian Writers*, Chukovskii's *From Chekhov to Our Days*, and Voloshin's *Faces of Creativity*, the last of which will serve as a transition into the final, portrait-as-memoir section of this dissertation. Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's conceptions of the literary field of their time were informed by the features of the critical genre in which they worked: that is, by the portrait's travel between high culture (the realm of the thick and sumptuously produced journal, Symbolism, and the educated reader) and middlebrow (the realm of the newspaper, Realism and "boulevard literature," and the uncultured or novice reader), as well as the comparative format that the portrait collection invites. Voloshin, for his part, cleaved more towards the esoteric literary tastes that defined Symbolism: *Faces of Creativity* does not deign to address mass culture, nor does it strive to seek as wide an audience as Chukovskii and Aikhenval'd's works. However, like Chukovskii, Voloshin does interrogate the mass-market miscellany (*al'manakh*) as an eminently modern cultural phenomenon; furthermore, the comparative format likewise remains a prevalent feature of his collection, and that format yields its own peculiar holistic treatment of late imperial Russian culture.

Whatever the differences between Voloshin's project and those of Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, all three critics make many of the same intriguing critical moves. For example, each

144 M.O. Vol'f, founder of the eponymous nineteenth-century publishing company, remarked apropos of discrete volumes of literary fiction in the 1870s, "We Russian publishers cannot risk, cannot print more than 1000, 1200 copies, even of well-known authors, because one cannot count on such high demand"; qtd. in A. I Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu: i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009), 260. The more frequent production of critical compendiums in the early twentieth century thus represents a significant change from nineteenth-century publication practices.

145 Again, see N. A Bogomolov, *Vokrug "Serebriannogo veka": stat'i i materialy* (Moskva: NLO, 2010), 8-10. See too White, *Memoirs and Madness*, which situates Leonid Andreev between Realist and Modernist aesthetics via the memoir-portraits produced on him by Gor'kii, Aleksandr Blok, Kornei Chukovskii, Andrei Belyi, and others. Recent work in Russian cultural studies has broadly endeavored to bring nominally distinct readerships, social circles, and aesthetic camps under the same interpretative umbrella; see Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, eds., *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

employs the comparative format of the portrait collection to assert common ground between seemingly incompatible authors; specifically, it is the oeuvre of Leonid Andreev that most frequently serves that function, allowing each critic to calibrate the relationship between Realist and Modernist aesthetics. At the same time, the critics' divergent worldviews (such as their various characterizations of the Impressionist trend in criticism) condition key differences in the poetics of their individual portrait collections: put simply, the organizational principles at work within each collection produce motivated juxtapositions between specific authors, and yield different conclusions about the late imperial literary field as such.

A similar and instructive approach to the poetics of anthological volumes has recently been undertaken by Jon Stone, who suggests that late and in many ways “posthumous” publications of the Russian Symbolist movement (Blok's collected works, Bely's compendiums of manifestos and critical articles, etc.) possess a narrative or biographical poetics. Such poetics sought to make the esoteric Symbolist movement more legible to non-Symbolist readerships.¹⁴⁶ This goal makes for a felicitous comparison with Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin's collections, all of which profess similarly explanatory and didactic objectives while privileging a diametrically opposed *spatial* poetics. The reasons for this distinction are sundry. In the first place, these collections (Voloshin's *Faces* excepted) were published slightly earlier than these Symbolist documents, before any retrospective, chronologically structured account of modern Russian literary culture (much less its constituent movements) would have been tenable: they thus tend to avoid conventionally historical or chronological sequencings of their constituent portraits. In the second, these collections concern themselves not *only* with the intellectually dominant but esoteric Symbolists, but rather with a range of diffuse contemporaneous cultural phenomena: this more horizontal, “democratic” holism privileges mapping over narrativization, space over time.

Most vitally, these spatial poetics are on display not only at the macro, but also at the micro level within each collection when Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin explore the character, the *lichnost'*, of individual Russian authors. Character, as we have demonstrated, is the peculiar province of the literary portrait; we should recall that the genre of visual art from which these works derive their name privileges simultaneity over development.¹⁴⁷ However, spatial poetics become a problem when *Silhouettes, From Chekhov*, and (to a lesser extent) *Faces* attempt to encapsulate the *lichnosti* of authors whose biographies and oeuvres are particularly, pronouncedly chronological; here we might think of Blok (who, as the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, became ever more interested in the dialectical shifts inherent in Russian Symbolism's evolution) and Chekhov (whose turn towards more “serious” subject matter in the early 1890s was already acknowledged by critics of his time).

Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii overcome this problem by focusing exclusively on the

146 Jonathan Stone, “Aleksandr Blok and the Rise of Biographical Symbolism,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 54, no. 5 (2010): 626–42 and Jon Stone, “Conceptualizing ‘Symbolism’: Institutions, Publications, Readers, and the Russian Propagation of an Idea” (University of California, Berkeley, 2007), esp. 172–230.

147 Such Lessing-derived distinctions between artistic media have, of course, been challenged not only by Futurist painting, but also by Modernism's drive to spatialize narrative, as Joseph Frank's seminal article on literary form pointed out long ago. See Joseph Frank, “Spatial Form in Modern Literature,” *The Sewanee Review* 53, no. 2 (1945): 221–40; 53, no. 3 (1945): 433–56; and 53 no. 4 (1945): 643–653. Literary portraiture – especially that produced by Gertrude Stein, discussed briefly in the previous chapter – might thus represent one of the most symptomatic genres of Modernist literature, diffuse and underexplored as it might currently be.

consistent and omnipresent formal qualities of Russian authors' oeuvres, and extracting a vision of stable, easily defined and categorized *lichnost'* therefrom. In other words, they distinguish a spatially-conceived authorial *lichnost'* – which both critics describe the “radii” that wind back to an essential characterological center – from a more conventionally chronological biography. (Indeed, in contrast to the “life and works”-type biographical criticism, we might describe Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's portraits as exemplifying a “life *as* works.”) Given these critics' orientation towards a mass audience, a turn towards formal criticism might also be seen as a pragmatic choice: by encouraging a “close reading”-type interaction with the text, Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii sidestepped their (presumably) undereducated audience's (presumed) unfamiliarity with Russian literature, and sought to build their readers' (strictly) formal aesthetic education from the ground up. Of course, Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii profess very different understandings of the late imperial literary field, and different methodologies as well: Aikhenval'd synthesizes Schopenhauer's aesthetic philosophy and Apollon Grigor'ev's organic criticism in order to create a metric applicable to Symbolist and Realist writers alike, while Chukovskii borrows the language of Pinkerton detective novels to designate the varieties of “madness” exhibited by those who populate the late imperial literary field.

These two critics' explicit focus on form also bears additional exploration insofar as it explains some of the more curious manifestations of their collections' spatial poetics. Catherine Gallagher has recently contended that form-oriented analyses of narrative literary artifacts (novels, etc.) tend to collapse a work's temporality and suggest that it “has, or should have, a *form* that can be made apprehensible all at once, in a picture or a fractal.”¹⁴⁸ Despite their differences, both authors' form-oriented methodologies consistently (and seemingly independently) make recourse to “pictures and fractals,” that is, spatial and geometrical metaphors, of which the circle is the most recurrent. Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii describe both individual authorial *lichnost'* and the constellation of *lichnosti* that populate the wider literary field of late imperial Russia as possessed of an essential “center” and incidental “radii.” Ultimately, it is this spatial model that allows Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii to perform the essential operations of the post-1905 literary portrait collection: negotiating between forms of individual and communal identity; organically relating seemingly disparate authors and texts to one another; and ultimately providing the novice consumer of literature a holistic interpretative model for a particularly heterogeneous and confusing moment in Russian cultural history.

However, what of Voloshin and his *Faces*? He, too, interrogates the idea of formal authorial *lichnost'*, and indeed imbues his collection with a purposeful, comparative architecture. However, his material and intentions are remote from those of Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, and indeed point to the future of the literary portrait genre in Russia. Conversant in Symbolist discourse, though sufficiently skeptical of Symbolist self-mythologization, Voloshin actually (re)turns to the conventions of biographical criticism. Indeed, not only does he acknowledge the evolution and complexity of authorial *lichnost'*, he also stresses the formative influence of *his own* biography on his criticism. Overcoming context-less, purely formal readings of someone's “life and works” (and indeed, the formal “pictures and fractals” that result from Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's methodology), Voloshin's collection points to the next step in the generic evolution of the literary portrait: its transformation into memoir.

In the following chapters on, respectively, Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin's

148 Catherine Gallagher, “Formalism and Time,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 229–51, 230.

literary portraiture, I will endeavor to sequence my argument as follows: first, I will summarize each critic's intellectual and professional background; then I will discuss the method by which each author conceives of and articulates *lichnost'*; then I will move on to the architecture of and operative spatial tropes within each portrait collection; and, finally, I will provide close readings of the essential portraits in *Silhouettes*, *From Chekhov*, and *Faces*, demonstrating how each collection's portraits mutually inform one another and thereby reflect each critic's individual vision of the literary field of late imperial Russia.

Ch. 2.2: Iulii Aikhenval'd's Silhouettes of Russian Writers: Overcoming Social Criticism Through Impressionism

Notwithstanding his minor status in Russian cultural history, Iurii Aikhenval'd represents a pivotal figure in the development of Russian literary portraiture. Most famous, perhaps, for his stewardship of the nascent émigré literary scene in post-Revolutionary Berlin, Aikhenval'd was nevertheless one of the most widely read Russian critics of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and had a hand in many Russian assimilations of contemporary Western European culture. Not only was he the translator and editor of the first Russian-language translation of Arthur Schopenhauer's collected works (1901-1910), but he was remarkably knowledgeable of the most current trends in literary scholarship and criticism from both England and France. For this reason, he is one of the most important intermediaries between de Gourmont & Pater and the Russian Modernists.

At the same time, Aikhenval'd distinguished himself from many of his Russian peers by actively seeking to popularize Modernist aesthetic thought among wider readerships than Russian Modernist authors typically attempted to cultivate. Such efforts would seem to resemble watered-down, populist derivations of Schopenhauer and Pater's aesthetics; in Pater's own time, his peers frequently labeled his work, pejoratively, as "Impressionist." However, such complications simply make him an all the more interesting nexus for the cultural ferment of *fin-de-siècle* Russian literary culture. Indeed, within this literary culture, he was among the most popular frequently read critics of his time, to which the numerous reprintings of his work can attest. Most important for our purposes, however, is the fact that both his characteristically Modernist understanding of the individual personality and his appeal to a broader readership harmonized in his preferred genre, the literary portrait. Aikhenval'd was among the first to embrace a truly Gourmontian iteration of the genre, and Chukovskii and Voloshin's subsequent work in the genre can be read as a response to his ingenuity. For this reason, Aikhenval'd is at once a highly symptomatic portraitist for his time and a fitting figure with whom to begin our more focused inquiry into literary portrait collections from the turn of the century.

Thus, in the following chapter, we shall use Aikhenval'd and his work to examine: the critic's position in the changing cultural field of early twentieth-century Russia; connections between the genre of the literary portrait, so-called "Impressionist" criticism, and the tastes of highbrow and middlebrow reading publics; and possible articulations of the turn-of-the-century literary field that have been lost in subsequent literary historiography.

Iulii Aikhenval'd's Professional and Cultural Context

Though rarely championed in modern histories of Russian culture, Iulii Aikhenval'd (1872-1928) was an active participant in the literary debates and intellectual life of late imperial Russia. As Semon Vengerov's entry in the Brokgauz and Efron encyclopedia notes, Aikhenval'd was born to a prominent rabbi in Odessa, where he attended university and acquired a gold medal for his thesis. This award eased his passage into Moscow intellectual circles and helped him to both publish and acquire professional positions in literary and scholarly journals.¹⁴⁹ Aikhenval'd's

149 K. K. Arsen'ev, ed., *Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 1 (Sankt-Peterburg: Brokgauz-Efron, 1910), 607.

subsequent professional profile included work in translation, journalism, and education,¹⁵⁰ but he attained his greatest fame (and notoreity) as a literary critic. He ostentatiously rejected social-minded criticism – both that of his Marxist and populist contemporaries and their nineteenth-century precursors – and instead championed what he referred to as the immanent or subjective method of literary criticism, and which his detractors often designated Impressionist. Synthesizing trends from the nineteenth-century Russian school of organic criticism and European Modernist aesthetics, Aikhenval'd's criticism emphasized the reader's immediate experience of literary texts, and largely evaded historical, social, or biographical interpretation of a given author's work. For a time, this anti-materialist approach garnered Aikhenval'd a certain affinity with many Russian Modernists, though his criticism often denigrated their most visible and exemplary representatives, such as Valerii Briusov.¹⁵¹

Aikhenval'd's governing philosophical principles and concomitant dismissal of socially- or historically-oriented interpretations of art served him poorly after the Russian Revolution: in 1922, the critic was forced to emigrate to Berlin along with other Silver Age intellectual luminaries on the so-called Philosophy Steamers. He continued to write histories of Russian literature and criticism on contemporary Russian authors, both emigre and Soviet, until his tragic death in 1928, when he was fatally hit by a streetcar. Aikhenval'd was a prominent and well-liked figure in the emigre community, particularly among other critic-authors such as Vladislav Khodasevich and the young Vladimir Nabokov, on whose literary opinions he exercised a meaningful influence. In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov would later refer to Aikhenval'd – with a succinctness that belies his true respect for the emigre critic – as “a Russian version of Walter

150 Aikhenval'd's famous pre-Revolutionary works include *Silhouettes of Russian Writers* (*Siluety russkikh pisatelei*, 1906-1910), the primary focus of this chapter; *Etudes on Western Writers* (*Etiudy o zapadnykh pisateliakh*, 1910), which was intended as something of a companion to *Silhouettes* (and was not unlike Zinadia Vengerova's *Literaturnye kharakteristiki* in its format and execution); and *Separate Pages* (*Otdel'nye stranitsy*, 1910) and *Words about Words* (*Slova o slovakh*, 1916), which, like *Silhouettes*, gathered articles Aikhenval'd had originally published in numerous early twentieth-century Russian journals. Some of the more notable articles were “On Suicide” (“O samoubiistve,” 1911), a learned and literary response to the modern panic about urban suicide epidemics, which appeared in the collection *Suicide* (*Samoubiistvo*, 1911), alongside similar contributions by Anatolii Lunacharskii and Ivanov-Razumnik; and “The Negation of Theater” (“Otritsanie teatra,” 1914), another controversial piece in which Aikhenval'd claimed that theater was not a true art because it was ultimately dependent upon and subservient to other artistic forms such as literature. Aikhenval'd's critical and intellectual activity did not wane after his departure from the Soviet Union in 1922: he wrote numerous articles on culture for the periodicals *The Rudder* (*Rul'*) and *Literary Notes* (*Literaturnye zametki*), and, alongside Semen Frank, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Vladislav Khodasevich, formed numerous cultural and educational organizations for the Berlin émigré community. On Aikhenval'd's emigre works, see Lesley Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), esp. 207-12, and M. Rippling, “Literaturno-kriticheskaia deiatel'nost' Iu.I. Aikhenval'da v Germanii,” in *Russkii iazyk, literatura i kul'tura v sovremennom obshchestve: materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 20-letiiu kafedry prakticheskogo russkogo iazyka, Ivanovo, 20-22 iyunia 2002 g.*, ed. E. B. Ershova (Ivanovskii gos. universitet, 2002), 625–29.

151 Aikhenval'd did see several of his articles published in Briusov-edited journals during the early- and mid-aughts, and he also participated in the Moscow-based Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi kruzhok, which was similarly organized by Briusov. His relationship with the poet and publisher – and by extension, the wider circle of Russian Modernists – soured when Aikhenval'd published the pamphlet “Valerii Briusov. An Exercise in Literary Portraiture” (“Valerii Briusov. Opyt literaturnoi kharakteristiki,” 1910), in which the critic indelicately claimed that Briusov lacked poetic talent. (This essay was soon republished in the third volume of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*; see below).

Pater,¹⁵² an epithet to which I will soon return.

Aikhenval'd's aestheticist tendencies should be understood as a challenge to many of the dominant, longstanding conventions of Russian literary criticism. His notorious dismissals of the renowned Vissarion Belinskii were no mere posture, but a strategic challenge to the revolutionary rhetoric and social criticism that had dominated Russia's public discussions of literature since the 1830s and indeed remained a resilient feature of early twentieth-century literary culture.¹⁵³ Thus, his works describe an important boundary between what we might call *popular* and *populist* criticism. Nineteenth-century populism conventionally presented the Russian people as a tool of revolution, a beleaguered group whom the privileged intelligentsia must educate and on whose behalf they must act; consequently, populist criticism instrumentalizes culture in the name of political action and socioeconomic change. Aikhenval'd's art-for-art's sake orientation neuters much of that progressive impulse: he was more inclined to empty literary works of their historical meaning (on which the populists' more instrumentalized interpretations of culture relied), and correspondingly emphasized the reader's immediate, individual experience of a given text.

Such an apolitical approach to literature, combined with his general distaste for radical criticism, need not lead us to perceive Aikhenval'd as a reactionary figure. True, the apolitical essence of his criticism proved useful to the cultural apparatuses of the tsarist state, which incorporated Aikhenval'd's writings into school curricula and deemed them worthy of official merit.¹⁵⁴ However, many of Aikhenval'd's works were published in Kadet-based newspapers, and he remained committed to popular education, in which he directly participated by teaching women's courses at the Shaniavskii People's University in Moscow. Like his protégé Nabokov, Aikhenval'd was simply more oriented towards the cultivation of the reader's aesthetic sense, and disdained any hijacking of literature for extra-aesthetic aims. Aikhenval'd's concerns were particularly pointed given the fissures that were becoming ever more apparent in the early twentieth-century Russian reading public. To his mind, many lower- and middle-class readers looked to literature for entertainment as much as for – or instead of – enlightenment, and hence were disinclined towards all but the crudest or most middlebrow works. Furthermore, Modernist

152 Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Putnam, 1966), 287. For Aikhenval'd's influence on Nabokov's conception of the relationship between writer, reader, and critic, see Stephen H Blackwell, *Zina's Paradox: The Figured Reader in Nabokov's "Gift"* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 25-36, and A. V. Zlochevskaia, "Vladimir Nabokov i Iulii Aikhenval'd," *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta*, no. 5 (2007): 115–22.

153 Aikhenval'd set off a particularly stormy polemic in the 1910s by including previously published unflattering statements about Belinskii in 1914. Aikhenval'd accused the nineteenth-century critic of being insufficiently liberal and exceedingly inconstant in his literary tastes. This earned Aikhenval'd rebukes from many in the contemporary critical establishment, including Marxist-inclined Pavel Nikulin and the prominent populist Ivanov-Razumnik. Aikhenval'd responded in turn, defending his views in the pamphlet "The Argument about Belinskii ("Spor o Belinskom," 1914). For a brief account of this polemic, see E. IU Tikhonova, *Russkie mysliteli o V.G. Belinskom: vtoraiia polovina XIX–pervaia polovina XX v.* (Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2009), esp. 168-171.

154 D.S. Mirsky mentions, dismissively, that Aikhenval'd's essays on Russian authors "even penetrated into the schools"; *Contemporary Russian Literature: 1881-1925* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 327. Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, the popular collection that compiled the critic's numerous portraits of classic Russian authors, received a special commendation from the more conservative Russian Academy of Sciences in 1909; see Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 345. Such compatibility with the tsarist state foretold Aikhenval'd's future incompatibility with the Soviet regime.

writers' penchant for aesthetic experimentation was producing ever greater and more important literature, yet that very experimentation alienated them to wider audiences, who would consequently remain ignorant of the most current aesthetic trends.¹⁵⁵

To this conundrum, Aikheval'd answered with his *Silhouettes of Russian Writers (Siluety russkikh pisatelei, 1906-1910)*, a three-volume compendium of literary portraits that profiled virtually every Russian author and poet of note from the previous hundred years. *Silhouettes* sought to situate the most contemporary literary figures within this larger cultural heritage, and provide a conceptual bridge between canonized authors and the more challenging Modernists thereby. Aikhenval'd wrote appreciative portraits for all of these figures, attempting to synthesize a consistent and intelligible vision of authorial *lichnost'* by juxtaposing various citations from each author's (often wide-ranging) oeuvre. However, *Silhouettes'* assessments of many contemporary writers were often willfully provocative and biting, for Aikhenval'd sought to promote a particular vision of literary Modernism – one whose innovations would remain beholden to the larger, continuous vision of Russian cultural history that the portrait gallery, in aggregate, articulated, one that was untainted by the programmatic thought espoused by tententious authors and Decadent aesthetes. Indeed, reviews of Aikhenval'd's works in *Scales (Vesy)*, one of several flagship journals of Russian Modernism, demonstrate the Symbolists' progressively more combative relationship with the critic.¹⁵⁶

Such enmity masks the common ground between, at the very least, Aikhenval'd and the Symbolists' critical methods: both espouse a critical variant of the “art for art's sake” doctrine that reigned in *fin-de-siècle* Russia, one that was often labeled “Impressionist.” Derived from many of the same late Romantic and Schopenhauerian sources, Aikhenval'd's focus on the individual, often irrational experience of art nevertheless avoided the mysticism of the Symbolists. This made *Silhouettes* more amenable to popular tastes: the volumes witnessed four printings in Aikhenval'd's lifetime, and one immediately following his death in 1928. The second reprinting ran to 3000 copies, an exceptional circulation number for a collection of literary criticism, and one that testifies to the largely urban, middle-class readership that Aikhenval'd managed to develop.¹⁵⁷

155 Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 113, 332.

156 While the first volume of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* (published in 1906 and primarily concerned with Russian Romantic poets) was greeted with enthusiasm by the journal, *Vesy's* response to Aikhenval'd's pamphlet *Pushkin* (1908) was tepid, and the critic's tendency to ignore biographical fact was met with particular condemnation. Compare the reviews by Boris Sadovskoi, “Iu. Aikhenval'd. Siluety russkikh pisatelei,” *Vesy* 3, no. 10 (1906): 61–63 and N. Golov, “Iu. Aikhenval'd. Pushkin,” *Vesy* 6, no. 7 (1909): 93–94. Tensions only increased when subsequent volumes of *Silhouettes* portrayed Modernist mainstays Briusov and Fedor Sologub in an unflattering light. Indeed, in his memoirs, Andrei Belyi repeatedly underscored the distinctions between Aikhenval'd's method of criticism and a more authentically Symbolist one, and indeed mocks Sadovskoi's early enthusiasm for Aikhenval'd's works; see Andrei Belyi, *Nachalo veka* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 234-5, and Andrey Belyi, *Mezhdv dvukh revoliutsii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 235.

157 The tension surrounding “popular” turn-of-the-century literary criticism was reignited by the 1994 republication of *Silhouettes*. This edition met with a somewhat stormy reception, most notably at the hands of the respected critic and academic Andrei Nemzer, who, in his 1994 review article “Mass Culture in the Modern Epoch” (“Masskul't epokhi moderna”), denigrated the republication of *Silhouettes* as unnecessary in the face of other, more worthy turn-of-the-century criticism that had yet to receive such a reexamination. Nemzer likewise decried Aikhenval'd's unnuanced, stereotypical opinions that assuage the aesthetic prejudices of “deacons, photographers, investigators, impoverished landowners, doctors, music store clerks, and similar Chekhovian

Aikhenvaľ'd managed a skillful balancing act that is never more manifest than in *Silhouettes'* portrait gallery. This collection demonstrates both his allegiance to rarefied, turn-of-the-century aesthetic philosophy and his commitment to popular education; his consistent, if occasionally tempestuous, shuttling between both a narrow, cultivated Symbolist readership and a wider, less sophisticated one; and his integral vision of literary history that insists upon the modern – and particularly the Modernist – being tempered with the old. Though far from prominent in today's literary historiography, Aikhenvaľ'd emerges as one of the more symptomatic cultural figures of his time. I would argue that the literary portrait lies at the heart of his peculiar and largely effaced success in his navigation of the late imperial cultural field. To demonstrate why, we must now examine Aikhenvaľ'd's critical methodology more closely, and then move on to *Silhouettes* as a whole.

“Every One Defined for Himself and by Himself”: Aikhenvaľ'd's Critical Methodology

Aligning only fitfully and inconsistently with Russian Modernists, Aikhenvaľ'd's methodology and aesthetic philosophy map more smoothly onto those of two non-Russian critics explored in ch. 1.2 of this dissertation: Walter Pater and Remy de Gourmont. However, his particular position in the literary field of late tsarist Russia also compelled him to deviate from these foreign models, and explains how his variant of critical, Impressionist portraiture becomes oriented towards a wide readership rather than a narrow one.

It remains unclear (as it is for most turn-of-the-century Russian writers) whether Aikhenvaľ'd directly encountered any of Pater's works: although Aikhenvaľ'd wrote numerous pieces on modern English literature, he never mentions the author. Nevertheless, even a cursory reading of Aikhenvaľ'd's bears out Nabokov's description of Aikhenvaľ'd as “a Russian version of Walter Pater.” Aikhenvaľ'd's fluid and oft-subjective criticism typically ruminates on a given writer's irreducible personality and artistic method: for Aikhenvaľ'd, as for Pater, reading is a creative act that requires one to open one's mind to the sundry impressions wrought by the act of perceiving a particular work: “In the realm of the artistic word, the critic presses himself against another's word and converts it into his own. The wave of sincere and unrestricted impressions carries him to the very soul of the poet” (28). Fusing these impressions together means reproducing the artist's mental life: “Perceiving the artist means, to a certain extent, reproducing him, repeating after him the activity that inspires his own creativity” (25). Such sentiments are intriguingly reminiscent of Pater's (see Ch. 1.2); one must remember, however, that Aikhenvaľ'd's insights into the creative *lichnost'* were marshaled not merely for rapturous, Paterian aesthetic criticism, but killing criticism that reprimanded modern Russian literature for its Modernist excesses.

Aikhenvaľ'd's similarities to de Gourmont are likewise striking, and traces of the French critic's influence are more apparent in his writing. The most obvious testament to that influence is the obituary Aikhenvaľ'd wrote for de Gourmont in 1915. He specifically mentions de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* (in Russian, *Kniga masok*) therein, calling it “a series of graceful descriptions (*kharakteristiki*), literary medallions, fleeting silhouettes.”¹⁵⁸ Aikhenvaľ'd, like most

characters.” See A. S. Nemzer, *Pamiatnye daty: ot Gavriily Derzhavina do Iurii Davydova* (Moscow: Vremia, 2002), 233-8.

158 Iulii Aikhenvaľ'd, *Slova o slovakh: kriticheskie stat'i* (Petrograd: Knigoizdatel'stvo M.V. Popova, 1916), 142.

other French-speaking Russian critics of his generation, was familiar with de Gourmont's *Livre des masques* (to say nothing of his other works) long before the text's 1913 Russian translation.¹⁵⁹ *Silhouettes* undoubtedly bears that work's pedigree. Aikhenval'd champions of the absolute individuality of every author, and asserts the critic's right to eschew any exploration of the similarities that exist between them: "The essence of any artistic work consists not in how it is related to others, with the facts of that external group of phenomena, but rather just the opposite: namely, in how it differs from them. Difference, and not similarity; distinguishing signs, and not common features: that is the main thing in art...And the essence of every writer consists not in how he resembles another writer [17]). Indeed, he seems to go further than de Gourmont in this regard: "There are no movements (*Net napravlenii*): there are writers. This means: however many writers there are, there are that many movements, and every one in his own essence defined for himself and by himself" (21). Such philosophical common ground is further buttressed by the formal similarity between the portraiture of *Silhouettes* and *Livres des masques*: both create lapidary statements about an author's creative essence, founded upon the juxtaposition of numerous, harmonious citations from their oeuvre.

Aikhenval'd's portraiture thus borrows Pater's method for accessing authorial *lichnost'* and de Gourmont's insistence on each author's uniqueness, as well as the formal conventions of the literary portrait genre. However, *Silhouettes* modifies the two authors' approaches in an attempt to synthesize a new method of writing literary history – a vital task in the Russian critical tradition, but one which remains beyond Pater and de Gourmont's purview. Later editions of *Silhouettes*¹⁶⁰ begin with a long, often bewildering introductory essay in which Aikhenval'd references numerous contemporary authors, critics, and philosophers of French, German, and English origin who, for various reasons, nominally write literary history incorrectly.¹⁶¹ Their

159 On Gourmont's popularity amongst and influence on Francophone Russian critics, see Ol'ga Lebedushkina, "'Otrazheniia' i 'knigi': k voprosu o zhanrovom instrumentatsii russkoi literaturnoi kritike 1900-1910-x gg.," in *Innokentii Fedorovich Annenskii, 1855-1909: materialy i issledovaniia po itogam mezhdunarodnykh nauchno-literaturnykh chtenii, posviashchennykh 150-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia I.F. Annenskogo*, ed. S. R Fediakin and S. V Kocherina (Moscow: Izd-vo literaturnogo instituta im. A.M. Gor'kogo, 2009), 174–82, 178-9.

160 The first volume, largely concerned with the Romantic poetry, came out in 1906; the second, largely concerned with Realism and the novel, in 1908; the third, concerned more with contemporary literature, in 1910. After the completion of *Silhouettes* in 1910, the three-volume collection witnessed full reprintings in 1911, 1914, and 1917; a final, posthumous printing came out in 1929. Each new edition contained alterations, based on Aikhenval'd's changes (and, in the case of the 1929 version, his notes for additional, prospective changes), and often included entirely new portraits of additional authors. Such changes are noted in Iulii Aikhenval'd, *Siluety russkikh pisatelei* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), v.1, v-vi. Please note that, when I transition to the discussion of writers from Aikhenval'd's own time, the discussion of those portraits moves in the sequence found in the original, 1910 volume, from which the provided table of contents (Fig. 1) is taken; see Iulii Aikhenval'd, *Siluety russkikh pisatelei* (Moscow: Izdanie tovarishchestva "Mir," 1906), v. 3, to which subsequent editions do not adhere. All citations come from Iulii Aikhenval'd, *Siluety russkikh pisatelei* (Moscow: Respublika, 1998), the most textually complete version of the work.

161 Among those mentioned both immediately and frequently in "Suppositions" are the late nineteenth-century French critics Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) and Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906), both of whom (particularly the former, with his interpretative doctrine of "race, milieu, moment") were inclined to read literature in an arch-programmatic way, and are thus anathema to Aikhenval'd's "immanent" method. On Taine and Brunetière, see Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, v. 4, 27-57 and 58-71, respectively. Near the end of "Suppositions," Aikhenval'd speaks more favorably about the turn-of-the-century French literary sociologist Gustave Lanson (1857-1934), and even reproduces a lengthy passage from the 1896 Russian translation of *Histoire de la littérature française* (1894), Lanson's pivotal work. Aikhenval'd uses this passage to characterize Lanson as a

mixtures of art, science, politics, and economics prove untenable for Aikhenval'd, who offers his own approach, labeled the “immanent method.” This method is enacted “when the scholar engages organically (*organicheski soprichashchaetsia*) with the work of art and remains within it rather than outside it” (25).

Two words in Aikhenval'd's definition stand in relief, and for different reasons. *Immanent* bears a metaphysical patina (recalling Aikhenval'd's academic engagement with Kant and Schopenhauer) and pointedly resists those adjectives (Impressionist, Symbolist, aesthetic) that contemporaries used to describe Pater, de Gourmont, and Aikhenval'd's methods. *Organic*, for its part, harkens back to a more native critical tradition, albeit one adapted from early nineteenth-century German Idealist philosophy: Apollon Grigogor'ev's mid-nineteenth-century doctrine of organic criticism. These two phenomena are arguably intertwined in Aikhenval'd's thought, and bear directly upon the larger poetics of *Silhouettes* on the whole.

The “immanence” of Aikhenval'd's method is an exclusionary one, meant to circumscribe the arena of the activity. It recalls Schopenhauer's distinction between an immanent and transcendent metaphysics: the former concerns itself with how the world appears to us and how we experience those appearances, while the latter goes beyond the world and ponders its origins and purpose.¹⁶² For Aikhenval'd, any interpretative apparatus that extends beyond the act of reading the work, from socioeconomic analysis to biographical fallacy, drifts into such speculation; consequently, it remains beyond the true critic's purview, and muddies the reader's access to the writer's true, creative self. Why is this the case? Aikhenval'd provides an explanation via his statements about the irrational foundation of artistic production:

...Писатель в своих произведениях по существу именно отрешен от своей внешней биографии, а не участвует в ней. Ибо глубоко правым остается наш вечно правый Пушкин, который свидетельствует, что в минуты творчества поэт, объятый священным сумасшествием, бежит от людей и от собственной сознательности в стихию широкошумных дубров и пустынных волн, - бежит дикий, суровый, полный звуков и смятенья [...] На эту святую недужность творца, на это бессознательное, иррациональное, безумное бросят ли должный свет биографические факты, лежащие совсем в другой психологической области? (ibid)

In his works, the writer is by his very nature detached from his external biography, and does not participate in it. For our eternally correct Pushkin remains correct,

kindred spirit, someone who, like Aikhenval'd, questions the degree to which literature itself might be made subject to an exact science (*tochnaia nauka*) (29) and instead seeks to investigate the author's personality (*lichnost'*). This characterization of Lanson runs counter to the way that he was perceived in the twentieth century received; again, see Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, 71-4. Aside from a snide condemnation of “Pisarev's vandalism” and Chernyshevskii's tendency to write not *about* literature but *apropos* of it (22), direct references to Russian literary historians and critics are few in “Suppositions.” However, it is at all times clear that Aikhenval'd positions himself against the *real'naiia kritika* of the nineteenth-century as well as contemporary critical trends variously derived therefrom – namely, the populist Marxism of Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik (1878-1946), the historical school of Aleksandr Veselovskii (1838-1906), and the biographically-oriented psychologism of Dmitrii Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii (1853-1920).

162 John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 109-11.

observing that in during moments of creativity, the poet, embraced by a holy madness, flees people and his own consciousness into a whirlwind of whispering forests and deserted waves, flees as a wild and severe [individual], full of sounds and commotion [...] Onto this sacred infirmity of the creator, onto the unconscious, the irrational, the mad, do biographical facts, lying in an entirely different psychological arena, throw a proper light?

Aikhenval'd's views on the loss of the self during moments of artistic creativity likewise have their origin in Schopenhauer, who attributes to the artistic genius the ability to abandon individual Will and momentarily become one with the larger Will that moves the universe:

Genius is the capacity to remain in a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge which originally existed only for this service. In other words, genius is the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain *pure knowing subject*, the clear eye of the world.¹⁶³

Such sentiments about the irrational, unconscious, and impersonal origin of art became a common creed for many Russian Modernist authors.¹⁶⁴ Aikhenval'd, too, is indebted to this line of thought, although he would often accuse those same authors of having abandoned Schopenhauer's allegiance to irrational, instinctive creativity.¹⁶⁵ However, Aikhenval'd exceeds this position as well – or, more charitably, is simply concerned with authors from a variety of aesthetic camps whose relationship to creativity is not as narrowly defined. Following Sainte-Beuve, Pater, and de Gourmont, he insists – to a certain degree – that a writer's particular, originary *lichnost'* leaves an important imprint on his work, even as he dismisses the positivist revelation of that *lichnost'* through the “race, milieu, moment” interpretative apparatus. Aikhenval'd seems to temper Schopenhauer's line with more native critical traditions – primarily those of Apollon Grigor'ev's organic school of criticism, which Aikhenval'd's use of the adverb *organicheski* signals.

Grigor'ev (1822-64) adhered to a similar position regarding artistic production, although his thinking on the matter drew more from Schelling and other German idealist philosophers. In Grigor'ev's interpretation of their work, they allowed for the unconscious production of art while insisting that the author's individual personality acts as a prism that refines such supra-individual inspiration. For this reason, Grigor'ev insisted that “we do not understand how images can exist without any relation to the artist and independently of him.”¹⁶⁶ The critic makes additional allowances for the conscious production of art (which, to his mind, seems invariably to result in

163 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 186.

164 See, for example, Edith W. Clowes, “Literary Decadence: Sologub, Schopenhauer, and the Anxiety of Individuation,” in *American Contributions to the Tenth International Congress of Slavists*, ed. Alexander Schenker (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1988), 111–21.

165 T. Korobova, “Literaturnaia sovremennost' v otsenke Iu.I. Aikhenval'da (konets 1900-kh gg.),” *Russkaia filologiya* 16 (2005): 70–76.

166 qtd. in Charles A. Moser, *Aesthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 129-30.

stilted or unsatisfying art), as well as the fundamental differences between inward-looking lyric poetry and outward-looking art (for instance, prose works) that considers a wider community of people. This approach, which allows for varieties of creativity across genres and personality types rather than narrow discussions of artistic genius, resembles that of Aikhenval'd some fifty years later.

The descriptor *organic* in organic criticism likewise harkens back to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, but has a particular valence in Grigor'ev's criticism – one that winds its way into Aikhenval'd's larger project in *Silhouettes*. In an open letter to Dostoevskii published as “Paradoxes of Organic Criticism” (“Paradoksy organicheskoi kritiki,” 1864), Grigor'ev repeatedly uses the word as a contrast to the modifier “nakedly logical” (*golo-logicheskii*), which “leads [its adherents] toward theory, with the accompanying narrowness with which it grasps life, and with its despotism.”¹⁶⁷ This tendency is soon attributed to Belinskii's particular brand of criticism, the “historical perspective” from which Grigor'ev is at pains to distinguish his own “organic perspective,”¹⁶⁸ because both parties' interest in the developmental progression of Russian culture masks a more fundamental difference in interpretation. In Grigor'ev's estimation, the Hegelian Belinskii presumes that culture develops linearly, logically, when one writer directly influences another; the end result is an ever-more perfecting art, one seeking to replace that which preceded it. Grigor'ev, however, endorses “a cyclical view of the history of ideas” that drew upon natural processes of birth, death, rebirth, and understood culture as sedimentation rather than linear progression,¹⁶⁹ one in which all members of a given society wittingly and unwittingly took part.

Aikhenval'd synthesizes these varying ideas – the immanence of the creative and critical acts; the creative *lichnost'* putting its individual stamp on shared cultural forms; the cyclical repetition, rather than overcoming, of those shared forms – into a larger aesthetic system. If it is de Gourmont and Pater who help Aikhenval'd uncover the individual writer's essence, then it is Grigor'ev who helps Aikhenval'd inscribe those writers into a larger constellation of meaning. This much is reflected in the structure of *Silhouettes'* prefatory materials. The first half of its introductory essay is a purposefully bewildering rundown of all-too-rational literary scholarship designed to elevate Aikhenval'd's simpler, de Gourmont and Pater-derived “immanent method.” The second half, however, engages with broader questions of Russian cultural history, questions which Grigor'ev better equips him to answer. This portion of the introduction posits an array of shared cultural features that are individually and inevitably refracted through the individual personalities of the forty-odd Russian writers whose portraits are to follow. Thus, *Silhouettes* maps a cyclical historical dynamic onto a variety of creative *lichnosti* spanning some hundred years of cultural production.

Aikhenval'd's idiosyncratic literary history manages to avoid narratives and even historical dates. The critic instead discusses Russian literary culture as a unified, transhistorical entity that routinely draws from a consistent body of thematic and topical binaries. Aikhenval'd suggests that some half-dozen diametrically opposed values or phenomena operate in the work of every Russian author, singular genius or passable epigone, nineteenth-century poet or twentieth-century. Aikhenval'd's most essential oppositions are: “homesickness and wanderlust (*toska po*

167 Apollon Grigor'ev, *Estetika i kritika* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980), 134.

168 Ibid., 140.

169 Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, 125-6.

rodine i toska po chuzhbine), centripetal and centrifugal force, stasis and dynamism...in Russian society – Westernism and Slavophilism” (30); the problem of nature versus culture (34); the contrast between city and country (38); and a series of more minor binaries (the idyll and the drama [40], the predatory versus the submissive [41], etc.) that are related to and conditioned by these three major ones.¹⁷⁰ The topographical dominant in many of these categories (east/west, city/country, etc.) is vital: space has replaced time (e.g. historical dates and progress, the absolute contemporaneity of literary Modernism) as the primary object of critical interrogation. This permits Aikhenval'd to sequence his three volumes' worth of portraits in unconventional, stridently non-chronological “galleries,” spatializing Russian literary and cultural history. Each presents not the various members of an aesthetic camp for a given point in Russian literary history, but rather the broadly persistent themes in Russian culture that have been refracted through the unique sensibilities of each author's particular creative *lichnost'*, irrespective of the period or genre in which that *lichnost'* operates.

Aikhenval'd himself indicates that the main theoretical thrust of *Silhouettes* is not chronology, or even literary genealogy, but a relational topography that presents individual and group, Russian writer and Russian culture on equal footing:

Но в высшей степени знаменательно, что именно пристальное изучение писательских индивидуальностей, анализ личностей, совершенно без усилий, просто и безыскусственно, раскрывает некоторую между ними, и очень значительную, общность. Чтобы прийти к общему, надо отправляться от личного. Все наши теоретические предпосылки остаются в силе; центр тяжести, самое существенное и самое главное, лежит в индивидуальном творчестве писателя; но этому не противоречат наши указания на то общее, что роднит между собою отдельных писателей и связывает их в какую-то семью. (30)

But it is in the highest degree significant that, entirely without exertion, simply and guilelessly, just such an intense study of writers' individualities, an analysis of personalities, reveals a specific and very meaningful commonality between them. To get to the general, one must move away from the individual. All of our theoretical premises remain valid; the main emphasis, that which is essential and primary, lies in the individual oeuvre of the author; but this is not contradicted by our gestures towards that common ground which relate otherwise separate authors and connect them into some kind of family.

This turn towards a greater community of individual authors demonstrates how Aikhenval'd's critical method – and his understanding of the portrait gallery format – departs from that of de Gourmont. Aikhenval'd accentuates that which de Gourmont strategically deemphasizes, particularly in the French critic's acquiescent statement from *Livre des masques* that “there is

¹⁷⁰ Aikhenval'd demonstrates the applicability of the major binary systems by inscribing certain authors within in – for example, describing Karamzin's status as a cultural intermediary between *rodina* and *chuzhbina* and Turgenev's nature as “split” between those same poles. Others who, like Sergei Aksakov, are defined more by their “sedentarism” (*osedlost'*) hew to the *rodina* of the spectrum; conversely, while most every author exhibits *toska po chuzhbine*, none give themselves over to this impulse entirely.

profit and justice in noting dissimilarities” between authors: Aikhenval'd knows that individuality can only be perceived against a background of similarity. *Silhouettes* thus transcends the portrait gallery model that it inherits from Western Europe, and exhibits a holistic vision of the literary field in which discrete portraits reinforce one another instead of operating in a falsely constructed isolation.

However, Aikhenval'd must also distinguish his methodology from that of his fellow Russian critics whom he accuses of constructing their own false (nakedly logical, politically-motivated) arrangement of literary *lichnosti*. He, like Grigor'ev before him, distinguishes their models of critical reflection and literary historiography. To Aikhenval'd, Russia's Marxist and historical critics begin with doctrinaire generalizations (e.g. about historical and social development) and impose them, awkwardly, upon individual artists and works. Aikhenval'd's belabored introduction to *Silhouettes* would seem no less doctrinaire, an impression of which he seeks to disabuse his reader:

Так как, согласно сказанному, обобщающие соображения, которые излагаются в дальнейших строках, явились в результате изучения отдельных писателей и настоящее вступление, это, собственно, – не предисловие, а послесловие. (30)

Thus, in accordance with what has been said, the generalizing considerations, which are set forth in the subsequent lines, appeared as a result of the study of separate authors, and the current introduction is, strictly speaking, not a foreword, but an afterword.

The essay, in other words, is not the explication of an extant ideological doctrine, but an extrapolation conditioned by the critic's *return* to his writings. Organic cyclicality is opposed to a progressive linearity. So too with the circular metaphors that bubble up throughout the essay. Aikhenval'd remarks that the greater whole of literature is “unified in itself, and its many contours fuse into a single, continuous sphericity (*sferichnost'*)” (30). So, too, with Aikhenval'd's understanding of the relationship between the various binary oppositions that he puts forth in the introductory essay: “It seems that from this center, from this foundational problem – which is formulated as the antitheses of sedentarism (*osedlost'*) and nomadism (*skital'chestvo*), of nature and culture, of the country and the city – other important themes in our literature might proceed as radii” (40). These spheres and radii seem entirely Russian: they belie Aikhenval'd's indebtedness to Grigor'ev organic criticism, they position themselves against the progressive traditions of Russian radical criticism, and seem to have little precedent in Pater and de Gourmont. Their existence does not end with Aikhenval'd, however: as we shall see in subsequent chapters, spheres, radii, and other circular motifs live an intriguingly vibrant life in Chukovskii and Voloshin's literary criticism as well. They seem to spring from Russian literary portraiture specifically, and express well its peculiar focus on relational holism.

The Structure of *Silhouettes*

Indeed, the holism of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* is a formidable one. It assesses some hundred years' worth of Russian literary and cultural history, and considers the poetry, prose, and drama

ОГЛАВЛЕНИЕ.

	<i>Стр.</i>
Козловъ	1
Веневитиновъ	9
Александръ Одоевскій	15
Полежаевъ	22
Языковъ	29
Бенедиктовъ	36
Левитовъ	45
Максимъ Горькій	53
Леонидъ Андреевъ	64
Валерій Брюсовъ	85
Федоръ Сологубъ	100
Иванъ Бунинъ	113
Ворисъ Зайцевъ	126

Fig. 1 – table of contents for third volume of Iulii Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* (1910)

of the Romantic, Realist, & Modernist movements. As I have already indicated, Aikhenval'd's aesthetic sympathies are more Romantic (and frequently poetic), indebted as they are to early nineteenth-century German philosophy and its spiritual descendents in mid nineteenth-century Russian organic criticism. Aikhenval'd's intermittent enmity for contemporary poetry has likewise been discussed, as has his distaste for tendentious criticism and, by extension, fiction. Russian literary historiography typically positions these various phenomena as a sequence: Romantic poetry cedes its primacy to Realist prose (a progression generally reproduced by the first and second volumes of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*) which in turn exhausts itself, allowing Modernist poetry to become the premier literary form. Those figures who seem to undermine this sequence – such as Maksim Gor'kii – are either anachronistic throwbacks to the nineteenth century or progenitors of the eventual return to Socialist Realist prose.

Aikhenval'd, for his part, sees little difference between these phenomena, insofar as Modernist poets have nominally abandoned their genre's commitment to Will-less, unconscious creation, in effect producing the all-too-logical and ego-driven art that Realist authors have been practicing all along. Thus, the third volume of *Silhouettes*, which catalogs the writers of literary contemporaneity, is unified not by allegiance to a particular historical moment, aesthetic movement, or genre, as the peculiar sequence of portraits – muddier than the previous volumes' – would seem to indicate. (See Fig. 1 above.) Gor'kii, Bunin, Briusov, Sologub, Bunin, and Zaitsev are meant to represent the most contemporary trends in Russian culture, and Aikhenval'd's portraits concern themselves the cognitive operations practiced by their subjects – cognitive operations that produce inferior or superior art, irrespective of genre or aesthetic tendency.

Aikhenvaľ'd's task, then, is to synthesize a critical metric that allows him to speak equally fairly and effectively about Realist and Modernist trends. He achieves this metric, I would argue, through a curious amalgam of his critical and philosophical influences that nevertheless rests upon a vocabulary that is Aikhenvaľ'd's own. There is, again, his preference for unconscious artistic creation that relies upon the suppression of the self (Schopenhauer), as well as the conviction that each artist uniquely calibrates the variables at work in this self-effacement (Grigor'ev). The primary variables in this self-effacement, however, are abstract thought and immediate perception, and Aikhenvaľ'd, for his part, desires to see them in a particular sequence: impression, the act of creation, should precede abstraction, the act of intellectual synthesis. Again, recall that Aikhenvaľ'd's presentation of *Silhouettes* follows just such a sequence: the "immanent" critic suppresses his individual Will in his attempt to feel out the *lichnost'* of a given author (i.e. the literary portrait), and takes up the more synthetic, motivated intellectual labor after this first task has been completed (i.e. *Silhouettes'* introductory essay). Any author who violates this natural cognitive sequence – impression followed by thought, perception followed by abstraction, individuation followed by relation – inevitably produces inferior art.

Reading Aikhenvaľ'd's portraits, one gets the sense that this vision of universal cognitive processes supersedes any author's individual aesthetic inclination or membership to a given artistic camp. The critic is able to judge most any contemporary author by this standard metric, assessing works with esoteric "art for art's sake" sympathies (e.g. Modernist poetry) by the same standard as more popular, socially conscious works (e.g. Realist prose); in practice, his understanding of aesthetic cognition collapses any difference between Symbol and social type. With such a perspective in mind, one comes to understand the peculiar rationale operating behind the Gor'kii-Andreev-Briusov-Sologub-Bunin-Zaitsev sequence: Aikhenvaľ'd moves from two authors of tendentious prose who openly defy the perceiving-thinking sequence, to two Symbolist poets who do so less obviously, to two figures who straddle literary camps and exhibit the aesthetic grace that the previous four cannot.¹⁷¹ However, the language in which he discusses the writers remains consistent from portrait to portrait, even as he gestures towards the profound differences between them. This consistency reflects not only the wide applicability of his method, but the maintenance of the transhistorical cultural unity established in *Silhouettes'* introductory essay.

We should take special note of this language before proceeding into the individual portraits. The most consistent terms that Aikhenvaľ'd employ map easily onto the perceiving-thinking dialectic: words such as *impression*, *intuition*, *immediacy* (*vpechatlenie*, *intuitsiia*, *neposredstvennost'*) cleave to the former end of the spectrum, while *thought*, *knowledge*, *reason* (*mysl'*, *znanie*, *rassudok*) cleave to the latter. Words signifying an openness to perception and firsthand experience, such as *vpechatlenie* and *neposredstvennost'*, are presented in a uniformly favorable light; this reflects Aikhenvaľ'd's esteem for passive, instinctual, and therefore more authentic means of perceiving the world. Conversely, words that concern abstract, willful cognition, such as *mysl'* and its many etymological relations, tend to come off poorly: Aikhenvaľ'd uses such vocabulary in oft-unflattering contexts that imply an artificial, invented, or all-too-conscious detachment from experience. Such negative portrayals of authorial thought

171 In my subsequent discussion of individual literary portraits, I will be ignoring Zaitsev, as Bunin clearly represents Aikhenvaľ'd's exemplary modern author. As I noted in fn. 12, subsequent editions of *Silhouettes* scrambled the original sequence of the 1910 volume; I will be observing the original sequence here.

typically proceed from the unjustifiable or awkward imposition of a holistic moral, political, or aesthetic system onto the world. Both are essential, of course; they simply must appear in the proper ratio and sequence. As Aikhenval'd notes in *Silhouettes'* introduction, "In general, it is not only science that leads one to the truth – there is also the path of intuition, conjecture, and reflection (*intuitsii, dogadki, razmyshleniia*); ultimately, it is only important that every researcher renders unto himself and others a proper account of the road by which he got there" (29).

***Lichnost'* and Cognition in *Silhouettes'* Analysis of Individual Authors**

Silhouettes' portraits arrange the incidental and essential features of the author's oeuvre conceptually, rather than biographically: Aikhenval'd avoids a linear, developmental calibration of life and works. Just as *Silhouettes'* vision of literary history replaces temporal categories with spatial ones, its individual portraits eschew precision in historical dates and rarely gesture towards their subjects' aesthetic development. In such circumstance, biographical narrative becomes telescoped, flattened; as suggested in section 2.1, this preference for static *lichnosti* permits us to describe Aikhenval'd's interpretative model as "life *as* works." Furthermore, this elision of biography further allows Aikhenval'd to construct his idiosyncratic vision of Russian literary history: he is able to see both the individual text within an author's body of work *and* Russian culture's constellation of individual authors as radii that extend from an essential center of a unified, spherical system. For Aikhenval'd, differences between authors are not to be fetishized for their own sake, but rather calibrated to demonstrate more important, if less immediately recognizable, moments of unity.¹⁷²

As one might expect, Gor'kii – the first contemporary author profiled in *Silhouettes'* third volume, and one who, along with Briusov, represents one of the most frequent targets of Aikhenval'd's critical ire – comes off poorly in Aikhenval'd's pantheon of modern writers. As an author of tendentious prose in the Realist tradition, he provides a paradigmatic example of the improper relations between instinctive impression and abstracting thought. The portrait's opening paragraphs are programmatic, often directly juxtaposing concepts from both categories to each other. Aikhenval'd alleges that Gor'kii is a preeminent "moralist" and "didacticist" who "almost never gives himself over to the careless wave of free impressions" (449). Indeed, by Aikhenval'd's estimation, the author's moral imperatives ultimately undermine his professed project of glorifying what is most essential to man: Gor'kii does a disservice to the "irrationality of [man's] audacious and powerful will" by instead focusing on "thought, on Thought with a capital T" (450). As a consequence, not only Gor'kii but Gor'kii's *characters* spend all their time agonizing over the injustice of the world and dwelling upon whether their own behavior is just.

Furthermore, Aikhenval'd states that Gor'kii's characters come across as all too similar,

¹⁷² Indeed, if we return to Aikhenval'd's obituary for Gourmont, we see how he modifies the latter's definition of an author who can, in the French critic's words, "be compared only to himself": "True, being an individual, an inimitable person, possessed of his own name, every author is at the same time a synthesis: through his personality, he involuntarily and unknowingly synthesizes for himself his own epoch, his race, a specific moment of humanity, but does so without renouncing himself or his authorial freedom: in this willful coincidence of the personal and the social consists one of the wonderful secrets of living creativity." *Aikhenval'd, Slova o slovakh: Kriticheskie stat'i*, 143. This statement (which oddly accommodates Taine's interpretative scheme of "race, milieu, moment" despite Aikhenval'd's professed distaste for it) resembles *Silhouettes'* introduction more than any of Gourmont's statements in *Livre des masques*.

possessing a uniform “organic incapacity for unmediated life” (451); this stems from the fact that “their own personal fate and sufferings” are wrongfully abstracted into “generalizations” (ibid.) in the service of Gor'kii's program. As a consequence, the reader's “impression” of these characters as actual, living people is spoiled (450): we understand Gor'kii's protagonists as embodied Thought rather than sentient individuals. Gor'kii and his characters thus spend too much time inside their own minds: their attempts to transform reality on the basis of abstract absolutes deprive them of a more reciprocal relationship with the world. For Aikhenval'd, this trait of Gor'kii's becomes all the more unfortunate given that, as we are told in the first sentence of the portrait, Gor'kii is an “advocate of freedom and nature” and “exemplary negater of culture” (449), both of which are Romantic qualities that Aikhenval'd respects. Gor'kii's imperfect methods simply corrupt his otherwise worthy goals and prevent him from producing good art.

The portrait of Andreev dwells on many of the same points as that of Gor'kii, but reaches a slightly different conclusion. If it is Gor'kii's abstract political idealism that wrongly imposes itself on the world and overshadows his perception, then it is Andreev's penchant for stylistic maximalism that produces a similar degree of artificiality – one reflected in the portrait's terminology that is governed by the etymological root *mysl'*. Aikhenval'd harps on Andreev's tendency to enhance otherwise decent prose with superfluous, bluntly rendered metaphors that seem to exist for their own sake and take the reader out of the work; as a consequence, “the only inspiration here is literary (*slovesnoe*),” and Andreev “merely composes (*sochiniaet*), merely invents (*vymyshliaet*)” (402). These two damning verbs, which obtain in Gor'kii's portrait as well, suggest Andreev's tendency to produce incommensurate combinations of the individual and the type. Aikhenval'd evidences his point by excerpting numerous passages from Andreev's works. He locates the same hyperbole and excess in all of them, and seeks to demonstrate that “for Andreev, only life's exceptions are dramatic, not its law and habitualness (*privychnost'*)” (408). The end result is not authentic art, but rather a *lubok* (406) or the gargantuan pieces “in life's *Kunstkamera*” (407).

These metaphors are significant: as phenomena that attempt to educate via hyperbole, exaggeration, and monstrosity, the *lubok* and *Kunstkamera* corrupt the principles of economy and measure that normally regulate perception and cognition. If Gor'kii's oeuvre is defined by generalizing abstraction, then Andreev's is defined by a purposefully hyperbolic perception; the characters and situations that result from these artistic methods both fail. Aikhenval'd expresses as much in his concluding remarks on Andreev: “One cannot view the world as plot (*siuzhet*) and violently draw out its living content (*soderzhanie*) for an illustration of the author's conjecture (*domysel*)” (418). Thus, while Aikhenval'd's philosophical principles insist upon the subjectivity of writers' visions, they also require a sense of measure and economy that neither Gor'kii nor Andreev can achieve.

Aikhenval'd's distaste for these authors might be attributed to a general preference for poetry over prose, and his corresponding privileging of philosophical Romanticism over critical Realism. In practice, however, his critiques of Modernist poetry resemble his critiques of Gor'kii and Andreev's more Realist prose. Briusov's poetry is the worst offender, and in Aikhenval'd's presentation of him, Briusov manages to come off as Andreev's poetic doppelganger, an example of perceptual excess run wild. Read in sequence, the compositional importance of *Silhouette's* Gor'kii-Andreev-Briusov triad thus comes into focus: Andreev serves (as he will in subsequent

portrait collections) as the comparative bridge between Realist and Modernist aesthetics.

Aikhenal'd tells us that Briusov's verses are too laboriously conceived, and that the final product fails to conceal the strain and effort behind its origins – neither of which is perceptible when one reads the work of better poets (387). Thus, Briusov's poetry likewise demonstrates how purposefully directed thought overwhelms immediate impressions. Briusov seems unable to extricate himself from this cognitive cycle: his collections' "endless forewords and afterwords" represent an attempt to "classify and qualify himself" (388) – an egoistic task that, in Aikhenal'd's estimation, is better left to an outsider, namely, the immanent critic. Finally, Briusov's work is too scattered and beholden to others, in that he often "adopts" the subject matter of, or makes all too frequent reference to, his inevitably superior progenitors. Consequently, his own work "does not amount to a defined writerly personality (*lichnost'*)" (394). In other words, Briusov's approach to poetic influence is willful rather than spontaneous, and his work comes off as studied and artificial. As in the case of Gor'kii and Andreev, this negative judgment can be traced back to Aikhenal'd's understanding of the relationship between thought and perception:

Его знание, его понимание, его умственность отравляют его художество. Так как рассудок преобладает у него над интуицией, то мы и слышим часто подобные заявления: «эти яркие одежды, *понял, понял* – для меня!» или «*понял* – в рай». Он понял, наконец: он не почувствовал, он понял рай. Удручающей прозой звучит понятливость нашего поэта...И этот упорный крик о знании так символичен для его страниц, где гораздо больше *ars poetica*, чем поэзия. (392; emphasis in original)

His knowledge, his understanding, his intellectual nature all poison his artistry. His intellect so dominates his intuition that we even hear, frequently, such declarations as "These colorful clothes, *I understood, I understood* – they were for me!" or "*I understood* – in heaven." He understood, finally: he didn't feel heaven, he understood it. Our poet's penchant for understanding rings with dispiriting prose...And this stubborn yell about knowledge is so symbolic for his pages, where there's more *ars poetica* than poetry itself.

By claiming to "understand" heaven – that realm of the Idea – rather than intuitively perceiving it as a true artist should, Briusov reveals the faulty construction of his poetry. He is a laborer, not a prophet. For him, the creative process is all artifice: a product of abstract knowledge rather than free perception; of studied craft rather than intuitive, firsthand experience. Briusov can have only "pages," not inspired poetry, since he treats art and world alike as a set of base material to be worked and reworked. This judgment recalls the beginning of the portrait, when Aikhenal'd likens the poet to Turgenev's quintessential character, Evgenii Bazarov, who similarly treats nature as a workshop rather than a temple (387). Driven by logic rather than intuition, Briusov is ultimately no different from Gor'kii and Andreev, and can be criticized along the same lines as they. For Aikhenal'd, the process of aesthetic cognition is more important than whatever particular aesthetic it produces, and is ultimately more meaningful than, other more superficial distinctions between writers.

The poetry of Sologub presents Aikhenval'd with a different set of challenges, and it is in dealing with these challenges that the critic reveals some of his more conservative inclinations. It is clear that Aikhenval'd respects Sologub's work more than Briusov's: Aikhenval'd writes less about the mechanics of Sologub's poetry, and more about its metaphysical implications, much as he does for the Romantic poets in the first volume of *Silhouettes*. This shift likewise endows the portrait with a more fluid character: we float easily from poem to poem, excerpt to excerpt, all of which speaks to the organic unity of Sologub's *lichnost'*. In this, he is superior to the scattered, strained Briusov and the pedantically monolithic Gor'kii and Andreev. Indeed, Sologub's organic unity takes on a pseudo-Romantic character that might also remind us of Schopenhauer's philosophy of the world as one's Will and representation:

Вообще, пленник бытия, я оказываюсь в то же время его единственным создателем и властелином. Сологуб понимает себя как вселичность. Есть только мое великое я, моя всемирная душа. Я сам сотворил природу; она – только послушное тело моей души. Мир – это лишь разнообразные воплощения единого я, которое на протяжении веков надевало разные личины [...] Всякая отдельность, время и пространство – только ложь и «мгновенный дым». (382)

In general, I, a slave to existence, simultaneously turn out to be its sole creator and master. Sologub understands himself as an All-Person. There is but my great I, my universal soul. I myself created nature; it is but the dutiful body of my soul. The world is merely the varied embodiments of a unified I, which has donned many guises over the centuries [...] Any separate entity, time and space, is but a lie and “a wisp of smoke.”

This passage contains several iterations on turn-of-the-century Schopenhauer-derived clichés (the body as a simultaneous object and subject of knowledge, the exterior world as the reflection of the Will, etc.). Aikhenval'd thus acknowledges Sologub's affinity with the German thinker, and consequently, with Aikhenval'd's own philosophical position. However, Sologub's poetry is still compromised – not by its mechanics or its form, but by the fact that its content is marked entirely by death, or rather, a “synthesis of the living and the dead” (378). Because this pall hangs over his vision of the world, it prevents him from transforming this “liturgy to the Self” into “an unmediated feeling” (382); he is incapable of “seeking out those original, elementary feelings, the poetic freshness of the heart” (379); and “every one of his feelings and images is imbued by an evil force, run through with a poisoned sword” (ibid). Sologub could thus be likened to Andreev as well: if the latter's selective perception warps life to the point of hyperbole, then the former's vision faithfully reproduces life, yet petrifies it. In context, this is presented as a consequence of genre: in the beginning of Sologub's portrait, Aikhenval'd explicitly associates poetry with beauty, optimism, and the revelation of other worlds, and prose with inertia, everydayness (*povsednevnost'*), and pessimism (378). Thus, it is no coincidence that Aikhenval'd modifies his Schopenhauerian vocabulary here: the problem is not so much warped perception or domineering thought so much as a sheer absence of *feeling* that would endow Sologub's “prosaic” metaphysics with a properly optimistic, and therefore “poetic,” tenor.

In *Silhouettes*, it is Bunin who represents the greatest and most exceptional contemporary

writer, one whose “poetry stands out, as a good throwback (*khorooshee staroe*), against the background of Russian Modernism” (419). Aikhenval'd presents Bunin as both bound to tradition, in that his work aspires to a Pushkinian elegance and simplicity, and liberated, in that he does not belong to any particular school. We are meant to read this accomplishment against the previous portraits of other, less adequate writers. Over the course of the first several paragraphs of Bunin's portrait, Aikhenval'd makes reference to things that Bunin is *not*, references that should remind us of what his contemporaries regrettably *are*. Bunin does not have a theory of literature (*ibid*), unlike Briusov; his poetry almost always deviates from the temptations of prose (*ibid*), unlike that of Sologub; he “does not wish to say more than what there is,” and as a consequence, his words correspond with reality, and “you don't doubt him” (420), as you do when reading Andreev.¹⁷³ These echoes underscore not only the conceptual unity of *Silhouettes*, but the importance of the portrait sequence in the 1910 edition.

Bunin's exemplary status in *Silhouettes* is underscored by the more fluid, Paterian tone of his portrait. Unlike in *Silhouettes'* previous entries, Aikhenval'd will typically write of Bunin's content without clinical (and therefore condemnatory) reference to his nominal artistic designs. Instead, Aikhenval'd will periodically employ an almost free indirect discursive style to demonstrate the facility with which the reader suppress his or her individual Will and identify with Bunin's lyric subjects.¹⁷⁴ Aikhenval'd further enhances this slippage between author and character, reader and text, by moving fluidly from one poem to another, often without providing their titles or even indicating that they are separate works, as he does throughout much of *Silhouettes*.¹⁷⁵ Bunin's oeuvre thus exhibits a consistency, an organic uniformity, that discourages any attempt to read it in a schematic, sequential manner.

Ultimately, for Aikhenval'd, Bunin's singular accomplishment is his achievement of a rigorous aesthetic that operates on the basis of a proper calibration of perception and thought. In the passage below, for example, we see how easy it is for the critic to describe Bunin's poetic essence in the language of perception and abstraction, here painted – rather uniquely in *Silhouettes* – in a uniformly positive light:

Так из одиноких страданий личности выводит Бунина мысль о вечности красоты, о связи времен и миров и от любимых им будней [...] сознание его отвлекают моменты важные и величественные, мудрость востока, чужая мифология, – и словно движется перед вами какая-то колесница человечества. От «часиков с эмалью» и от «маятника лучистого», который «спесиво

173 The absence of an evident Gor'kii comparison is intriguing, and perhaps represent a telling contradiction that Aikhenval'd would prefer not to mention: Bunin's more socially-conscious prose works, such as the 1910 novella *Derevnia* (*The Village*), stem from his early involvement with Gor'kii's Sreda circle.

174 A representative example of Bunin's facility with readerly identification, apropos of several lines of his poetry: “‘Smile for me, deceive me, he begs the departing woman; and she, perhaps, will give him a 'goodbye caress' and yet leave, and he will remain alone. There won't be disappointment, there won't be a suicide – the autumn will simply become more empty...And perhaps the very inseparability of love already weakens the torture of loneliness. The main thing is love itself, the desire for this fleeing, charming mayfly” (423).

175 There are indeed moments where Aikhenval'd provides the entirety of a single Bunin poem and endows it with its proper title (424, 426). However, Aikhenval'd presents them in this fashion because we are to experience these works in their entirety, as organic wholes. We are denied a more schematic exploration of his oeuvre, unlike in, for example, Andreev's portrait, where paragraphs frequently announce in their first sentence the intention of dissecting a particular work in cold, clinical terms (e.g. 403-5).

соразмерял с футляром свой розмах», – от всего этого быта он незаметно, но и неизбежно приходит к размышлению о солнечных часах, о тех, чей позеленел уж медный циферблат, но чью стрелку в диске циферблата «ведет сам Бог – со всей вселенной в лад». Он умеет от себя откидывать радиусы, от близкого переходить к дальнему, от человеческого к божьему, он «ищет в этом мире сочетания прекрасного и вечного». Правда, когда он сам об этом говорит, когда он без нужды неоднократно поучает, что мир весь полон красоты, что «во всем красота, красота», что олень «в стремительности радостно-звериной» уносит от охотника красоту, то именно такая настойчивость и обнаженность элементарной философии производит отрицательное впечатление. Бунин – философ только там, где он этого не сознает, где он не отрывается от образов. (424)

Thus, thought about the eternity of beauty, about the connectedness of times and worlds, leads Bunin out of the isolated sufferings of his person [...] and important, majestic moments, the wisdom of the East, foreign mythology, all divert his consciousness away from his beloved humdrum existence – and it's as if before you spins some kind of wheel of humanity. From an “enameled watch” and from “a radiant pendulum” that “loftily adjusts its swing with its case” – from all of this everyday life he imperceptibly but inevitably moves towards meditation on sundials whose bronze dials have already turned green, but whose clockface arms are “moved by God himself, in harmony with the whole universe.” He is capable of casting radii out from himself, of moving from the proximal to the distant, from the human to the divine; he “seeks the coincidence of the wonderful and the eternal in this world.” True, when he himself speaks of this, when he repeatedly and without cause teaches that the whole world is filled with beauty, that there's “beauty, beauty, in all things,” that a reindeer “in joyously wild swiftness” carries its beauty away from the hunter – it's just such insistence and naked philosophizing that produce a negative impression. Bunin is a philosopher only when he isn't conscious of that fact, when he doesn't lose touch with his images.

We see the language of cognition (*vpechatlenie, soznanie, vymyshlenie*), which yielded only cacophony in previous portraits, achieve a mostly harmonious synthesis in this paragraph. Bunin's conceptual abstractions are not top-down, willful impositions on the world; rather, they proceed from and remain rooted in the immediacy of perception. Bunin likewise accords with Aikhenval'd's Romantic ideal of the creative personality: *mysl'* (here a “proper” dwelling upon the eternally beautiful rather than an “improper” manifestation of a Gor'kiiian political dogma) directs Bunin out of his personal suffering, an implicit reference to unconscious artistic creation – and, significantly, the function of art in general – within Schopenhauer's aesthetic thought.¹⁷⁶ Significant as well is the reference to Bunin's “radii,” which allow Bunin to traverse the individual and the general, and likewise recall Aikhenval'd's own spherical model of literary history. Bunin thus represents the ideal model by which one might navigate the vagaries of

176 So too, perhaps, with Aikhenval'd's reference to Bunin's comprehension of the “wisdom of the East”: Hindu and Buddhist thought are a widely acknowledged influence on Schopenhauer's work.

perception and thought, and becomes the model artist for *Silhouettes* and literary contemporaneity thereby.

Conclusion

In the way of closing remarks, we might explore the peculiar yet extremely telling definition of modernity that Aikhenval'd's portrait gallery advances. Late in *Silhouettes'* introductory essay, Aikhenval'd remarks upon the dynamic between nature (*priroda*) and culture (*kul'tura*), which he describes as having exercised a particularly significant influence “on the artists of recent times” (37). One can sense in this simple binary shadows of a broadly European modernity: positivist faith in science and rationality, technological mastery of the organic world. For his part, Aikhenval'd generally weaves such themes into a larger, transhistorical, and above all cyclical vision of Russian literary development that swings, pendulum-like, between a series of opposed values. Thus, it is significant that Aikhenval'd finds the battle between nature and culture to be particularly acute in the modern age, making its calibration with *Silhouettes'* privileged perception-abstraction dynamic all the more important:

Тонки ощущения Зайцева – но к этой тонкости природа оказалась приспособленной; она вовсе не груба и вовсе не идет вразрез с психологическими запросами развитой личности – это и служит новым подтверждением возможности синтеза между природой и культурой. Нельзя достаточно оценить то благое и знаменательное явление, что вместе с нами утончается и природа, она не отстает от нас, – другими словами, для нас открыта возможность ее все больше и больше одухотворять, приобщать к лиризму хотя бы самых изысканных настроений наших, – ко всей этой чистой нежности Зайцева, Блока, Анны Ахматовой. Сказать, что природа сама сделалась модернисткой, – на это мы имеем право. (ibid)

Zaitsev's sensations are keen – but nature has been able to adapt to such keenness; it is not at all coarse, and does not at all conflict with the psychological inquiries of a developed personality. This serves as evidence for the possibility of the synthesis between nature and culture. One cannot sufficiently appraise that good and significant phenomenon, that nature is becoming more refined along with us, and doesn't abandon us; in other words, the ability to ever more spiritualize [nature] is revealed to us, to impart lyricism – to impart all of the pure delicacy of Zaitsev, Blok, and Anna Akhmatova – to even our subtlest sentiments. We have the right to say that nature herself has become a Modernist.

This, along with Bunin's portrait, is one of the few places in *Silhouettes* where Aikhenval'd pointedly employs a variation on the word “modern.” We might be justified in seeing this as a tactical acquiescence on Aikhenval'd's part: if modernity – defined as the forward march of scientific progress, as the dominance of the machine, the shedding of the obsolete, as the triumph of reason over instinct and abstraction over impression – is truly inevitable, then the only way for nature to survive is to embrace these new conditions. Indeed, the above quote expresses the

paradoxical position of Aikhenval'd's understanding of nature in modernity: it does not battle against culture, its longstanding antipode, so much as operate in tandem with it. Such is Aikhenval'd's conciliatory definition of Modernism: our heightened senses come to possess nature's lyricism, while nature becomes infused with our spirit. Once again, Aikhenval'd rejects a progressive narrative of development and obsolescence, and instead prescribes a synthetic exchange between nominal antipodes.

Gor'kii, Briusov, Sologub, and Andreev are out of step with this synthetic Modernism, unable to understand that “the discord between nature and culture is a fact; but facts can be overcome if they are not marked by internal necessity” (ibid). The most contemporary authors – Bunin, Zaitsev, Blok, and Akhmatova (the latter two of whom did not receive portraits in the first edition of *Silhouettes*) – instead demonstrate how this synthesis between nature and culture might be accomplished. It is not adherence to a narrowly defined aesthetic or ideological dogma that grants one entrance to Aikhenval'd's idiosyncratic pantheon of truly Modernist writers; rather, it is the ability to properly coordinate the demands of nature and artifice, life and art, impression and abstraction, all of which is performed within *Silhouettes'* introductory essay and across its constituent portraits. Such a model, for all the deeper complexity of its cognition-focused apparatus, remained approachable and intelligible to both the middlebrow readers whom Aikhenval'd sought to educate and the narrower, Symbolist (and more conventionally Modernist) circles out of which its philosophical apparatus grew. Aikhenval'd's holistic model of the late imperial Russian literary field strikes a similar middle ground, championing the “good throwback” of Ivan Bunin as the most contemporary, the most Modernist, of all Russian authors.

This privileging of Bunin runs counter to most literary historiography of the time period, and must ultimately be understood not only as an aesthetic judgment but also as a self-reflexive position-taking on the critic's part. Indeed, Bunin and Aikhenval'd himself appear quite similar when they are refracted through *Silhouettes'* interpretative lens. Both employ the modern tactic of operating outside of any school or dogma: Bunin traverses several aesthetic camps, and Aikhenval'd disavows ideologically directed criticism. At the same time, both of them maintain a healthy appreciation for the past, manifested particularly in their joint respect for the poetic legacy of Pushkin. Finally, as one can see within the fluid movement of Bunin's poetry and the constructive principles that govern Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, both figures navigate impression and abstraction in the proper manner.

Thus, in championing Bunin, Aikhenval'd asserts his own centrality in the contemporary Russian literary field. Just as Bunin's poetry represents (for Aikhenval'd, at least) the truest escape from Russia's confoundingly heterogeneous literary present, Aikhenval'd positions his own critical impressionism as the truest escape from late imperial Russia's ossified methods of materialist and biographically-inflected literary criticism. It is this audacious feature of *Silhouettes* – itself a symptom of the volume's successful engagement of multiple readerships – that marks it as a meaningful milestone in the development of turn-of-the-century Russian literary culture, and a pivotal work in the body of Russian literary portraiture.

Ch. 2.3: Kornei Chukovskii's From Chekhov to Our Days: Overcoming Impressionism Through Pinkertonism

The life story of Kornei Chukovskii (1882-1969) makes for a marked contrast with Iulii Aikhenval'd, discussed in Ch. 2.2. He, too, was raised (though not born) in Odessa, which made him something of an outsider to the Modernist cultural scenes in St. Petersburg and Moscow. However, his outsiderness was more socially inflected: he was born out of wedlock as Nikolai Korneichukov, the son of a former peasant and laundress whose surname he retained.¹⁷⁷ By his own account, Chukovskii received a shoddy education, and was even barred from attending the local gymnasium on the basis of his illegitimate birth status. Nevertheless, he was a remarkable autodidact. Following a chance encounter with Walt Whitman's poetry, he decided to teach himself English using the resources available to him – textbooks in Odessa's public libraries – and parlayed these language skills into a position as a foreign correspondent of *The Odessa News* (*Odesskie novosti*) in 1903. At this job he proved rather inept, not because he was untalented or lacking in education (a frequent, self-critical refrain from his diary entries from that period),¹⁷⁸ but because he spent all his time reading in the library of the British Museum rather than writing newspaper articles. Nevertheless, Valerii Briusov took notice of his journalistic work, and offered to publish Chukovskii in the premier Symbolist journal *Scales* (*Vesy*), an opportunity which led to more sustained work for the Kadet newspaper *Speech* (*Rech'*) and, eventually, the numerous critical collections and other works of his pre-Revolutionary period.¹⁷⁹

The most vivid and fully realized of these collections *From Chekhov to Our Times: Literary Portraits* (*Ot Chekhova do nashikh dnei: literaturnye portrety*, 1908). As the subtitle indicates, this book represents Chukovskii's contribution to advent of Russian literary portraiture. It chronicles some two-dozen writers from the turn of the century (roughly 1890-1908). Like Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, it uncovers patterns within their oeuvres and presents these patterns as the writers' generative creative *lichnosti*. While *From Chekhov* precedes the third volume of

177 He officially took the name Kornei Ivanovich Chukovskii, his longtime pen name, after the 1917 Revolution.

178 See, for example, the July 18, 1903 entry in Kornei Chukovskii, *Dnevnik 1901-1929* (Mosk: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), 19.

179 Chukovskii's pre-Revolutionary works were numerous. *Leonid Andreev Big and Small* (*Leonid Andreev, bol'shoi i malen'kii*, 1908) explores both the biographical and artistic personalities exhibited by the volume's titular controversial subject. *Critical Tales* (*Kriticheskie rasskazy*, 1911), which was later expanded, corrected, and given the title *Book about Contemporary Authors* (*Kniga o sovremennykh pisateliakh*, 1914), consisted primarily of articles published in the newspaper *Rus'* on some of Russia's most notorious contemporary authors (including Anastasiia Verbitskaia, Gor'kii, and Vasili Rozanov). It included Chukovskii's most influential and widely discussed work of pre-Revolutionary criticism, the article "Nat Pinkerton and Contemporary Literature" ("Nat Pinkerton i sovremennaia literatura," 1908). *Faces and Masks* (*Litsa i maski*, 1914) again drew heavily from Chukovskii's work in the journal *Speech*, but concerned both older, nineteenth-century Russian authors (Vsevolod Garshin, Nikolai Nekrasov) and non-Russian authors (Jack London, Oscar Wilde) alongside some of Chukovskii's work on children's literature, a topic that would famously interest Chukovskii more as time went on. The "masks" in the volume's title might seem to betoken the influence of Gourmont's *Livre des masques*, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, would have become available in Russian translation to the non-Francophile Chukovskii in 1913. I think it more likely, however, that turn-of-the-century Russia's omnipresent fascination with masks (whether of a Nietzschean, Gourmondian, or Harlequinade origin) simply penetrated Chukovskii's vocabulary. It is also worth noting that Chukovskii served as the primary editor of the two-volume Russian-language edition of Oscar Wilde's works (1912), which was put out by the publishing arm of A.F. Marks company, which owned numerous popular bookstores in turn-of-the-century Russia.

Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* (i.e. the volume most concerned with literary contemporaneity) by two years, it nevertheless responds to Aikhenval'd's brand of criticism specifically and the general trends of literary criticism of that time. Though the young critic's work, like Aikhenval'd's, was often classified under the rubric of Impressionism, Chukovskii objected to that label and critical trend, and *From Chekhov* could be seen as his attempt to transform the portrait collection into a less aestheticized, more rigorous, and more intelligible enterprise.

This desire for a different kind of criticism stemmed from Chukovskii's particular view on the pedagogical value of reading literature, a view shared by the publishers of his collections.¹⁸⁰ Chukovskii (unsurprisingly, given his biography) was particularly attuned to literature's role in the *self*-education of novice or middlebrow readers. By Chukovskii's estimation, such readers were poorly served by both Aikhenval'd's popular but abstruse *Silhouettes* and the crass mass culture that had recently sprung up in Russia's urban centers. Chukovskii retained Aikhenval'd's orientation towards the mass reader's enlightenment, as well as Aikhenval'd's penchant for controversial, occasionally outrageous statements about Russian culture's sacred cows. While he similarly maintained that literary portraiture was an ideal vehicle for addressing a wider readership, he understood the genre's poetics and cultural function differently. He felt that one needed to meet these readers halfway – to speak in *their* language, rather than offering them ready aesthetic judgments and watered-down philosophy. He thus transformed literary portraiture into an exercise in criminal profiling, a gesture that was at once entirely keeping with *fin-de-siècle* pathologizing and the middlebrow detective fiction that was currently in vogue.

Chukovskii would continue to write literary portraiture throughout his life (see Ch. 3.3), and his understanding of the genre's cultural function and interpretative capacities would shift in the post-Revolutionary landscape, *From Chekhov* remains an extremely compelling and symptomatic document. More obviously (and more purposefully) than *Silhouettes* does, *From Chekhov* represents modernity as acute break with the past; indeed, Chukovskii seems to intuit some of critical theory's now-standard position on how life in the city transforms human perception. Implicated within this concern is the collection's perspective on *lichnost'*. *From Chekhov* populates late imperial Russia's heterogeneous literary field with authors from various camps who are paradoxically united by the diversity of their responses to modernity. Each of them becomes afflicted with a particular, *lichnost'*-defining “mania” that the attentive reader must sleuth out. In doing so, these readers better adapt to the conditions of modernity, and

180 Chukovskii's self-proclaimed status as cultural enlightener likely sat well with the Petersburg-based M.O. Vol'f Company, the publishing house that released *From Chekhov* as a discrete volume in 1908. The turn-of-the-century iteration of the company, which had existed since the mid nineteenth century, published many kinds of work, but specialized in children's literature, affordable collections of Russian and foreign authors' works, popular science and history, and pedagogical materials. From 1897 through 1917, the Vol'f Company similarly released “Proceedings of the Vol'f Company Bookstores” (“Izvestiia knizhnykh magazinov Tovarishchestva Vol'fa”), an affordable (35 kopecks) monthly – and by 1906, weekly – catalog that also contained topical articles. On the Vol'f Company, see S. V. Belov and N. A. Mikhailova, “Tovarishchestvo M. O. Vol'fa,” in *Kniga v Rossii, 1895-1917*, ed. I. I. Frolova (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2008), 56–62. Admittedly, the Vol'f Company was not as robust as the publishing empire of the Moscow-based I.D. Sytin, who exercised considerable control over the markets for popular fiction, pedagogical literature, and inexpensive *belles-lettres*; on Sytin, see Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 1985, esp. 97-101. Nevertheless, the Vol'f Company's commitment to publishing popular education materials and affordable editions of classic literature dovetails well with Chukovskii's own liberal politics.

thereby acquire the opportunity to remake their *own lichnost'*, as the bootstrapping Chukovskii has himself already done.

The Professional and Cultural Context of the Young Kornei Chukovskii

From Chekhov savaged writers from most every contemporary aesthetic camp, and remained Chukovskii's most famous critical work well into the Soviet period. Examining critical responses specific to this collection, as well as Chukovskii's own statements about other such collections, will allow us to calibrate the variables that produced Chukovskii's brand of killing criticism and his peculiar take on literary portraiture.

Like Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii traveled in Modernist circles, but maintained a peculiar enmity with some of the foremost figures thereof. One of these was, again, Briusov, who wrote a pseudonymous 1908 review of *From Chekhov* in the Symbolist journal *Scales*. Briusov commends the young critic for the striking and memorable nature of certain pieces in the collection, singling out Chukovskii's sneering portrait of Artsybashev for its searing exposure of the “false anarchism of our contemporary spiteful critics (*posramiteli*) of the bourgeoisie.” However, he also damns his portraiture with faint praise by calling them caricatures (*karikatury*) and contending that Chukovskii merely “takes one feature of the description of the writer and endows it with an improper meaning.”¹⁸¹ Briusov tends to see the young critic as a blunt yet still double-edged sword that he might marshal against competitors to or illegitimate perversions of Modernist literature. For example, Briusov approves of Chukovskii's ire for Maksim Gor'kii's socially-conscious *Knowledge (Znanie)* collective and rogue “Nietzscheans” such as Mikhail Artsybashev; however, he also maintains that Chukovskii's sneering criticism cannot grasp the true depth of the Symbolists' art.

In the mid 1920s, Prince D. S. Mirskii came to a similar conclusion:

[Chukovskii's] object was to make criticism readable and entertaining, and this object he certainly achieved. His style, rich in paradoxes, was formed under the influence of Oscar Wilde and Mr. Chesterton. His method of dealing with an author is to single out one or two violently contradictory characteristics, and then to group all the facts so as to corroborate the choice. The result, at its best, is a brilliantly convincing critical cartoon, which impresses itself on the mind of the reader. Naturally it is at its best when it is used as a weapon of ridicule, and Chukovskii's best essays are those in which he is most unkind. His essay on Artsybashev's *Sanin* is a masterpiece of killing criticism. But in most cases he either misses the point or simplifies to the point of vulgarity matters of extreme complexity, and, readable and entertaining though he is, Chukovskii is, above all, tremendously superficial.¹⁸²

Mirskii's half-appreciation, half-condemnation of Chukovskii resembles that of Briusov, but more explicitly traces the origins of Chukovskii's mocking irony to, on the one hand, turn-of-the-

181 Avrelii (Briusov), “K. Chukovskii. From Chekhov Do Nashikh Dnei,” *Vesy* no. 11 (1908): 59–60, 59.

182 Mirsky, *Contemporary Russian Literature*, 327-8. Mirskii's reference to G.K. Chesterton is an intriguing and prescient one as well, as one of the most vital facets of Chesterton's literary career was his detective fiction. As I shall explain below, Chukovskii's adoption of the rhetoric of detective fiction becomes a pivotal feature of the critical method in *From Chekhov*.

century English culture and, on the other, the desire to court a mass audience. The descriptors “readable” and “entertaining” place Chukovskii's work beyond the confines of meaningful, authentic criticism informed by taste and acumen, rather than the pleasures of sneering repudiation. One senses that Mirskii's assessment of Chukovskii intones an aristocratic condescension towards an upstart autodidact from a lower class, one whose work retains the spirit of the satirical gutter press rather than respectable journals.

Chukovskii's pieces, however mocking they might have been were published in periodicals that were no less respectable than those in which Aikhenval'd's appeared. Nevertheless, Mirskii's charges of superficiality could be more readily marshaled against Chukovskii because the critic makes few gestures towards a larger, more rigorous intellectual heritage (as Aikhenval'd does in the bewildering preface to *Silhouettes*).¹⁸³ To a certain extent, this is true even within the confines of literary portraiture: Chukovskii seems to appropriate the genre without the cultural baggage that it acquired from its rise in the European *fin de siècle* and migration into Russian letters. Chukovskii could not read French and thus likely did not encounter de Gourmont before *From Chekhov* was published, and while he certainly appreciated Pater's acolyte Oscar Wilde, Chukovskii never listed Pater as one of his English influences.¹⁸⁴

Implicit in both statements about *From Chekhov* is Chukovskii's blending of nominally distinct categories: Symbolists and non-Symbolists cannot be judged by the same metric; authentic criticism and ironic criticism belong to different social and economic spheres; high and low should remain distinct from one another. In his life and in his work, Chukovskii seems to confuse such operative boundaries, but it would be a mistake to consider this his personal sin. Indeed, Chukovskii laments the indecipherable heterogeneity of modern Russian culture in one of his most reputation-making pieces, “Nat Pinkerton and Contemporary Literature” (“Nat Pinkerton i sovremennaia literatura,” 1908). This rambling jeremiad catalogs the consumer practices of so-called “Hottentots” – uncultivated individuals who frequent the movie theaters for cheap thrills, prefer the fiction about the brutish American detective Nat Pinkerton to the refined Sherlock Holmes stories, and ultimately dictate the course of modern urban culture. The aesthetic preferences of these “Hottentots” tend toward the shallow, the coarse, the blunt, and above all, rapid series of stimuli that inevitably flatten and draw together phenomena from incompatible categories – as in, for example, the melange of advertisements that blaringly announce their products in newspapers and cityscapes (*SS*, v. 7, 37).¹⁸⁵

In drawing clever, rapid-fire analogies between topics as diverse as urban space, consumerism, and literary and cinematic forms, Chukovskii exhibits precisely the kind

183 Mirskii's assertion notwithstanding, Chukovskii's mocking tone might be traced not only to turn-of-the-century English satire, but to a more native critical tradition. In a January 8, 1902 diary entry, Chukovskii remarks, “In the teachers of that era – in Dobroliubov and Chernyshevskii – there was not any particular, exceptional sympathy for the people; as Podarskii so vividly underscores in the twelfth issue of *Russian Wealth* (*Russkoe bogatstvo*), they were not afraid to sometimes call the people 'blockheads,' 'ignorant,' 'stagnant!...'” Chukovskii, *Dnevnik 1901-1929*, 16.

184 For a helpful account of Kornei Chukovskii's remarks on his love of English fiction and formative experiences as a foreign correspondent in early twentieth-century London, as well as a useful history of his role in Russian-English literary relations, see Anna Vaninskaya, “Korney Chukovsky in Britain,” *Translation and Literature* 20, no. 3 (2011): 373–92.

185 For all works that are not *From Chekhov*, I will be citing from Kornei Chukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v piatnadsati tomakh* (Moskva: Terra-Knizhnyi klub, 2001). Subsequent in-text and footnoted references to Chukovskii's writings will refer to this text as *SS* and indicate the quoted volume and page number.

eclecticism and category-hopping that Briusov and Mirskii's object to. Chukovskii's piece, however, suggests that such rapid transitions between seemingly disparate phenomena proceed from modern life itself, and that one should develop the cognitive and critical capacities to navigate them. Indeed, Chukovskii traces the wider public's inability to navigate such phenomena to the gradual dissolution of the Russian intelligentsia, whose nineteenth-century incarnation he presents as *Kulturträgers*, a kind of intellectual avant-garde. Chukovskii provides evidence for the intelligentsia's decline with another interpretation that traverses cultural, economic, and material life: he suggests that the turn-of-the-century rise of the miscellany (*sborniki* and *almanakhi*, individual collections of written pieces by multiple authors)¹⁸⁶ as both its symptom and its cause. He asserts that such texts are incapable of fostering the “sectarianism” – that fanatical passion for a single, overarching ideal held by intellectuals of any stripe – once fostered by nineteenth-century “thick journals with strict editorial lines and explicit political and cultural objectives.”¹⁸⁷ In the absence of the “monotheism” (*edinobozhie*) that drove nineteenth-century print culture, the modern Russian intelligentsia has been thrown into chaos, embracing divergent, even contradictory, aesthetic and political principles, thereby speeding its own collapse. Chukovskii seeks to demonstrate as much in one particularly damning passage:

Журнал заменился альманахом – и так задорно альманах говорил: у меня Андрей Белый рядом с Семёном Юшкевичем, Валерий Брюсов с Серафимовичем, Куприн с Александром Бенуа. Я терпим, я не сектант, у меня нет фанатизма [...] И фанатический прежде толстый журнал стал приспособляться к альманаху и сам стал альманахом, только чуточку это скрывая: в «Русской мысли» заплясал Городецкий заодно с Крашенинниковым, и рядом с Ремизовым уселась г-жа Шепкина-Куперник; в «Современном мире» то же самое, а в «Образовании», если б не посторонние какие-то причины, мы наслаждались бы единственным, невозможным доселе зрелищем: Зинаида Гиппиус и Катерина Кускова, Мережковский и Прокопович сидят за одним столом и едят, и пьют из одной миски. (*SS*, v. 7, 55-6)

The journal has been replaced by the miscellany – and how cheerfully the miscellany said: “I have Andrei Bely next to Semyon Iushkevich, Valerii Briusov next to Serafimovich, Kuprin next to Aleksandr Benois. I am tolerant, I'm no sectarian, I lack fanaticism” [...] And the once fanatical thick journal began to accommodate the miscellany and itself became a miscellany, only hiding it somewhat: in *Russian*

186 Chukovskii frames his discussion of the miscellany in terms that recall the “literature and commerce” debates of the 1830s. These debates were engendered by Osip Senkovskii's *The Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*), the middlebrow miscellany all but cornered the literary market of its time and earned the ire of Pushkin, Gogol', Belinskii, and others for its haphazardly varied content, rejection of serious criticism, and disdain for its contributors' intellectual property rights; see William Mills Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), esp. 93-104.

187 Louise McReynolds locates the decisive battle between the fading thick journals and burgeoning commercial newspaper industry in the 1880s, with the rise of *The Moscow Leaf* (*Moskovskii listok*) and the censors' shuttering of *Fatherland Notes*, the last liberal thick journal, in 1884. Louise McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 97-122.

Thought, Gorodetskii began to dance with Krasheninikov, and next to Remizov sat Schepkina-Kupernik; in *Contemporary World* there's the same thing, and in *Education* – if not for our own, peculiar reasons – we would have enjoyed the singular, heretofore impossible spectacle: Zinaida Gippius and Katerina Kuskova, Merezhkovskii and Prokopovich sitting at the same table, eating and drinking from the same bowl.¹⁸⁸

Chukovskii finds such juxtapositions objectionable because they account for neither the authors' distinct aesthetic inclinations & professional spheres, nor the varying degrees of quality that their oeuvres possess. He suggests that modern publications tolerate and even embrace a contradictory heterogeneity unthinkable for the more purposefully constructed thick journals of the past. They consequently neuter any capacity for coherent artistic projects or rationally directed action.

In another move that traverses the divide between low and high culture, Chukovskii directs many of the same objections at the more rarefied, less commercial enterprise of Impressionist literary criticism, which commits the same crimes as the miscellany: random leaps from topic to topic, unjustifiable juxtapositions of different writers, and a staunch refusal to adhere to a uniform aesthetic or philosophical position. In his 1907 article “On Capricious Thought” (“O korotkomyslii”) published in the newspaper *Speech (Rech’)*,¹⁸⁹ Chukovskii lambasts the recent literary criticism by Innokentii Annenskii and, significantly, Iulii Aikhenval'd – particularly the first volume of *Silhouettes!* – for its incoherence. While Chukovskii finds that these critics make many worthy points about specific authors (and he will generously cite both

188 To properly frame Chukovskii's objections, it would be prudent to contextualize the various minor figures whom he lists. Semyon Iushkevich (1868-1927) was a Petersburg-based author and playwright, and frequent contributor to *Knowledge*, the publishing house maintained by Gor'kii; Aleksandr Serafimovich (1863-1949) was a Marxist-inclined author initially associated with Gor'kii's “Sreda” circle, and later earned renown for his writing and editorial work in the Soviet press; Sergei Gorodetskii (1884-1967) was associated with several pre-Revolutionary literary camps, including the Symbolists and Acmeists, and survived long into the Soviet era by embracing the Soviet ethos; Nikolai Krasheninnikov (1878-1941) was a minor but multitalented writer who published under a pseudonym in weekly humor magazines and produced more serious, social-minded fare under his own name (though the latter works were routinely dismissed by the likes of Gor'kii and Vladimir Korolenko); Tatiana Schepkina-Kupernik (1874-1952) was a poet, playwright, and writer of short prose who published in various pre-Revolutionary periodicals, including *The Russian Gazette (Russkie vedomosti)* and *Russian Thought (Russkaia mysl’)*; Ekaterina Kuskova (1869-1958) was a prominent journalist and (later) memoirist, famous primarily for her political writings and founding role in what would eventually become the Constitutional-Democratic Party (or Kadets) after 1905; Sergei Prokopovich (1871-1955) was not an author, but rather, like Kuskova (to whom he was married), a political writer, associated with the Russian liberal movement and Kadets during the first decade of the twentieth century. Chukovskii's juxtapositions (such as that of the Modernist Briusov and more Realist-inclined Serafimovich) are meant to point out the aesthetic contradictions that the editors of these periodicals provide without commenting on those juxtapositions. Maksimilian Voloshin will make similar remarks about the miscellany's tendency towards aesthetic contradiction in his own literary portraiture; see Ch. 2.4.

189 *Speech* was itself another print manifestation of the interaction between distinct cultural spheres. Established in 1906 by I. V. Gessen and Pavel Miliukov, representatives in the first Duma and members of the Kadet (Constitutional Democrat) party, this newspaper courted a larger audience for its founders' liberal political agenda. Although it tempered its dry political content with articles on culture (provided by, among others, Chukovskii and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii), the circulation of *Speech* was modest in comparison to other daily periodicals of the time. On *Speech* as one of several representative examples of politics' interaction with the commercial press after 1905, see McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime*, 210-218.

critics in his own works), their awkward flitting from one subject to another, the “arbitrariness of the themes and content” (*SS*, v. 6, 534), makes these collections less successful as unified bodies of criticism. For Chukovskii, this arbitrary manner of anthological presentation lacks any overarching critical philosophical-interpretative system (as in nineteenth-century criticism), but instead relies on the critic's vain and capricious perceptual capacity to foster a tenuous unity between the collection's varied works.¹⁹⁰

...Прежний критик, полагая в главу угла именно свое я и применяя к нему все чужие, мог широко пользоваться дедукцией, смотреть на все критикуемые вещи, как на частность своего мировоззрения и считать их только эпизодами своей общественной или эстетической, или моральной личности; нынешний же критик, наоборот, применяя свое я к каждому чужому, необходимо недогматичен, лишен обобщающей мысли, верен индуктивному методу, изменчив по темам и произволен по задачам. (*ibid* 536)

The critic of the past, regarding his *I* as paramount and applying all other selves to it, could make free use of deductions, see all the objects of his critique as a part of his worldview and take them as episodes of his own social or aesthetic or moral self; today's critic, on the other hand, applying his *I* to every other self, is necessarily undogmatic, deprived of generalizing thought, credulous of the inductive method, fickle in his themes, and arbitrary in his tasks.

Here we find a (likely unintentional) echo of Merezhkovskii's introduction to *Eternal Companions*: both authors speak of the critic's “I” as the pivot of the critical enterprise, albeit in different ways. As discussed in Ch. 1.2, Merezhkovskii's “I” creates a “subjective internal connection” between various literary texts, an impressionism that is subsequently reified in the collection's structure. Chukovskii suggests that such collections of literary criticism lack any obvious structure or internal motivation, and thus muddy their authors' points. He suggests that their “I” is a centrifugal center from which that wider world is impressionistically colonized, while the “I” of the nineteenth-century critic is a centripetal center through which the wider world is more rigorously filtered. Thus, while Impressionist criticism would appear to reflect the rapid-fire chaos of the modern world, it actually represents its apotheosis: its practitioners actively pursue and extend such capriciousness on the level of individual perception, further contributing to the social fragmentation of late imperial Russia. No wonder the young Chukovskii objected to being called an Impressionist.

Irrespective of those critics' voluntary cultivation of such capriciousness, the net result was the same: solipsistic aestheticism, complacent middlebrow art, and urban life as such were

190 In his dedicated review of Annenskii's *Book of Reflections*, Chukovskii (with a moderate dose of ironic overstatement) refers to the critic as, amongst other things, an “aesthetic nihilist”; see his “On Aesthetic Nihilism” (“Ob esteticheskom nihilizme”) in *SS* VI, 382-384. Annenskii was wounded by these accusations. Although he was too polite to be drawn into a polemic with the brash young critic (whom Briusov had only recently hired as a contributor to *Scales*), the foreword to the second *Book of Reflections* (*Kniga otrazhenii*, 1909), with its insistence that the volume was “not a miscellany,” suggests the enduring effect of Chukovskii's harsh words. See I.I. Podol'skaia, “‘Ia pochuvstvoval takuiu gor'kuiu vinu pered nim...’,” *Voprosy literatury* 8 (1979): 299–306.

all marked by the same arbitrary rapidity, one that was destructive to politics, discourse on culture, and individual development alike. Neither high nor low, neither aesthete nor Hottentot, was immune to the effects of modernity. It would be incorrect to suggest that Chukovskii positioned himself against all of this, however. One could not escape the rhythms of modern life: one had to learn to navigate them, even when that meant embracing the tools provided by modernity and turning them back on modernity itself. Indeed, the literary portrait was one such tool, and indeed proved to be an ideal one, if it was used carefully: portraiture needed to be didactic, but could not sag under the weight of erudition and esoteric style, lest it demand too much of the Hottentots' short attention span. For this reason, the portraiture of *From Chekhov* represents the young Chukovskii's highly symptomatic attempt to address this cultural malaise. Having established Chukovskii's cultural and intellectual background, we shall now turn to his critical methodology.

Literary Detective Work as Chukovskii's Critical Methodology

Jeffrey Brooks' useful account of the pre-Revolutionary Chukovskii suggests that he espoused a Walt Whitman-derived "egalitarian individualism" that placed his literary criticism somewhere between "modernist aesthetics and traditional utilitarianism,"¹⁹¹ but ultimately left him beholden to neither. Within such circumstances, it would seem curious that the vision of literary portraiture practiced *From Chekhov* borrows much from detective fiction. This middlebrow literary form eschews Modernist verbal fireworks and privileges a recreational escapism that seems highly un-utilitarian; furthermore, it represents the object of Chukovskii's ire in "Nat Pinkerton and Contemporary Literature," which was published in the same year as the first edition of *From Chekhov*. Such circumstances make Chukovskii's statement in *From Chekhov*'s preface that "Indeed, every critic should make himself into a good Pinkerton!" (29) seem all the more unusual. One could assume that, in his self-appointed role as an enlightener, Chukovskii is trying to sweeten the bitter pill of high culture with rhetoric that would appeal to the middlebrow readers that most frequently consumed detective diction.¹⁹² While generally true, such a perspective ignores not only the connections between detective fiction and more highbrow literature thought & culture,¹⁹³ but the ways in which detective work might obtain as an arch-modern practice, entirely symptomatic of Chukovskii's cultural moment and methodologically rigorous where Impressionist criticism is most capricious.

191 Jeffrey Brooks, "The Young Kornei Chukovsky (1905-1914): A Liberal Critic In Search of Cultural Unity," *Russian Review* 33, no. 1 (1974): 50-62, 51, 53.

192 A.I. Reitblat has argued that the "middle strata (minor officials, young merchants, clerks, milliners, artisans, etc.)" of early twentieth-century Russian society took most to detective fiction. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 299.

193 Olga Matich details the striking generic parallels that might be drawn between G. K. Chesterton's detective novel *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908) and Andrei Belyi's seminal Symbolist novel *Petersburg* (1914), and notes that a writer as idiosyncratic and acerbic as Vasili Rozanov thought of Sherlock Holmes as a righteous figure. Olga Matich, "Backs, Suddenlys, and Surveillance in Andrej Belyj's Petersburg," *Russian Literature* 58 (2005): 149-65. Similarly, Boris Dralyuk has located many positive portrayals of detective fiction in the letters and memoirs of the poet Sergei Esenin, the writer Valentin Kataev, and the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, all who, as children, appreciated the genre's bombast and ability to distract from (or aestheticize) the grim realities of pre-Revolutionary Russian life. Boris Dralyuk, *Western Crime Fiction Goes East: The Russian Pinkerton Craze, 1907-1934* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 7-27.

In the Russian context, Jeffrey Brooks' discussion of turn-of-the-century detective fiction can illuminate the power afforded Chukovskii by the peculiar mantle of Pinkertonian critic. Brooks suggests that Russianized versions of the hero detectives Pinkerton, Holmes, and the similarly popular Nat Carter possessed a broad appeal because, in an era defined by “a new sense of order, one in which the private community had an increased stake,” the private detective represented the proto-bourgeois literary hero that the Russian reading public needed. He was an interstitial figure, able to “traverse the hitherto impermeable barrier between freedom and order,” and capable of independent, rationally directed, and meaningful action.¹⁹⁴ By adopting the mantle of Pinkerton-critic, it seems as if Chukovskii is drawing on precisely this interstitial and more ultimately mobile position. In navigating the high and low, the respectable and the middlebrow, the young critic moves between the dangerous extreme of impressionist critical “freedom” and the all-too-automated “order” of Hottentot culture. One could also argue that Chukovskii's self-identification with Pinkerton was meant to instill in his readers those proto-bourgeois values of individual agency and self-reliance that the bootstrapping Chukovskii himself possessed.¹⁹⁵

Possessed of this greater degree of social mobility, Chukovskii's Pinkerton is likewise endowed with a more advantageous set of “reading” habits. His labor is one of sustained detection and righteous judgment, not haphazard speculation and subjective reasoning. His methodical interrogation of an integral *lichnost'*, rather than a superficial survey of outward appearance, makes Pinkerton a worthy model for the critic – and, by extension, Chukovskii's presumed reader. The opening remarks of *From Chekhov* extend this analogy:

Каждый писатель для меня вроде как бы сумасшедший. Особый пункт помешательства есть у каждого писателя, и задача критики в том, чтобы отыскать этот пункт. Нужно выследить в каждом то заветное и главное, что составляет самую сердцевину его души, и выставить эту сердцевину напоказ. Сразу ее не увидишь. Художник, как всякий помешанный, обычно скрывает свою манию от других. Он ведет себя, как нормальный, и о вещах судит здраво. Но это притворство. Только умеете подойти к нему, и он откроет вам по секрету, что он, например, петух, и захлопает руками, как крыльями, и пожалуй, шепнет вам на-ухо: кукуреку. (*SS*, v. 6, 29)

For me, every author is like a madman, each with his own peculiar madness, and the task of criticism is to sleuth it out. One must track down that which is hidden in every individual, track down that essential thing which makes up the very core of his soul, and put that core on display. You won't see it immediately. The artist, like any maniac, often hides his mania from others: he behaves normally, his judgment seems sound. But this is all an affectation. You need only get close to him, and he'll secretly reveal that, for example, he's a rooster, and he'll start flapping his arms like wings and, very likely, whisper in your ear: cock-a-doodle-doo!

194 Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 1985, 208. See also Dralyuk, *Western Crime Fiction Goes East*, in which detective fiction is figured as an escapist exploration of alternative moral codes.

195 However much its heroes profess and perform proto-bourgeois values, turn-of-the-century Russian detective fiction often intoned hints of proletarian class-consciousness as well; see Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 1985, 144, and Dralyuk, *Western Crime Fiction Goes East*, 43.

This paragraph is littered with vocabulary markers that stress the utility, and necessity, of sustained observation. As Chukovskii goes on to say, “it is only after extended pursuit (*posle dolgikh podkhodov*), and spying, and eavesdropping” that the reader will be able to grasp an author's essential features.¹⁹⁶ Chukovskii explicitly distinguishes this kind of holistic reading to critical Impressionism: “The impressionist critic's capricious, egotistical transitions from topic to topic prove comparatively fruitless” (30). Indeed, Chukovskii's method, which links one's ability to profile individual criminals with the ability to *think* like them, runs counter to Aikhenval'd's approach to writerly *lichnost'*. As discussed in Ch. 2.2, Aikhenval'd judges writers by their works' reflection of preordained cognitive processes that move from perception to abstraction; he does not attempt to isolate an author's unique stylistic feature as it exists in the author's oeuvre, in the author's own terms. Indeed, asks that his reader attempt to first navigate the multifarious traits exhibited by a given author, and only then assign meaning to those traits:

И если вы все подметите и обнаружите пред читателем, и докажете ему, что именно здесь, где говорите вы, и находится центр духовной личности того или другого художника (хотите – зовите этот центр помешательством, хотите – религией), и что все прочие черты есть как бы радиусы, сходящиеся в этом центре, – вы тогда выполните ту задачу, которую я, худо ли, хорошо ли, пытался наметить в этой книжке. (*SS*, v. 6, 29-30)

And if you take note of all this, and reveal before the reader, prove to him, that here, right where you're indicating, resides the center of the inner life of this or that artist (call this center “madness” or “creed,” whichever you prefer), and that all his other traits are like radii that converge in this center – then you will fulfill the task that I sought to outline, however skillfully or poorly, in this book.

One could argue that the odd pronoun slippage (i.e. from Chukovskii's “I” that begins the paragraph to the reader's “you” that ends it) in this paragraph harkens back to the intersection of aesthetic education and bourgeois self-reliance mentioned above: Chukovskii's readers are now equipped to conduct literary detective work on their own – instead of, again, passively receiving Aikhenval'd's ready aesthetic judgments. More immediately relevant to Chukovskii's critical methodology, however, is his application of the words center (*tsentr*) and radii (*radiusy*) to the process of literary detection. Indeed, these terms which Aikhenval'd will go on to employ for wider, culturological analyses (see Ch. 2.2) are here applied to the individual writer. The Pinkertonian method of literary criticism comes rests upon the ability to articulate the relationship between the essential and incidental, the universal and specific, that exist, formally, within any given author's oeuvre. It is only after such operations are performed across multiple oeuvres that the center and radii of a given epoch might be deduced. Where Aikhenval'd's portrait gallery is prescriptive, Chukovskii's rogue's gallery is diagnostic.

196 By emphasizing the sustained process of detection alongside the essential depth of a writer's personality, Chukovskii seems to intermingle what A.I. Reitblat has defined as the essential distinction between Western and Russian crime fiction: in the former, “the foundational focus is placed on the detective and the process of investigation”; in the latter, authors of crime fiction focus on “the experiences of the criminal (which frequently lead to his repentance) and the causes that impelled him to crime.” Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 300.

Such calibration of universal and specific personal traits is entirely keeping with the culture of Chukovskii's time – in particular, Russian and European discourses of criminality that *From Chekhov* activates. Significantly, such discourses were intimately connected with a contemporary practice in portraiture: composite photography. This technique was developed by Francis Galton (1822-1911), an English polymath and eugenicist whose thought and technical innovations in photography influenced *fin-de-siècle* conceptions of criminality, including those famously practiced by the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909). Galton sought a means by which generalizable human characteristics (genius, monstrosity, racial difference) might be empirically measured in a subject's physiognomy and placed in wider classificatory rubrics. In the late 1870s, he invented a peculiar apparatus that allowed him to overlay within a single image various full face or profile photographs. This process smoothed out the individual or atypical features of a given face, and yielded a new, abstracted visage that belonged to no one individual but contained within itself every member of his representative sample. From a criminological and physiological standpoint, such composites would nominally yield visual, quantifiable “averages” of a certain type: in recording *all* the physical features of a given set of faces, the most common features would collapse into one another, and any outlying bit of data – anything that deviated, in either direction, from the statistical mean – would fade into the background. Thus, composite photography represents a compilation of empirical data that can be visualized all at once, affording the viewer to immediate access to an idealized (racial, criminal, intellectual, etc.) type that remains uncorrupted by the perceptual vicissitudes and prejudices of the observing individual.¹⁹⁷

Such explorations of the universal through the particular are common to composite photography and literary portraiture – so much so that contemporary cultural commentators likened the two enterprises to one another.¹⁹⁸ Chukovskii's simply brings to the surface his chosen genre's connection with criminality, madness, and detection, a connection that is more readily apparent and well-established in the case of turn-of-the-century portraiture. However, that orientation towards criminality and madness possesses a more Russian intonation than many other contemporary phenomena. Chukovskii's professed desire to “out” the mad author-criminal before the wider world superficially reads just as Lombrosian as Max Nordau's famous psychological diagnoses of contemporary artists in *Degeneration* (1892). However, Russian detective fiction is rarely as interested in individual pathology as Nordau. Rather, as Louise McReynolds has recently noticed, writers of such fiction typically “faced criminals as human beings, [finding] society more culpable than the individual,” and further concluded that “the psychological and moral aspects of every society leave their prints on the crimes committed by its members,” and that “criminals are formed from life.”¹⁹⁹ Chukovskii's professed desire to isolate and classify a particular author's “madness” (*pomeshatel'stvo*) similarly gives way to inquiries into modern culture and urban experience; these circumstances, more than individual

197 On Galton's composite photography, see Josh Ellenbogen, *Reasoned and Unreasoned Images: The Photography of Bertillon, Galton, and Marey* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), esp. 111-28.

198 Indeed, Ford Maddox Ford's literary portrait of Ivan Turgenev – discussed in Ch. 1.2 of this dissertation – compares the characterological processes of literary portraiture to composite photography; see Ford, *Portraits from Life*, 154. On literary portraiture and composite photography as verbal and visual analogs to one another, see Saunders, *Self Impression*, 232-8.

199 Louise McReynolds, ““Who Cares Who Killed Ivan Ivanovich?”: The Literary Detective in Tsarist Russia,” *Russian History* 36, no. 3 (2009): 391–406, esp. 399-400.

pathology, is said to shape the *lichnost'* of each author.²⁰⁰ This critical apparatus is not only more rigorously focused on modernity (in particular the experience of the city) than that laid out in Aikhenval'd's long introduction; it is also reflected more obviously in *From Chekhov's* structure, the topic to which we now turn.

The Architecture of Chukovskii's *From Chekhov*

However disdainful Chukovskii may have been toward the nominally unmotivated, “impressionistic” sequence of portraits in Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, the contents of *From Chekhov* (see Fig. 2 below) might seem no less haphazard – and perhaps even more so – to our twenty-first-century eyes. However, the brief preface appended to the third printing of *From Chekhov* again proves useful here: much like how his half ironic invocation of detective fiction illuminates his critical method, Chukovskii's introductory remarks illuminate the hidden architecture of the volume, and belie an intriguing statement about the makeup of the late imperial literary field.

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ.	
	Стр.
Предисловіе къ третьему изданію.	
А. Чеховъ	1
К. Бальмонтъ	8
А. Блокъ	33
О. Демовъ	40
С. Сергѣевъ-Ценскій	54
А. Кудринъ	68
М. Горькій	98
Святалець	108
А. Каменскій	114
М. Арцыбашевъ	119
Г. Чулковъ	135
Т. Ардовъ	141
А. Рославлевъ	142
Е. Тарасовъ	150
Я. Годиный, Д. Цензоръ и др.	151
С. Юшкевичъ	152
Ф. Сологубъ	168
В. Зайцевъ	182
Д. Мережковскій	197
В. Брюсовъ	217
Л. Андреевъ	238
Приложеніе: Бальмонтъ и Шелли	255

Fig. 2 – table of contents for third edition of Chukovskii's *From Chekhov* (1909)

200 To be fair, Nordau – like many cultural commentators of his time – traced the origins of individual pathology to urban existence. However, Chukovskii is, again, not nearly as condemnatory of that individual pathology as such.

Chukovskii's volume avoids alternative sequences that we – perhaps anachronistically – might consider more logical. Most obviously, it refuses a historical-chronological one (e.g. from late Realism to high Modernism) and a more group-based one (that would place the Symbolists, members of Gor'kii's *Knowledge* publishing house, etc., together). Instead, following the introductory portrait of Chekhov, Chukovskii first places Bal'mont and Blok (Symbolist poets of the movement's first and second generations, respectively) adjacent to one another. He then inserts the political Gor'kii and provocateur Artsybashev into a more prose-focused middle section. Finally, he consigns Merezhkovskii and Briusov (literary elder statesmen and early pioneers of Russian Modernism) to the end, where they dwell alongside Andreev, who (as we saw in Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*) somewhat straddles Modernism and Realism as such.

One might generously interpret this sequence by reading it as purposeful chaos. It would seem to present the late imperial field as a site of chaos, an analog of hectic urban space that detectives, fictional and otherwise, were forced to navigate in turn-of-the-century literature. This chaos, in turn, would be the true proving ground for the development of the reader's literary detection skills. Chukovskii's preface imposes a modicum of order on this sequence. It suggests that the book is divided into three sections, each of which focuses on a specific feature that is nominally present (to varying degrees) in any contemporary author's oeuvre. These features are a fascination with urban experience; an engagement with *meshchanstvennost'*,²⁰¹ or petty-bourgeois philistinism; and last, a struggle with the concept of “individualism” (30-1).²⁰² Thus, like *Silhouettes*, *From Chekhov* suggests that a series of particularly turn-of-the-century thematic concerns unite writers who could more easily be distinguished by aesthetic camp, institutional affiliation (e.g. journals, *kruzhki*, etc.), and historico-biographical context. As a consequence, Chukovskii presents writerly *lichnost'* as simultaneously originating *from*, and manifested *in*, a fixed authorial style that refracts the shared thematics of urban experience, philistinism, and individualism in its own, peculiar way.

To demonstrate as much, we should examine Chukovskii's portrait of Chekhov whose simultaneously anomalous and primary position in the volume is likewise representative of *From Chekhov*'s overall poetics. Having “followed” Chekhov throughout his oeuvre like a good Pinkertonian critic, Chukovskii presents us with a series of (nominally) constant features of Chekhov's artistic method. He states that all of Chekhov's characters fit into two opposing categories: those who speak “clearly and definitively” and act with self-assured purpose (L'vov in *Ivanov*, Trigorin in *The Seagull*, Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard*, etc.), and those who have no prepared answers, who are plagued by uncertainty and respond in the negative, who can only mutter the words “That's not it” (Nina in *The Seagull*, the titular Uncle Vanya, etc.) (34-6). Chukovskii finds ubiquitous evidence of the conflict between these two character types in every stage of Chekhov's literary career – in his short stories and in his plays, in his major and minor works alike. Any individual work can thus stand as a synecdoche for his wider oeuvre.

The methodology should remind us of Aikhenval'd: Chukovskii seeks out features of Chekhov's writing that seem consistent, which he then presents as a fixed, immutable feature of the author's authorial *lichnost'*. Chekhov is denied the ability to change and develop as a

201 Chukovskii deviates, curiously, from the more standard Russian noun *meshchanstvo*.

202 While *From Chekhov*'s sequence of portraits remains consistent from printing to printing, the volume's underlying structure was not foregrounded until Chukovskii included this particular preface to the third, 1909 edition.

writer;²⁰³ he has a particular function to play in Chukovskii's holistic vision of late imperial culture. That feature is his sympathy for the purposelessness (*bestsel'nost'*) of the latter character type, even though, narratively speaking, the former emerges victorious in each of Chekhov's narrative conflicts. If we take the macro view of *From Chekhov*, we see that, for Chukovskii, Chekhov's affection for purposelessness permeates late imperial culture. Chukovskii casts it as a trait which other Russian authors would engage in their own way – that is, as a motif that becomes broadly reflected in the city's bewildering essence, the complacency of philistinism, and the struggle to construct a self that is implicit in individualism.

However, *From Chekhov* does not gradually build towards a kind of savior of modern Russian letters in the way that Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* does with Ivan Bunin. Chukovskii closes the collection with a portrait of Leonid Andreev, whom he labels the “synthesis of our epoch” (163), the author who most self-evidently manifests all three of the themes that give *From Chekhov* its tripartite structure. Aikhenval'd's Bunin bridges the old and the modern(ist) in an admirable and imitable way, while the hyperbolic Andreev corrupts whatever connections might exist between the two. Chukovskii treats Andreev more neutrally – or at least, no less caustically than he treats the other authors profiled in *From Chekhov*. Like the volume's titular writer, Andreev is simply another extremely representative avatar of the literary moment. *From Chekhov*'s sequence of portraits thus presents a diagnostic rather than prescriptive understanding of late imperial culture. While each author suffers from a particular “mania,” that mania need not be cured; Chukovskii merely provides his readers with an interpretative tactics for navigating the chaotic *polis* of contemporary culture. The structure of *From Chekhov* thus practices a Whitmanesque egalitarian individualism, embracing each author's peculiarities while inscribing him into a larger, democratic whole, never elevating a particular authorial method or school. Indeed, if the volume has a hero, it is no single author, but rather Chukovskii, literary gumshoe, possessed of the faculty to profile the rogues' gallery of modern literature – a faculty he seeks to pass on to his audience. With this in mind, we should now turn to *From Chekhov*'s individual portraits.

***Lichnost'* and Relationality in Chukovskii's Literary Portraits**

If the twenty-odd portraits of *From Chekhov* do not elevate any single author above others, then they are nevertheless present readers with superlative judgments of their chosen subjects. Most

203 Modern treatments of Chekhov tend to periodize the author's oeuvre and overlay a stylistic and thematic evolution on top of it; A. P. Chudakov, *Poetika Chekhova* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), is one such frequently cited example. The ability to periodize and see some kind of development in an author's work comes only with the power of retrospection, of course, so I do not wish to suggest that the young Chukovskii was at all going against the critical grain of his time. However, we might contextualize Chukovskii's approach by comparing it to that of Lev Shestov's 1908 essay “Creation *Ex Nihilo*: A. P. Chekhov” (“Tvorchestvo iz nichego [A. P. Chekhov]”). Shestov, too, states that “in the course of [Chekhov's] nearly twenty-five years of literary creativity Chekhov did but one thing: by one means or another, he killed human hopes” – a conclusion that Chukovskii's theory of warring character types inadvertently echoes. However, Shestov does recognize a profound difference between early and late Chekhov, and discuss the years 1888-89 as a period of meaningful change in the author's oeuvre (i.e. a turn to drama, more serious literature, and autobiographically-inspired content). Lev Shestov, *Chekhov and Other Essays* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 7-8. Chukovskii, however, performs no such delineation, and indeed posits a connection between Chekhov's juvenalia and his mature work: “This funny little story [“Kapitanskii mundir”] told by the carefree Chekhonte [i.e. a pseudonym under which the young author published some of his first works] is connected by some mysterious thread with the tenderest of Chekhov's works – *The Cherry Orchard*” (*SS*, v. 6, 32).

authors receive some kind of epithet designating them as “the [X]” or “the most [X]” within Chukovskii's selected pantheon. Nevertheless, these epithets emerge as mnemonic tools rather than a means of absolute distinction: they are a way of memorably inscribing each writer's “mania” into the volume's larger themes of urban life, philistinism, or individualism. We are meant to triangulate these nominally superlative authors with one another and with *From Chekhov's* overarching interpretative apparatus, and thereby acquire a better set of perceptual faculties for navigating modernity.

Chukovskii's take on the early Symbolist poet Konstantin Bal'mont represents a good entry point into *From Chekhov's* portraiture: it demonstrates the critic's method for constructing authorial *lichnost'* out of form and style, contains some of his most overtly didactic statements (buttressed by an unflattering interrogation of the “Hottentots” reading methods), and exemplifies the intriguing if idiosyncratic results of the larger volume's tripartite interpretative apparatus. Indeed, given that the first third of *From Chekhov* is dedicated to the theme of urban experience, Chukovskii's assertion that Bal'mont is the premier poet of the city would seem to be one of the most idiosyncratic of these. Not only was Bal'mont the first of the Symbolists who bore the imprint of life lived in rural Russia,²⁰⁴ but the content of his poetry – often set in nature and colored by observations of the natural world – would not immediately evoke urban life for readers of our time or Chukovskii's own.

Chukovskii's interpretation of Bal'mont is nevertheless a canny one, not least because it exemplifies the critic's penchant for extracting a counter-biographical authorial *lichnost'* from literary form. The particular mania that Chukovskii isolates in Bal'mont's poetry is vocabulary associated with time and brevity – *minute, moment, instant (minuta, mgnovenie, mig; 44)*. Modern scholars take this feature of Bal'mont's work as a theurgic, prototypically Symbolist extension of Baudelairean temporal poetics in which the moment bridges the fleeting and the infinite, the mutable and the eternal, the real and the ideal.²⁰⁵ Chukovskii, however, reads these words as a symptom of urban life's rapid tempos and rhythms. Indeed, Bal'mont's “momentary” poetics become mundane rather than mystical: they represent modern “existence in its chaos, its madness, its plurality” (41), the visions that flash before our eyes beyond the windows of a carriage speeding through the city streets (45), visual phenomena that can be expressed but fleetingly, vaguely, and (again!) impressionistically. Bal'mont acquires the superlative title of Russia's innovator of “capable, hurried, urban speech” (43).

For Chukovskii – contra Aikhenval'd's unified vision of Russian culture – Bal'mont represents contemporary Russian literature's absolute break with what he calls its nineteenth-century rural (*derevenskii*) past.²⁰⁶ So too must the reader of these works adapt to urban life. In one of his more overtly didactic moments, Chukovskii inserts several stanzas of Bal'mont's poetry into the portrait and then ventriloquizes their interpretation by “a person of the village, who has not tempered his soul to the rapid tempo of urban life.” His imagined simpleton proclaims, “Bal'mont wrongly calls the rays of the sunset 'unreturning.' These rays will return at

204 Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 56.

205 *Ibid.*, 60, 63.

206 As discussed in Ch. 2.2, Aikhenval'd promotes a vision of persistent cultural unity: the themes and content of Russian literature are constant; they merely wax and wane in time. For Aikhenval'd, “city” and “country” represent the far ends of a spectrum between which Russian literature and its authors regularly oscillate. For Chukovskii, modern, urban culture has triumphed irrevocably. It is the critic's task to force the urban consumers, these “Hottentots,” to locate the modern form in Bal'mont's ostensibly “rural” content.

the exact same time tomorrow. The trees also wrongly seem 'unalive' to him. The vegetable kingdom belongs to the organic world. Finally, his clouds wrongly look with 'sympathy' on the unnamed village. Clouds are incapable of feeling” (46). He misunderstands standard poetic devices such as the pathetic fallacy, and ignores Bal'mont's “momentary” aesthetic in favor of longer, recurrent, and ultimately agriculturally-oriented experiences of time. As A. I. Reitblat has observed, fiction and historical works displaced turn-of-the-century urbanized peasants' traditionally religious and instrumentalized “rural forms of translating culture.”²⁰⁷ Chukovskii's ventriloquism act provides just such a model for this acclimation to the rhythms of urban life, one that refocuses the novice reader's attention away from form and towards content.

While Chukovskii plays this confrontation between Bal'mont and bumpkin for laughs, I would argue that it represents a significant leap forward in Russian criticism's understanding of the urban experience – indeed, one that presages several famous treatments of that theme in twentieth-century literary theory. One can see as much in Chukovskii's discussion of how this more urban perceptual apparatus develops:

Так среди грома и сверканий улицы движется душа горожанина. Бальмонт весь во власти этих движений. Всю быстроту и изменчивость восприятия, всю душевную подвижность, всю эластичность городских душ он первый отразил с такой полнотой в торопливой и капризной своей поэзии [...] Постоянная готовность к восприятию новых и новых впечатлений, постоянная жадность к новым и новым ощущениям – этого не знала душа деревенского человека до его слияния с городской толпой. (*SS*, v. 6, 43-4)

Thus moves the soul of the urban man amidst the thunder and the flashes of the street. Bal'mont is entirely in the power of these movements. He was the first to reflect all the rapidity and the inconstancy of perception, all the mental mobility, all the elasticity of the urban souls in his hurried and capricious poetry [...] The perpetual readiness for the perception of new impressions, the perpetual thirst for new sensations – the soul of the rural man did not know this until his amalgamation into the urban crowd.

This discussion of perceptual faculties and crowds is curiously prescient of Walter Benjamin's discussion of the same. For Benjamin, within the *spleen* that compels Baudelaire to throw himself into the crowd, “time becomes palpable; the minutes cover a man like snowflakes. This time is outside history, as is that of the *mémoire involontaire*. But in the *spleen* the perception of time is supernaturally keen; every second finds consciousness ready to intercept its shock.”²⁰⁸ Chukovskii too locates “shocks” in urban experience; he repeatedly refers to these as the city's “effects” (*effekty*) (42) that condition the development of particular cognitive processes and ultimately produce literary forms that sublimate such effects.²⁰⁹

207 Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 143.

208 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 184.

209 On Benjamin's classic treatment of urban shocks and the aesthetic sublimation thereof, see *Ibid.*, 160-2 and 168-9. Benjamin's articulation of the phenomena is admittedly more complex than Chukovskii's: he is building on Freud's assertion that unconscious memory and its “traces” represent the premier device by which we learn to cognitively manage perceptual stimuli, the “shocks” of modern existence.

In his insistence that the effects urban life might manifest in literary form before they emerge in literary content, Chukovskii is likewise presaging points from Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981). Jameson suggests that “form [can be] apprehended as content,” and that “formal processes...[carry] ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works.”²¹⁰ This is essentially how Chukovskii distinguishes Bal'mont's formal innovations from the ostensibly more urban works of his nineteenth-century predecessors. Chukovskii states that Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevskii's famous treatments of the city possess a “sluggish” pace that is “utterly a creation of the forests and the steppes” (42); Bal'mont might write about nature, but his “momentary” aesthetic represents a far more accurate reflection of those urban rhythms. That Jameson traces such ideologically laden advances in literary form to moments of deep cultural heterogeneity and the coexistence of various means of production is only too appropriate as well: such were the aesthetic and socioeconomic circumstances of the Russia in which Chukovskii wrote; the fragmented audience whose appeal *From Chekhov* sought was just one more reflection thereof. Contradictorily locating the influence of the city where others see nature, Chukovskii's daring, unconventional reading of Bal'mont's poetry is thus a timely and forward-looking assertion of the urban theme's vitality in contemporary Russian literature.

From Chekhov remains a fundamentally comparative work, however, and for this reason it is worth comparing Chukovskii's treatment of Bal'mont to that of others writers who similarly fall under the sway of urban themes. His portrait of Aleksandr Blok is, admittedly, hardly revelatory, but it demonstrates well the comparative format that underpins *From Chekhov*. Blok's status in *From Chekhov* as “the poet of Nevskii Prospekt” (49) would still seem legitimate today, given his almost Baudelairean status in the Russian literary canon. As this designation implies, Chukovskii's Blok represents the chronicler of urban (i.e. Petersburgian) content to Bal'mont's prophet of urban form. Blok, in the young critic's mind, represents the first poet of *this* city, imperial Russia's capital; he is not a “poet of *the* city” in an abstract sense. In other words, Blok becomes the first to unite Petersburg's themes and content with a form that is adequate to them. Hence the high degree of topographical specificity in Chukovskii's epithet for him; hence his contextual extension of Bal'mont's merely formal urbanism.

Thus, the transition from Bal'mont to Blok represents a subtle gestures towards chronology and literary evolution. However, in order to uphold this presumed shift in literary history and maintain the relational format of the overall collection, Chukovskii's take on Blok must sidestep any evolution within the poet's individual oeuvre and the complexities of his personality. Blok's movement away from the ineffable Beautiful Lady towards more concrete, everyday experience (however inflected with the divine) represented one such complexity already recognized by Blok's contemporaries. To this end, *From Chekhov* performs on Blok the same synthetic operation that it performs on Chekhov and the same counter-biographical “life as works” reading it performs on Bal'mont: Chukovskii collapses authorial *lichnost'*, erasing any distinctions between the young, mystical Blok and the older, more urban Blok.

He does so by doubling down on the Nevskii Prospekt theme. For Chukovskii, this famous Petersburg street shapes even the earliest of Blok's poetry, which often seem to take place outside of real space and time. According to Chukovskii, it is wandering down the street and

210 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious : Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981, 99.

examining Nevskii's shop signs (*vyveski*, a recurrent trope of Petersburg texts) that prompts Blok's ethereal 1903 poem "I Foresee You" ("Predchuvstvuiu Tebia"). Boredom and the banality of urban life produce mystical experience. If at first Blok's famous Beautiful Lady represents a means of escaping Nevskii, then Nevskii soon becomes the most adequate environment for her:

И так долго ждал, и так ужасен был Невский, и так неизбежны его конки, и его городовые, и его витрины, и так силен этот «змей-дракон», восстающий на Прекрасную Даму, что поэт вдруг понял: кошмар этот действительно и есть тайна, благословение, мистика, а Невский и есть достойное окружение для его Прекрасной Дамы. (51)

And how long he waited, and how awful was Nevskii, and how unavoidable its horse-drawn carriages, and its policemen, and its shop-windows, and how strong was this dragon, rebelling against the Beautiful Lady, that the poet suddenly understood: this nightmare, too, was truly a mystery, a blessing, mysticism, and Nevskii was indeed a worthy environment for his Beautiful Lady.

Thus, in Chukovskii's estimation, whether Nevskii Prospekt obtains as the banal catalyst for a poet's escapist daydreaming or as the locale whose inherent mystery becomes gradually apparent, this thoroughfare shapes the entirety of Blok's output and defines the contours of his every experience. This critical operation is typical for, and essential to, *From Chekhov*. To employ the terminology used in its introduction, Blok's "radii" (his incidental features: love for the Beautiful Lady, tendency towards mysticism, the urban content of his poetry, etc.) all proceed from his "center" (his pivotal characteristic: an engagement with Nevskii Prospekt). Within the larger framework of Chukovskii's collection, Blok's own "center," his status as the chronicler of Nevskii Prospekt, itself serves as a "radius," as does Bal'mont's "momentary" aesthetic: the oeuvres of Blok and Bal'mont become particular articulations of a more profound "center," urban experience. These relational constructions of both authorial personality and the literary field define *From Chekhov*. They not only allow Chukovskii to draw diverse figures and literary camps together; they also help him overcome the nominal "arbitrariness of themes and content" that he found so objectionable in the impressionist critics' collections. Chukovskii merely takes the synthetic principles of construction that operate within an individual portrait and maps them onto his three-pronged interrogation of contemporary Russian literature.

The second "center" of *From Chekhov* is bourgeois philistinism (*meshchanstvennost'*), of which Maksim Gor'kii is presented as the premier example. This stance is no less provocative than Chukovskii's interpretation of Bal'mont as an urban poet, and presents another version of his counter-biographical "life as works" model of critical interpretation. Gor'kii was one of the most canny self-promoters in turn-of-the-century Russian literary culture, and the public reception of his works was inevitably colored by his reputation as a Nietzschean hobo who had witnessed, endured, and overcome the indignities of poverty. By any measure, Gor'kii's art was thought to directly reflect his life, and vice versa.²¹¹ Chukovskii's portrait of the author, however, begins with an almost sneering rejection of that correspondence: "Do as you like, but I don't believe his

211 Mary Louise Loe, "Maksim Gor'kii and the Sreda Circle: 1899-1905," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 1 (1985): 49-66, 50.

biography” (84). Chukovskii contends that Gor’kii is more likely the son of a petty bureaucrat who drinks tea, abstains from alcohol (“It’s unhealthy”) and goes to the cinema on Sunday – in other words, someone whose existence is the very definition of bourgeois respectability.

As in his interpretation of Bal’mont, Chukovskii comes to this conclusion on the basis of formal consistencies of the author’s oeuvre. He starts by examining one of Gor’kii’s earliest – and according to Chukovskii, most paradigmatic – stories, the 1894 “Song of the Falcon” (“Pesnia o sokole”). This fable neatly divides the world into two types: the falcons, those individuals who soar majestically and freely; and the snakes, those masses who remain in the mire, living out pitiful, backwards lives. Much as he did for Chekhov’s oeuvre, Chukovskii then locates this bipartite division of the world in Gor’kii’s subsequent stories and plays, even showing how the “falcons” from Gor’kii’s various works repeat the same basic ideas – indifference to the herd, esteem for individuality, etc. – and even employ the same narrow vocabulary. Chukovskii derives a clever, if contradictory, conclusion from this perpetual clash between two human types: Gor’kii’s works are constructed on a “monotonous precision” (85), on “geometrical figures” (86), on aphorisms (87), on symmetry (ibid). Consequently, however much he wishes to demonstrate the superiority of the falcons over the snakes, Gor’kii’s inevitably schematic works betray a respect for order, for comfortable “armchair philosophy” (*komnatnaia filosofiia*) (ibid). They begin to resemble an accountant’s ledger (85), all of which clearly places his spiritual sympathies with the staid bourgeoisie rather than the heroic hobos with whom he is widely associated. Thus, Chukovskii states that if we are to maintain the Russian “superstition” of identifying the *lichnost’* of the author with that of the protagonist, then Gor’kii must be identified with Bessemenov, the obtuse patriarch who serves as the protagonist of Gor’kii’s play *Bourgeois (Meshchane)* (89). Thus, Chukovskii states that the character whom Gor’kii most disdains ideologically is the one whom he most resembles artistically.

In a way, the operations that produce Chukovskii’s arresting conclusion are not so distinct from those that yield Bal’mont, poet of the city. True, while Chukovskii seems to take particular glee in outing Gor’kii, the heroic “singer of personality,” as a living embodiment of petty bourgeois philistinism, his critical method remains consistent across the portraits: he defines the author’s *lichnost’* not by the superficial facts of his biography or the self-evident content of his works, but by the deeper formal structures present in his wider oeuvre. His conclusion about Gor’kii is not so different from that of Aikhenval’d:

Горький, симметричный из сочинителей, наиболее придавил свою личность, сузил ее, обкорнал – и не только свою, но и личность всех тех, кого он так симметрично, так по-книжному неестественно вывел в своих писаниях, отнимая у них конкретные черты во имя афоризма. Певец личности, он является на деле наибольшим ее отрицателем. Прославляя человека вообще, отвлеченного человека, [...] воспевая такого общечеловека, человека алгебраического, Горький тем самым высказывает полнейшее равнодушие к человеку конкретному, к неповторяемой живой личности. (88)

Gor’kii, the most symmetrical of writers, has compressed his own personality as much as possible, has narrowed it, lopped it off – and not only his own, but the personality of all those whom he symmetrically, methodically, unnaturally depicts in

his writings, extracting their concrete features in the name of an aphorism. In his actions, he singer of personality appears as its greatest denier. Glorifying man in general, the abstract man, [...] singing the praises of the universal man, the algebraic man, Gor'kii thereby expresses absolute indifference to concrete man, to the unique living personality.

While this aesthetic judgment of Gor'kii's aphoristic characters is not so different than that made in Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*, Chukovskii's analysis foregrounds the theme of Gor'kii's *lichnost'* – particularly the malleability thereof, a theme with particular resonance for the bootstrapping young critic. Indeed, Chukovskii concludes his examination of Gor'kii's art with a quote from Merezhkovskii, who professes a rather condescending faith in the author's potential for “rebirth” (89). Like Merezhkovskii, Chukovskii expresses (however snidely) a respect for the energy and conviction of Gor'kii's writing; it is Gor'kii's penchant for highly ordered (and therefore seemingly bourgeois) divisions between the “falcons” and the “snakes” remains his undoing. Presumably, the comparative apparatus that drives *From Chekhov* does not fall prey to these shortcomings. To Gor'kii's two absolute and incompatible categories, Chukovskii presents three relativized and mutually reinforcing traits. To Gor'kii's supermen who espouse abstract philosophies, Chukovskii espouses a concrete interpretative methodology.

Indeed, Gor'kii's status as the “most symmetrical of writers” arguably makes him the exemplary figure in *From Chekhov*'s middle section. Yet at the same time, he throws into relief the similarly superlative qualities of his fellow grapplers with *meshchanstvennost'*. The pronouncement of Gor'kii's “conservatism” (88) echoes Chukovskii's statement that Aleksandr Kuprin is likewise a “conservative” (73). Whereas Gor'kii is able to escape into schematic abstraction, Kuprin lacks that capacity, and instead remains mired in *byt*, unable to see beyond (or reproduce anything but) the dull, repetitive life that surrounds him (75). (Kuprin's epithet? “The poet of stasis” [73].) Mikhail Artsybashev's portrait likewise contains echoes of Gor'kii's: the author's style reminds Chukovskii of an “aged clerk from some provincial department, one of those who drinks tea from a saucer, has a golden pocketwatch, and takes medicine for his hemorrhoids” (97) – another unflattering characterization of a petty-bourgeois type. So too with Chukovskii's interrogation of Artsybashev's hamfisted flaunting of conventional morality: “Anarchism peacefully slipped into *meshchanstvo*, and not only did not destroy it, but strengthened it” (99).²¹² (Artsybashev's epithet? “The reasonable pornographer” [102].) The middle section of *From Chekhov* roundly suggests that those modern Russian authors whose stories battle *meshchanstvennost'* end up reinforcing or succumbing to it *formally*. This is, of course, another example of the gleeful perversion permitted by Chukovskii's formalist “life as works” model.

If it is Gor'kii's schematic form that makes him a typical petty bourgeois denies him his nominal title of “singer of personality,” then what kind of form does express contemporary

212 Chukovskii's discussion of form in Artsybashev's novel *Sanin* (1907) likewise recalls the contradiction between Gor'kii's anti-bourgeois ideology and (nominally) arch-bourgeois, “accountant ledger” poetics. The young critic claims that the hedonistic, body-centric philosophy of *Sanin*'s eponymous protagonist runs up against Artsybashev's “clerical methodology” and Sanin's perpetual need to rationally “prove” his theories to other characters, which “[transform] this 'anarchist' novel into an arithmetical novel right before our eyes.” This contradiction proves that logic and reason trump base desire, and thus undermines the nominally provocative worldview of Artsybashev's character (102-3).

Russian letters' engagement with the individual, that true domain of *lichnost'*? This is the question that Chukovskii seeks to answer in the final third of *From Chekhov*. As previously mentioned, Leonid Andreev's portrait rounds out the collection, as this author, in Chukovskii's eyes, best exemplifies the contemporary fascination with individualism. As he does in previous sections of *From Chekhov*, Chukovskii arrives at a fittingly contradictory conclusion. Just as Bal'mont's euphonious poetry actually expresses the rapid rhythms of urban life, and just as Gor'kii's heroic battle against philistinism relies on a philistine poetics, contemporary Russian authors' attempts to construct archly individual authorial identities rely on the destruction of *lichnost'* itself.

As one might expect, Valerii Briusov makes his appearance in this final section of *From Chekhov*. Individualism, as a doctrine of inward reflection and outward performance of the self, was a core philosophical tenet of Briusov's earliest experiments with literary Decadence; through his continued esteem for Nietzsche and Leibniz, it remained a vital component of the poet's self-conception.²¹³ Chukovskii sees the exact opposite tendency in the poet, and in this sense, his evaluation of Briusov resembles Aikhenval'd's (and Voloshin's; see Ch. 2.4). Briusov is presented as a devout student of world culture who nevertheless lacks real-world knowledge, a poet whose aesthetic and philosophical precision betrays an artificiality rather than genuine mysticism.²¹⁴ Chukovskii arrives at his conclusion, however, through an idiosyncratic formal reading of Briusov's oeuvre. He sees in Briusov's works the perpetual impulse to measure out, weigh, and define phenomena such as eros and romance: "Briusov's poems about passion are varied definitions, signs (*priznaki*), and features of this concept; in other words, they serve as adjectives for the noun 'passion'" (154). As evidence for this conclusion, he marshals citations from numerous works where Briusov presents his varied subjects (war, mankind, the city, the female, history) as if he is describing, defining, and activating them for the first time. Thence, Chukovskii claims, Briusov's tendency towards odic and apostrophic address, which provides a veneer of action while "adjectives pass themselves off as verbs, and all of these features which the poet discovers in things, [Briusov] artificially transforms into actions" (158).

Examined on the basis of his oeuvre's stable formal qualities, Briusov thus becomes "the poet of adjectives," "the resurrector of the epithet in Russian literature" (157). His grand heroic individualism is thus reduced to something more impersonal and archetypal – part Adamic, part Promethean. Briusov's mania robs himself of authentic life (159), deprives his poetry of words such as "today" and "tomorrow" which point to lived experience, and transforms himself into "a person abandoning himself" (*ukhodiashchii ot samogo sebia*) (162). In this conclusion, we should hear echoes of Bal'mont and Gor'kii's portraits: in endeavoring to perform a certain idea, the writer embodies its aesthetic antipode. In trying to embody the arch-modern tenet of artistic individualism, Briusov robs himself of any true individualism, rendering himself an ideal subject

213 Joan Delaney Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

214 Chukovskii states that Briusov's prose "strikes us with the persistence of its logic and strong grasp of judiciousness. His polemics are defined by their sobriety, and more than once, in an argument with his philosophical comrades Andrei Belyi and Viach. Ivanov, he has had occasion to juxtapose his own judicious syllogisms to their mystical experience [...] Briusov cites Swedenborg as a like-minded person, although he himself does not know this otherworld, but only knows about it – not in experience, but as an object of cognition (*ne v opyte, a kak ob"ekt poznaniia*)" (160-1). This cognition-experience spectrum recalls Aikhenval'd.

for *From Chekhov's* formal methodology: the poet *already* defines his *lichnost'* through form rather than content, through adjectives rather than predicates.

Chukovskii rounds out the third section of *From Chekhov* with his portrait of Leonid Andreev, whose works similarly present the crisis of individualism. Chukovskii states that Andreev searches for *lichnost'* within “true individuality” (*istinnaia individual'nost'*), but does so like someone “tearing off the leaves of a cabbage to get to its heart.” However, he finds nothing there: “Andreev searches beneath [these leaves] and when he's torn off nearly all of them, his [1906 play] *The Life of Man* emerged, with capital letters, the life of anyone, of the universal man” (*SS*, v. 6, 169). Thus, like Bal'mont, Gor'kii, and Briusov before him, Andreev's aesthetic production unwittingly inverts his philosophical principles: in seeking to become someone, he becomes an everyman, no one. However, Chukovskii's signature formal analysis is largely absent here: close readings of the author's texts are largely replaced by outsized rhetoric.

The perfunctory essence of Andreev's portrait likely stems from the fact that it rounds out the collection as a whole – quite appropriately, given that he is touted as the most representative, the most contemporary of contemporary authors. His oeuvre routinely engages the three themes that Chukovskii finds ubiquitous in post-Chekhovian literature, and thus (as in Aikhenval'd's assessment of him in *Silhouettes*), Andreev is said to hyperbolize every aspect of modern Russian existence and muddy otherwise clear boundaries between Realism and Modernism. In theory, he throws into relief the other profiles of *From Chekhov*, but Andreev's outsized aesthetic threatens to make Chukovskii's observations about other authors insignificant, moot. Chukovskii forestalls this result by using Andreev's literary method as a meta-lesson about the rationale for literary criticism as such:

Люди правдивы, люди объединены, люди счастливы только тогда, когда они уходят от своих *различных* жизней, от своих различных душ в единый безличный восторг общебытия, когда тип становится безтипом, лицо обезличивается, и то хрупкое, но драгоценное, что зовется человеческим я, рассыпается безвозвратно. Кочана под листьями нет, и, чем обдирать их, их нужно бережно собрать и хранить, и лелеять, потому что мы все, читатели, зрители, слушатели, мы все, встречающиеся теперь с общечеловеком, мы сами несколько ни общелюди, мы мясо и кровь, и общечеловека нигде не видали, и горе этому общечеловеку, повстречавшемуся с нами. (170; italics in original)

People are true, people are united, people are happy only when they depart from their *various* lives, from their various souls, into the impersonal joy of communal existence, when the type becomes non-type, when the personal is depersonalized, and that fragile yet precious thing that is known as the human *I* is irrevocably scattered. There's no head of cabbage beneath the leaves, and rather than tearing them off, we must carefully gather, save, and cherish them, for all of us, we readers, observers, listeners, all of us who are now meeting the universal man, we ourselves are in no way universal people, we are but flesh and blood; we've not seen anywhere the universal man anywhere, and woe unto this universal man who has encountered us.

Chukovskii praises the virtues of anonymous, Dionysian communal activity that Andreev's

hyperbolic *Chelovek* seems to intone. At the same time, he warns of this activity's ultimate emptiness (“There's no head of cabbage beneath the leaves”), and instead posits the desire to preserve precious remnants of discrete selfhood. This productive tension between whole and part, between abstraction and individuation, undergirds the entirety of *From Chekhov*: the system of center and radii provides the architecture for individual portraits and, indeed, the portrait collection itself. Chukovskii's interpretative framework threatens to reduce contemporary authors to faceless chroniclers of Russia's newfound modernity; his epithets preserve each author's individuality, their selfhood, their *lichnost'*, even where the formal qualities of a given writer's aesthetic threaten to undermine that *lichnost'*.

Conclusion

Chukovskii's presentation of urban life, philistinism, and individualism seems like a more refined and focused version of the interpretative apparatus that undergirds Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes*. These concerns were not unique to Chukovskii, of course; they represent the collective neuroses of late imperial Russia, and one can easily find critics of all philosophical and political bents alike wringing their hands over them in much the same language.²¹⁵ However, his extremely idiosyncratic treatments of those themes, which often result in counter-biographical readings of his subjects, threaten to make *From Chekhov* something of an outlier in the criticism of its time. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see Chukovskii's collection as anything but an extremely symptomatic manifestation of turn-of-the-century Russian literary portraiture, and indeed, of turn-of-the-century Russian literature as a whole.

Like other portraitists, he seeks to work figures of distinct aesthetic camps into a holistic explanatory framework. Unlike the oft-abstruse Aikhenval'd, however, Chukovskii desires (in the language of his Chekhov portrait) to “speak clearly and definitively” about the oft-disorienting contemporary literary field. He condemns Impressionist critical collections whose poetics remain obscure; *From Chekhov*'s preface presents a brief and intelligible statement about the collection's structure. He condemns the tastes of Russia's mass of novice readers, the “Hottentots,” but understands that he must speak their language in order to endear genuine culture to them; *From Chekhov* turns to the rhetoric of detective fiction, the similarly ascendant genre that can be put to recreational and didactic methods simultaneously, and asks its readers to sleuth out each author's individual mania. Chukovskii draws together as many facets of contemporary Russian culture as he can, such that they might be more effectively calibrated against one another by people from all social and educational backgrounds. His metaphor of tearing cabbage is the perfect incarnation of this: a quirky variant of an arch-Modernist, Dionysian destruction, it remains eminently digestible, rooted in the everyday experience (and diet) of average Russian citizens.

The genuinely formal analysis that underlies *From Chekhov* similarly remains the work's most symptomatic and idiosyncratic feature. As his contemporaries noted, Chukovskii gleefully uses it to construct idiosyncratic, counter-biographical, and caricatured formulations of writerly *lichnosti*. In doing so, however, he intuitively foreshadows features of twentieth-century critical theory that afford pivotal importance to urban experience and the material conditions in which

215 Mark Steinberg's recent study of the turn-of-the-century Russian experiences of modernity purposefully emphasizes the omnipresence of specific images and themes – which, I would argue, Chukovskii's interpretative trinity of urban life, *meschanstvennost'*, and (im)personality draw from – amongst wide and diverse swaths of Russia's cultural commentators. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle*, 7.

literary reception takes place. Indeed, the modern, speeding, chaotic city – that background to and precondition of the detective's work – provides Chukovskii with his critical methodology, and consequently demonstrates the timeliness of his chosen genre. Literary portraits answer the rapidity and heterogeneity of modern life with a genre that can be quickly digested, typologies that are refracted through individual examples and lived experience. They allow mass readers to overcome gaps in their cultural knowledge (of authors' biographies, Russian history, literary aesthetics, etc.) by focusing on the truths that exist (and persist) in literary form.

The program of *From Chekhov* thus suggests that the ways one knows the world, knows literature, and knows the self can be harmonized through attention to form rather than content or context. This is Chukovskii's variant of literary portraiture's general tendency towards “life as works.” It is no coincidence that the young Chukovskii, a bootstrapping autodidact born out of wedlock, prefers to read *lichnost'* out of how one does something rather than what one is. The transformations that he visits upon modern Russian authors, the transformative “formal education” that he provides for the mass reader – these are but reflections of the metamorphosis that the young critic had already effected upon himself, and for which he serves as imitable exemplar. In other words, *From Chekhov* is not only a composite portrait of modern Russia, but also a portrait of Chukovskii himself.

Ch. 2.4: Maksimilian Voloshin's Faces of Creativity: Overcoming Life-Creation Through Biographism

As I have argued in the preceding chapters, Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* and Chukovskii's *From Chekhov* used the portrait gallery format to court a wider and seemingly middlebrow readership for their criticism. Instructing their audiences in what and how to read, these critics glossed over any kind of contextualizing information (socioeconomic background, biography, etc.) that traditionally served as interpretative lenses in social-minded Russian literary criticism. By focusing exclusively on the method and form exhibited in an author's oeuvre, they produced a “life *as* works” model of criticism, as I have called it. This model yielded authorial *lichnosti* that were static and unchanging: each author possessed a specific, defining stylistic or formal trait that could be located in any portion of his or her oeuvre. The complexities of artistic evolution were sacrificed so that the average consumer of Russian culture could more easily navigate the constellations of *lichnosti* that accrued in the late imperial literary field – a practice enabled and encouraged by the literary portrait genre's tendency towards brevity and economy.

As suggested in Ch. 1.2, twentieth-century Western European literary portraiture turned away from such attempts to flatten individual personality as authors adapted the genre to suit the needs of memoir writing. Maksimilian Voloshin enacts the first steps of a similar generic evolution within Russian literary portraiture. Voloshin treats authorial *lichnost'* as a complex, evolving, and discontinuous phenomenon that reflects the heterogeneity of modern Russian culture itself. Consequently, the literary portrait's orientation towards synecdoche remains in effect; it simply acquires a new, larger sense of scale. If the popular portrait extracted *lichnost'* from stable formal patterns ubiquitous in a writer's oeuvre, then Voloshin's brand of portraiture focused on the *illegibility* of *lichnost'*, on the potential incongruency and incompatibility of its parts. Life *and* works are two such parts for Voloshin: they are intertwined, mutually reinforcing phenomena, certainly, but phenomena that ultimately struggle with and remain irreducible to one another – unlike in the “life *as* works” model seen in the cases of Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii.

Although written as pure literary and cultural criticism, Voloshin's portraits remain inflected with “life” – namely, Voloshin's personal contact with and intimate knowledge of his subjects. His work is doubly bound by biography: he reads a writer's work against biographical developments in that writer's life, while contextualizing that assessment against the background of his *own* intellectual development. This double bind, I would argue, stems from Voloshin's peculiar place in Symbolist culture, whose valuation of individual *lichnost'* he inherited but whose methods for constructing that *lichnost'* he questioned. (In this sense, his literary critical portraits anticipate Vladislav Khodasevich's memoir-portraits; see Ch. 3.2.) While these twin orientations towards biographism and Symbolism would seem to methodologically distinguish Voloshin from Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, his work in the genre activates concerns similar to their own: it too seeks a holistic apparatus for the interpretation of contemporary Russian culture, and expresses concerns about how the literary market and certain publishing formats distort such holism. Thus, we should Voloshin liminally, as a bridge between pre- and post-Revolutionary literary developments, between the literary portrait as criticism and as memoir, between the interpretative models of “life *as* works” and “life *and* works.”

Maksimilian Voloshin's Professional, Intellectual, and Cultural Context

The early biography of Maksimilian Voloshin (1877-1932) bears a superficial similarity to that of Chukovskii: both were shaped by absent parents and broken families, and both got their professional start working as foreign correspondents for Russian newspapers. However, while Chukovskii's status as illegitimate son and bootstrapping autodidact imbued him with a prickly sort of pride, then Voloshin's more traditionally academic education and overbearing mother produced a milder individual – one more interested in negotiation than provocation. The young Marina Tsvetaevna counted Voloshin as her first literary mentor, and in her memoirs, she praised his ability to shape the world around him (*mirotvorchestvo*, in her words), to alleviate tension and hurt, to endear himself to anyone, to navigate and mollify potentially volatile interpersonal disputes – all traits that she connected to his upbringing.²¹⁶ We might further connect these traits to Voloshin's facility for literary portraiture, which trades in individuation and sociability alike.

As one scholar has noted, Voloshin's skill for interpersonal relations proved to be a professional boon. To acquire additional income, Voloshin's mother rented rooms in their Crimean home to various minor artists and authors who earned their keep through systems of patronage. The young Voloshin acquired professional contacts through his early paid translation work, and sought patron-mentors in Russian cultural circles outside of Crimea. In the early aughts, he studied in Paris, and there endeared himself to the French critic Remy de Gourmont(!) and Konstantin Bal'mont. Via correspondence, Bal'mont then introduced Voloshin to Valerii Briusov, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and other luminaries of the Russian literary scene.²¹⁷ Like Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, Voloshin found Briusov to be a willing (if combative) publisher of his journalistic work, work which, in 1904, the young writer cleverly parlayed into a position as a Paris-based correspondent for the Petersburg newspaper *Rus'*.

After two years of articles on art exhibitions, *Rus'* granted Voloshin, who had since returned to Russia, a recurring feature in which he could write reviews of recently published Russian literature and poetry. It was under the aegis of this recurring column, titled “Faces of Creativity” (“Liki tvorchestva”), that he produced his literary portraiture. In letters to friends, Voloshin described this feature as “portraits of contemporary and young poets”²¹⁸ and expressed the desire to compile its constituent works into a discrete volume.²¹⁹ Plans for such a collection, which was to be similarly titled *Faces of Creativity*, were only partially fulfilled in Voloshin's lifetime: the project was stymied by World War I and the political exigencies of early Soviet Russia. However, in 1988 the Nauka publishing house issued a four-book edition of Voloshin's *Faces*, reconstructed on the basis of the author's extensive preparatory notes.²²⁰

Voloshin's portraiture was largely dedicated to the work of Symbolists authors and poets, in whose circles he was a welcome if somewhat alien member. His conception of literary portraiture likewise bears the stamp of their influence more than Aikhenval'd or Chukovskii's.

216 See Tsvetaeva's memoir of Voloshin, “A Vital Word About the Living” (“Zhivoe o zhivom,” 1933), in Marina Tsvetaeva, *Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh: 1917-1937* (New York: Russica Publishers, 1979), v. 2, 52-3.

217 Barbara Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 28-40.

218 Maksimilian Voloshin, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2003), v. 9, 263.

219 *Ibid.*, 271.

220 Maksimilian Voloshin, *Liki tvorchestva* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988). Subsequent in-text references to Voloshin's criticism and portraiture will be drawn from this volume. For the purposes of this chapter, I am going to read the four books in *Faces of Creativity* as a unit, even if these plans were not realized in Voloshin's lifetime.

This is not to say that Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii foreswore Symbolist *kruzhki* or lacked intimate knowledge of their portrait subjects' lived existence: they sporadically attended Briusov's Moscow-based literary circle and Ivanov's Petersburg-based Tower, respectively. Voloshin was simply more invested in the Symbolist way of life, going as far as to live with Ivanov and Lidiia Zinovieva-Annibal for stretches of time. Furthermore, Voloshin's criticism was not as oriented towards a mass audience as that of Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, his association with the newspaper *Rus'* notwithstanding. Like many Symbolist-oriented and -directed compendia of criticism, *Faces of Creativity* had a comparatively small print run of 1000 copies (cf. *Silhouettes'* 3000), and witnessed no reprintings (cf. *Silhouettes'* five and *From Chekhov's* three).²²¹ Ultimately, Voloshin considered criticism to be an intimate and interpersonal affair rather than a strictly professional and public one. He in fact retained many copies of *Faces* and simply gifted them to friends, suggesting that his Symbolist-oriented literary portraiture originates from and circulates within private life rather than the public market.

At the same time, many of Voloshin exhibits a certain skepticism towards orthodox Symbolist ideas about lived existence. We might trace this skepticism to Voloshin's negative experiences with the Symbolist practice of *zhiznetvorchestvo*, or “life-creation,” the idea that lived experience can be consciously and aesthetically constructed.²²² In the winter of 1906-7, leading Symbolist Viacheslav Ivanov, his wife and fellow writer Lidiia Zinovieva-Annibal, and Margarita Voloshina (Maksimilian Voloshin's wife) participated in one of the Symbolists' famous life-creative “triple unions” that strove to transform mundane life along erotic and idealist lines. The union eventually dissolved in a particularly unpleasant way, and both Voloshin and his wife retrospectively viewed its collapse as a sign of improper mentor-mentee relationships: they deemed Ivanov's experiments with communal living to be ultimately self-serving and destructive.²²³ Voloshin's literary critical portraiture reflects this early exposure to and eventual skepticism about Symbolist constructions of individual & communal identities (in effect presaging Vladislav Khodasevich's similarly critical, Symbolist-oriented memoir-portraits; see Ch. 3.2). Voloshin's portraiture thus occupies a middle ground between Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's desire to synthesize *lichnost'* out of a given writer's oeuvre (“life as works”) and the Symbolists' desire to construct personality along aesthetic lines (“life-creation”). Skepticism towards the equivocation of biography and creativity represents Voloshin's greatest contribution to the generic development of Russian literary portraiture: he presents *lichnost'* not as a

221 Symbolist journals were more expensive and sumptuous, and tended to court narrow, elite audiences. The same might be said of explicitly Symbolist miscellany, which were not expected to turn a profit. For example: Andrei Belyi's 1910 critical collection *Symbolism (Simvolizm)*, which had a print run identical to that of Voloshin's *Faces* (i.e. 1000 copies), ultimately yielded a net financial loss both for the Symbolist publishing house Musaget and Belyi himself. G. A. Tolstykh, “Izdatel'stvo Musaget,” *Kniga: issledovaniia i materialy* 56 (1988): 112–33, 125.

222 The definitive treatment of Symbolist life-creative practices can be found in Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman, eds., *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

223 Walker attributes the sensitive Voloshin's later commitments to benevolent mentorship of younger literary figures to this negative experience with the dogmatic Ivanov's life-creation. See Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle*, esp. 59-65. On the Symbolist love triangle and the erotic components of *zhiznetvorchestvo*, see Matich, “The Symbolist Meaning of Love: Theory and Practice,” and Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: the Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin-de-siècle* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), esp. 162-235, on the most notorious Symbolist triple unions, undertaken by Zinaida Gippius, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and a rotating cast of third parties.

phenomenon that can be flattened or mirrored across two activities, but as a complex and irreducible phenomenon that rests upon the tension between them.

***Lichnost'* as Masquerade: Voloshin's Critical Methodology**

Even if the critical methodology at work in Voloshin's portraiture is inflected with the author's skepticism towards Russian Symbolist life practice, it nevertheless is implicated in a wider and surely more orthodox Symbolist project. This is never clearer than when they are examined in the context of *Faces of Creativity*, the four-book project that was to compile all of Voloshin's criticism – of literature, painting, dance and the performing arts – as well as his writings on mythology, philosophy, and history.

The holism of Voloshin's project thus extends well beyond the crude individual-type dynamic underlying Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's surveys of the contemporary literary fields. Voloshin filters that holistic impulse through a mystical, archetypically Symbolist dualist philosophical system, as the title (*Liki tvorchestva*) suggests. Symbolism sees correspondences between the noumenal Ideal and its various, phenomenological manifestations in the real world, and seeks a conduit (a symbol, the Logos, etc.) that unifies the two entities. The word *lik*, which the Symbolists appropriated from Russian Orthodox discourse, implies something similar: the transfigurative collapse of the individual (*litso*) into the divine (*lik*) through the Logos reconfigured as symbol.²²⁴ It would be a mistake to see *lik* merely as Voloshin's Symbolist substitution for the *lichnost'* (derived as it is from the same etymological root), the term that governs Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's portraiture. Indeed, calibrated against the collection's content, the *liki* in Voloshin's *Liki tvorchestva* suggests a deeper *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a more profound and quintessentially Symbolist unity across multiple artistic media. Put another way, if Chukovskii seeks the core variables of the creative *lichnost'* in the gritty reality of urban life, then Voloshin seeks them in the realm of myth.

Consequently, if we are to fully understand the methodological operations at work in Voloshin's literary portraiture, we must compare that literary portraiture to the other pieces in *Faces of Creativity*. Admittedly, only the first projected book of *Faces* witnessed publication (1914) in Voloshin's lifetime, and it contained no actual portraits, focused as it was on nineteenth-century French culture. Plans for the second, third, and fourth books languished in the author's archived manuscripts, until the publishing house Nauka released an extensively commentated edition of the entire collection in 1988. The second book was to focus on the visual & plastic arts in France and Russia, the third on Russian theater and dance. Voloshin's portraits from the original “Faces of Creativity” column were to be compiled into the fourth book, subtitled “Contemporaries” (*Sovremenniki*). If we are to locate a particular kind of methodology in Voloshin's literary portraiture, or a generalized one for *Faces* on the whole, we should first examine how the preceding three books parse the concept of creative identity.

There is one prominent motif that emerges across all four books of *Faces*, engages multiple artistic media, and explicitly addresses the question of identity: the mask. In turning to the trope of the mask, Voloshin would seem to be in step with both Russian Symbolist thought specifically and European Modernist aesthetics generally, and even Chukovskii and

224 Irina Paperno, “The Meaning of Art: Symbolist Theories,” in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 13–23, 22.

Aikhenval'd's explorations of the interchange between high and low cultures. For example, many Russian Symbolists turned *commedia dell'arte*, a popular theatrical form sometimes called *komediiia masok*, or “comedy of masks,” in Russian, as an (ultimately quixotic) means of fostering community with the Russian people.²²⁵ However, Voloshin's discussion of masquerade draws more specifically – like so many currents of turn-of-the-century Russian aesthetic thought – from Nietzsche and French Symbolism. Many Russian Symbolists were particularly attuned to Nietzsche's characterization of the mask as a mediator of Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies in drama. For example, Andrei Belyi contended that the mask distinguishes and individuates the dramatic hero, making him (re)cognizable, an agent of order; when that mask is ripped off, the hero is cathartically destroyed by the forces of chaos.²²⁶ However, the image had currency outside of drama as well, not least for Remy de Gourmont, whose *Livre des masques* proved influential for Russian critics specifically and Voloshin in particular. The titular masks, and Vallotton's woodblock portraits that accompany each of de Gourmont's literary portraits, celebrate the absolute individuality of each Symbolist writer profiled within the volume. (See Ch. 1.2.)

In Voloshin's 1906 article “Individualism in Art,” which was to have been republished in the second book of *Faces*, we see a telling fissure between Russian and French treatments of the joint theme of masks and individuation:²²⁷

В моменты высшего развития народного искусства имя всегда исчезает. В готическом искусстве XIII века почти нет имени. Маска или почерк в своей области равносильны имени. Самосохранение мешает общей работе, которая возможна только при свободном установившейся иерархии искусства. В те эпохи, когда каждый стремится создать свою маску и свой почерк, не может возникнуть общего стиля. (*Faces* 262)

In the moments at the peak development of a nation's art, the name always disappears. In the Gothic art of the thirteenth century there are hardly any names. In their domains, the mask or the hand are of a similar power to the name. Self-preservation interferes with communal work, which is possible only in the freely

225 Catriona Kelly has argued that the immediate influences on Symbolist *commedia dell'arte* were Western European abstractions of popular theater rather than truly native one, and that their orientations towards tragedy prevented them from appreciating the farcical energies of the genre. See Catriona Kelly, *Petrushka: The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. 146-150. Kelly mentions Voloshin's 1903 poem “The Circus” (“V tsirke”) as one example of the Modernists' tendency to emphasize the tragedy of the *commedia dell'arte* character type of Pierrot.

226 For an examination of Nietzschean thought and mask imagery in Andrei Bely's critical prose, see Virginia Bennett, “Esthetic Theories from The Birth of Tragedy in Andrei Bely's Critical Articles, 1904-1908,” in *Nietzsche in Russia*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 161–79, esp. 165-8.

227 Voloshin's article, originally printed in the Symbolist journal *Golden Fleece* (*Zolotoe runo*), was written apropos of an urgent Russian debate about individualism in art and social life. In this debate, the Symbolists were split along the coincident fissure between Petersburg- and Moscow-based authors, artists, and thinkers. The former, Ivanov-led group favored communal (*sobornyi*) endeavors, while the latter, Briusov-led group privileged individualism as an end unto itself. Voloshin strikes a more mediatory tone in this question: he notes that individual creativity emerges only against the background of “tradition and the canon,” which he describes as “not dead, mechanical forms, but living and eternally developing language of symbols and images” (265).

formed hierarchy of art. In those epochs when everyone strives to create his own mask and his own hand, a general style cannot arise.

The final statement equivocates masks with individuation à la de Gourmont, yet recognizes the need to temper individual style with communal (*sobornyi*) activity, a position we might reasonably trace back to Voloshin's mentor Ivanov.²²⁸ Later in the article, Voloshin likens the artist's mask to a “trademark” (*fabrichnaia marka*), and thus unflatteringly compares crass Western artistic production to the Russians' more spiritually inflected common task.

While Voloshin seemed to favor the (limited) effacement of individual will before the collective within the realm of art, that dynamic troubled Voloshin when applied to life. For this reason, we can also find in *Faces* references to masks transcend their orthodox origins in Symbolist aesthetics. Indeed, Voloshin's interests in masks remains more socially and historically tinged than those of Belyi or de Gourmont, and he frequently uses masquerade as a metaphor for the of social development exhibited by particular cultures and nations. In such context, the mask helps him forge a middle ground between Russian *sobornost'* and French absolute individuation. For example, in the article “French and Russian Theater,” republished in the first book of *Faces*, Voloshin contends that the French have developed “masks,” or agreed-upon “general formulas” of sociability behind which people are able to hide their authentic thoughts and feelings (122). He describes this mask as “a sacred achievement (*zavoevanie*) of the individuality of the spirit,” further implying that Russians – naïve, sincere, and ever tardy on the world's stage – have yet to acclimate themselves to such public masquerade. Unlike Belyi, Ivanov, and de Gourmont, Voloshin locates individual *lichnost'* remains *behind* the mask, shielded and hidden from the rest of the world, rather than tenuously reflected on its Apollonian surface. Similarly, Voloshin's mask is less a transhistorical aesthetic (as it is for both Belyi and de Gourmont) than a deeply historicized phenomenon; as Harsha Ram has pointed out, Voloshin's rhetoric taps into Petr Chaadaev's discussion of Russia's belated moral and cultural development *vis-a-vis* the West.²²⁹ For Voloshin, masks simultaneously allow social interactions to occur while preserving individual identity.

However, Voloshin qualifies this assessment in (significantly) the 1911 article “Contemporary Portraitists,” which was to be reprinted in *Faces'* second, visual arts-focused book. He states that “Petersburg is the only city which has already begun the process of developing the human masks that serve as the self-defense of the individual (*lichnost'*) within a narrow and fixed social system” (*v tesnom i ustoiavshemsia obshchestvennom stroe*) (282). This greater degree of development no doubt reflects Petersburg's geographical and spiritual proximity to the nominally more advanced cultures of Western Europe. However, in a gesture typical for *Faces*, Voloshin's further remarks on the phenomena traverse artistic media. He states that if the ritualized “theater” of public life compels Petersburgers to develop masks for the sake of sociability, then it is the task of portrait painting to document both the generalized mask and the individual who dons it. The latter is always under the threat of effacement, and for Voloshin,

228 See, for example, Ivanov's 1912 article “Manner, Person, and Style” (“Manera, litso i stil”), V. I. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1971), v. 2, 616-26. His 1907 essay “On the Joyful Craft and Rational Joy” (“O veselom remesle i umnom veselii”) – particularly its final sections – make similar arguments about the artist-craftsman's organic unity with the people; see *Ibid.*, v. 3, 62-77.

229 Harsha Ram, “Masks of the Poet, Myths of the People: The Performance of Individuality and Nationhood in Georgian and Russian Modernism,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 3 (2008): 567-90, 572.

portraiture is the medium best equipped to negotiate between social body and individual, *maska* and *lichnost'*. He suggests that good portraiture captures the general and particular in equal measure: portraits both serve as “documents about the characters (*o kharakterakh*) of our epoch, preserved for future generations” and capture “the sharp eyes of the living individual” (ibid) who exists behind the mask. Voloshin goes on to assess various contemporary Russian portrait painters by this standard twofold standard, warning against those who, like Valentin Serov, manage to capture only their sitter's public “mask”;²³⁰ one can reasonably assume that Voloshin's own literary portraiture aspires to capture the characteristic and individual in each of its subjects.

The second, painting-focused book of *Faces* yields other insights into the methodology at work in Voloshin's portraits – even when Voloshin is not discussing painted portraiture specifically. For example, his discussion of Impressionism (i.e. the movement in painting) illuminates the representational folly we might oppose to Serov's masquerade of all-too-generalized character types: painting from an entirely subjective point of view and ignoring historical circumstance. Voloshin states that Impressionism and Post-Impressionism provide extremely shallow and even de-humanizing visions of their subjects: the Impressionists treat the face as a still life (“*nature morte*”), and use it as a “pretext for complex problems of coloration”; the paintings of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne are said to “communicate more about the personal tragedies of the artists than about the people drawn by them” (281). In other words, *lichnost'* can be effaced not only by social masquerading, but by the solipsism of an unscrupulous artist. Voloshin sees this dynamic extending beyond Impressionist portraiture and into modern *landscape* painting, which fails to capture the “face, the visage (*litso, lik*) of the land” (312) and ignores national and historical context.²³¹ Impressionism remains something of a *bete noire* for Voloshin throughout the second book of *Faces* precisely because it destroys the more historically contingent background to which the individuality of the painting's subject matter must be dialectically opposed. Thus, Voloshin suggests that successful art records the “mask” (however it is figured within particular media or genres²³²) as necessary, contextualizing

230 Voloshin finds that few Russian artists are capable of navigating between these poles of type/mask and individual. Aleksandr Golovin (1863-1930) and, in particular, Konstantin Somov (1869-1939) are presented as Russia's most adept portraitists, while Valentin Serov (1865-1911) is said to have difficulty distinguishing between his sitter's mask and face (*litso*) (283). If we examine the paintings that Voloshin singles out for praise (Somov's portraits of artists) or criticism (Serov's portraits of politicians and businessmen), we uncover an important social dimension of portraiture. Serov's public figures have given themselves over *entirely* to the social masquerade, destroying the *lichnost'* that their masks (as per Voloshin) are meant to shield and preserve. However, Somov's creative individuals, who are presumably more acclimated to the creative construction of identity, preserve that very *lichnost'*. Voloshin further suggests that Serov is capable of representing his subjects only through their “gestures” (283), which present the ideal content for public figures' carefully calculated self-presentation. However, this leads Serov to confuse the masks and the genuine faces of his sitters, leading him to produce nominally inept portraits of creative individuals. For a more charitable assessment of Serov, and an expert situation of his work within late imperial Russia's changing social landscape, see Elizabeth Valkenier, *Valentin Serov: Portraits of Russia's Silver Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

231 In another article, eponymously dedicated to the landscape painter Konstantin Bogaeviskii that originally appeared in a 1912 issue of *Apollon*, Voloshin similarly triangulates the themes of individuality and identity, national character, and historical development through the prism of painterly Impressionism. He blames the movement for the decline of both the psychological portrait and historical landscape: in both genres, the Impressionists see nothing beyond the surface and impart no deeper sense of their subject's history and development.

232 Voloshin, ever oriented towards the *Gesamtkunstwerk*-oriented principles that unite various media, extends this mask analogy to the art of dance. In an unpublished article that was to be included in the third book of *Faces*, he

fact about a particular epoch and culture – and then proceeds to peer behind that mask, to uncover the *lichnost'* that is hidden beneath it.

Thus, for Voloshin, surface and depth become equally necessary, the mask becomes a polyvalent symbol, and masquerade becomes a contradictory but highly symptomatic modern phenomenon, one that was variously – or even simultaneously – enthralling and frightening for Russians of his own time.²³³ In his varied remarks about masks, identity, and modern art, Voloshin forges a series of middle grounds: between an oft-communitarian Russian Symbolism and the more individualist French Symbolism of de Gourmont; between the creative potentials and corrosive effects of masks; between the documentary and expressive functions of portraiture. *Faces'* references to these various topics cumulatively suggest that while masks might help preserve individual *lichnost'*, they can be pushed to extremes: giving oneself over to the public masquerade of sociability effaces individual identity, but in the realm of art, outsized performances of individuality likewise coalesce into a kind of generalized mask that preserves only identity's hollow shell. When used properly, however, the mask is simply a tool for navigating the countervailing demands of social and individual identity – a dynamic which portraiture is tasked with capturing.

In this respect, Voloshin's generalized *maski* emerge as distinct from de Gourmont's individualized *masques*: they are tools of mediation and sociability, and thus keep with the consistently holistic impulses of Russian literary portraiture. However, this operative metaphor of the mask (and its metonyms, *litso* and *lik*) likewise permits Voloshin to exceed his contemporaries Aikhenvaľ'd and Chukovskii, and point to future developments in Russian literary portraiture. As the mask is essentially a cover or facade, its poetics are aligned less with the flat radii that structure *lichnost'* in *Silhouettes* and *From Chekhov*, respectively: *Faces* is more concerned with the ironic distance between surface and depth. One must peer *behind* an artist's mask, because even if artistic form provides basic insights into creative *lichnost'*, it can also obscure deeper truths about the same. In other words, Voloshin's portraiture refuses the “life as

draws an analogy between the shame at nakedness that compels us to don clothes and the shame of individuation that compels us to don social “masks.” However, Voloshin states that the human body can, at the current moment in history, only be masked literally (i.e. with clothing) and not metaphorically: it lacks the capability to lie, “that is, to be dressed up in a spiritual mask (*dukhovnaia maska*), which is always ready to hide the our innermost, sincere movement.” Thus, the world must begin to develop “a self-knowing (*samosoznaiushee*) face of the whole body – that is, a mask for the body,” with the result that “material clothing will be replaced by spiritual clothing” (404). As Voloshin states in “On the Meaning of Dance” (“O smysle tantsa,” 1911), it is only in this ideal state, but glimpsed in the work of Isadora Duncan, that “without the aid of the word, without the aid of an instrument, man himself [will become] instrument, song, and creator (*tvorets*)” (397). Dance thus presents a unique iteration of Voloshin's cross-media discussion of the mask as something that needs to be created and then subsequently overcome in genuine art.

233 See Colleen McQuillen, *The Modernist Masquerade: Stylizing Life, Literature, and Costumes in Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013) for a stimulating survey of masquerade in late imperial Russian culture. Voloshin's discussion of social masquerade often contradicts middle- and upper-class Russians' fascination with masquerade balls, a dynamic that McQuillen explores in the introduction of her book. She connects these events to “spontaneity and novelty, which entailed a break from quotidian and prescribed behaviors” (9) – which seems to contradict Voloshin's idea of the mask as a generalized social formula. On the other hand, McQuillen also explores the connections – often made in literary fiction of the time – between terrorism and the anonymity afforded by masks in late imperial culture (see pp. 73-85), a devious manipulation of that which Voloshin designates as formulas for sociability. See also Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle*, for a discussion of modernist masquerade that centers on the themes of mystery and illegibility.

works” model that undergirds Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* and Chukovskii's *From Chekhov*.

The Multiple Masks of the Critic: The Architecture of *Faces of Creativity*

As I have argued, the mask serves as *Faces of Creativity's* operative metaphor, permitting Voloshin to calibrate private and public selves, painting and theater, art and the social sphere. But is this recurrent motif equivalent to a wider “architectural” principle that typically structures Russian portrait collections? Unlike *Silhouettes* and *From Chekhov*, *Faces* lacks an introductory preface that announces and rationalizes such an architecture; consequently, we are not primed to read the collection in any particularly motivated way. Furthermore, as we have already established, *Faces* did not witness full publication in its author's own lifetime, and the editors of the 1988 Nauka edition found largely similar but ultimately conflicting plans for the fourth, literary portrait-focused book of the collection.²³⁴ In such circumstances, can we speak with authority about *Faces'* overarching poetics, or even the poetics of its literary portrait gallery?

I would argue that, to a certain extent, we can, so long as we keep in mind *Faces'* presumed audience. Regardless of the fact that many of *Faces'* constituent pieces originally saw publication in newspapers, Voloshin's collection addresses a more specifically Symbolist readership, one whose worldview already primes it to intuit connections between nominally disparate cultural phenomena. For such readers, the sequence of individual works is no less important than the more paradigmatic connections between media (theater, poetry, painting, architecture) and cultures (French and Russian) one might find across *Faces'* multiple books. Hence the obscured but organic mask motif that bubbles up therein: it invites but does not delimit the reader's possible interpretative strategies with a metaphor that is extremely familiar to that group.

And yet, as pointed out in the previous section, Voloshin's invocation of masquerade differs from traditionally Russian Symbolist understanding thereof: it belongs as much to the mundane social sphere as it does transcendent artistic ones. This should make us recall Voloshin's skepticism towards Symbolist life-creation, which we might designate as portentous codes of abstruse meaning that are overlaid atop more routine life practices. If Voloshin is writing against a Symbolist worldview (albeit gently) from inside of it, then we should also consider the ways in which *Faces'* structure simultaneously invites and critiques Symbolist readings. This issue becomes all the more important in the face of Voloshin's portraiture: how might the synthetic construction of *lichnost'* on which it rests be marshaled for and against Symbolist understandings of the individual and group?

One of the variant but unused prefaces that Voloshin penned (likely in 1914) for the second, painting-oriented tome of *Faces* provides some clues. Its Nietzsche-inflected clichés – artistic creation is called a “masculine act,” understanding and criticism “feminine acts” (596) – resemble Symbolist rhetoric, but Voloshin also brings that rhetoric down to earth. In the epigraph, he cites an inexact quotation of Remy de Gourmont – “*Kritika – eto ispoved'*” (Criticism is confession)²³⁵ – on which he subsequently builds an argument about critical naiveté:

234 See Voloshin, *Liki tvorchestva*, 552, for the seemingly final variant that was believed to best accord with Voloshin's wishes, and 602-3 for a photographic reproduction of an early variant that appeared in Voloshin's archives. The editors evidently made sure to include articles (such as that on Sergei Gorodetskii's poetry) in the original “Liki tvorchestva” feature from the newspaper *Rus'* that were inexplicably left out in this manuscript.

235 The full quote in the original French is “Contre l'opinion commune, la critique est peut-être le plus subjectif de

Она [i.e. the second book of *Faces*] обнимает статьи об искусстве за десять лет (1904-1914). Она вся в движении и представляет собою постепенное развитие и углубление художественного понимания. Оценки и симпатии автора незаметно меняются на ее страницах. Разве может быть иначе, раз критика есть исповедь, а книга обнимает десять лет? Меняется и самый подход к искусству: импрессионистический и эстетический энтузиазм становится более подробной и расчленяющей любовью к понимаемым художникам. Она захватывает течения и устремления французского и русского искусства от импрессионизма до возникновения кубизма, не касаясь последнего. Статьи расположены в хронологическом порядке, поскольку он не нарушался логической группировкой тем. (596-7)

This book embraces articles about art from a ten-year period (1904-1914). The entire book is dynamic and constitutes a gradual development and deepening of artistic understanding. The judgments and sympathies of the author imperceptibly change on its pages. Could it be otherwise, since criticism is a confession, and the book embraces ten whole years? The critic's very approach to art changes: his impressionistic and aestheticist enthusiasm becomes a more detailed and discriminating love for the interpreted authors. This love grasps the trends and trajectories of French and Russian art from Impressionism to the emergence of Cubism, the latter of which is not touched upon. The articles are laid out in chronological order, since the order is not destroyed by the logical grouping of the themes.

Like Chukovskii, Voloshin positions himself against Impressionist and aestheticist trends in Russian criticism, although he also acknowledges the appeal that such trends once held for him. He thus imparts de Gourmont's metaphor of criticism-as-confession (which has its roots in Oscar Wilde)²³⁶ with an almost Augustinian tone, one of overcoming and transformation. By reproducing the actual publication sequence of his criticism in *Faces*' second book,²³⁷ Voloshin invites us to read beyond these pieces' arguments, and see them as a subdued version of his own biography. The youthful sowing of wild (critical) oats is replaced by a more authentic, profound engagement with art.

Voloshin's preference for this “confessional” sequence speaks to a concern for time and evolution that is not quite as present in Aikhenvaľ'd and Chukovskii's more topographically-oriented portrait collections. In *Silhouettes* and *From Chekhov*, portraits produced at various

tous les genres littéraires; c'est une confession perpétuelle”; Remy de Gourmont, *Promenades littéraires* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1904), 13. The quote comes from Gourmont's article *Mercure de France* article “Renan et l'idée scientifique” (1903), although, in 1914, Voloshin would more likely have drawn the quote from *Promenades Littéraires*. *Promenades* was multi-volume series, published between 1904 and 1927, that collected Gourmont's miscellaneous essays and journalistic works, and it, more than any other collection – *Livre des Masques* included – helped propagate Gourmont's ideas in Russia.

236 Recall the introduction to Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which ironically suggests art criticism to be an autobiography of the critic himself; see Ch. 1.2.

237 This linear chronology suggested in this never-used preface is roughly, though not absolutely, maintained in the 1988 Nauka edition.

times are arranged such that they, and their subjects, appear similar (e.g. Bal'mont and Blok become urban poets). Voloshin instead asks us to notice their differences, which both the book's linear sequence and the preface's biographical framework are meant to underscore. His insistence on the complexity and malleability of the critic's self distinguishes him from Aikhenval'd and the early Chukovskii, whose portrait collections present *lichnost'* as a static, monolithic entity.

We should also consider how Voloshin's (re)turn to biographism manifests in his portraiture, where it might likewise oppose the practices that *Faces* otherwise courts. As we shall soon see, such gestures towards chronology and change are particularly necessary within his portraits of those Symbolist writers with whom he was more intimately acquainted. Voloshin often prefaces those portraits with remarks about his first *and* subsequent real-life encounters with the writer at hand, and suggests how these encounters shaped his views of their art and *lichnost'* over time. However, such questions of chronology also bear upon the structure of "Contemporaries," *Faces'* portrait gallery. Admittedly, the entries in the fourth book of *Faces* do not observe the "confessional" sequence of the second. If we read Voloshin's tendency towards sober chronology as a counterweight to a more orthodox Symbolist preference for transcendent, paradigmatic connections, then *Faces'* portrait gallery realizes a similar critique of Symbolism through a different architectural poetics.

Russian Symbolism was more than a group of like-minded artists who participated in institutionalizing phenomena of literary circles, weekly private gatherings, and poetry readings. Symbolism was a way of life, one that assigned metaphysical import to typical, even mundane life events, which were themselves subject to a peculiarly communitarian ethos. The history of Symbolist unions and, in particular, triple unions (with which Voloshin was intimately familiar via his experiences with Ivanov and Zinov'eva-Annibal) are a paradigmatic example: they pushed life events both mundane (cohabitation, sexual relations) and exceptional (weddings) into a different, more elevated register of existence.²³⁸ This transposition of everyday life into what Vladimir Khodasevich would go on to call "the Symbolist dimension" (see Ch. 3.2) relies upon the collapse of difference, much in the same way that the symbol and the Logos mediate between the Ideal and the real.

Voloshin's Symbolist-derived aesthetics resembled the Symbolists', but his more sustained focus on mundanity and lived experience set his hermeneutics apart. He was a meticulous recorder of Symbolist everyday life, and his diaries and correspondence between 1903 and 1917 recount everything meetings and conversations in Ivanov's Tower to offhanded statements and body language of individuals in Briusov's artistic circle.²³⁹ Such dutifully recorded, intimate contact with the Symbolists became an organic part of his literary criticism in a way that it never could for fellow-travelers Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii. His literary portraiture is no less biting for it, however. Voloshin renders his subject's life both biographically (i.e. as a fact of that individual's existence at a specific point in historical time) and in accordance with life-creative principles (i.e. as a facet of that individual's attempt to construct a transcendent identity for him- or herself).²⁴⁰ The end result is a quietly biographical criticism, in the full sense

238 Again, see Matich, *Erotic Utopia* for explorations of these phenomena.

239 On Voloshin's commitment to the recording of Symbolist life and its relevance to his memoirs, see Vladimir Kupchenko, "Maksimilian Voloshin as a Memoirist," in *The Silver Age in Russian Literature: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990*, ed. J. D. Elsworth (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 11–31.

240 This tension is particularly acute given that Voloshin's portraiture primarily stems from occasion-specific

of the word “critique”: Voloshin's portraiture peeks behind the Symbolists' carefully constructed masks of sociability and, quite often, finding the *lichnost'* underneath to be quite lacking.

This method has particular bearing on the actual structure of “Contemporaries,” the fourth book of *Faces* that contains all of Voloshin's literary portraiture. (See Fig. 3 below.) The

ЛИКИ ТВОРЧЕСТВА. II. СОВРЕМЕННОСТИ.

(1907—1913 гг.)

1. Брюсов. «Пути и переputья».
2. Город («в поэзии Валерия Брюсова»).
3. «Эмиль» Верхарн («и Валерий Брюсов»).
4. Сологуб. «Дар мудр(ых) пчел».
5. «Поль» Верлен. «Стихи избранные и переведенные Ф. Сологубом».
6. «Сологуб» и Леонид Андреев.
7. Л. Андреев. «Елеазар».
8. Некто в сером.
9. Вяч. Иванов. «Эрос».
10. Кузмин. «Алек(сандрийские) песни».
11. Блок. «Нечая(нная) Рад(ость)».
12. Ремизов. «Посолонь».
13. «Князь А. И.» Урусов.
14. Ад. Герцык. «Откровения детских игр».
15. «И. Ф.» Анненский («— лирик»).
16. Ч. де Габриак. «Гороскоп Черубины де Габриак».
17. Похвала морали(стам).
18. Проповедь новой естест(венности).
19. Итоги Боборыкина.
20. Судьба Толстого.
21. Жестокость в жизни и ужасы в иск(усстве).
- «22». Голоса поэтов. (ИРЛИ, ф. 562, оп. 1, ед. хр. 158).

Fig. 3 – table of contents for the intended fourth book of Voloshin's *Faces*; copied from p. 847 in 1988 Nauka edition

opening trio of portraits, all dedicated to Valerii Briusov, would initially seem to keep with *Faces'* overarching paradigmatic unity. Respectively, Voloshin's wide-ranging review of the first volume of Briusov's collected works, his rumination on Briusov's nominal title of “poet of the city,” and his harsh assessment of Briusov's translations of the Belgian poet Emile Verharen (1855-1916)²⁴¹ present a characteristically Symbolist mask for Briusov. His poetry and translations are presented different “faces” of the same originary creative impulse, just as internally unified as any of the other media that *Faces'* four books seek to calibrate with one another. However, as I shall further explain in the next section, Voloshin also treats Briusov as the quintessential manifestation of turn-of-the-century Russia's social masquerade, making him an ideal pretense for the exercise of Voloshin's biographical critical method, his compulsion to peek behind the artist's mask.

literary reviews (e.g. the publication of an author's new collection of poetry). Their event-ness presents Voloshin with an interesting opportunity: within his reflection of authorial *lichnost'*, should the event of this publication be treated in syntagmatic (linear, chronological, biographical) or paradigmatic (nonlinear, transcendent, “life-creative”) terms?

241 Respectively: “Valerii Briusov. *Paths and Crossroads*” (“Valerii Briusov. 'Puti i pereput'ia,'” first published in *Rus'*, Dec. 29, 1907); “The City in the Poetry of Valerii Briusov” (“Gorod v poezii Valerii Briusova,” first published in *Rus'*, Jan. 22, 1908); and “Emile Verharen and Valerii Briusov” (“Emil' Verkharn i Valerii Briusov,” first published in *Scales*, no. 2, 1907).

The first article, which was dedicated to Briusov's collection *Paths and Crossroads (Puti i pereput'ia*, 1908), caused something of a public tiff between the two writers when it was first published in *Rus'*. Briusov objected to Voloshin's remarks about his appearance, mannerisms, childhood, family history, and place of residence. In a prickly letter written to Voloshin (likewise published in *Rus'*, on Jan. 4, 1908), Briusov insisted that such minutiae about his private life had no bearing upon his poetry. Voloshin's rejoinder was published alongside it: the critic maintained that in every one of his articles, he seeks to “provide the integral face (*tsel'nyi lik*) of the artist,” and as a consequence, he finds Briusov's demand for the critical courtesy of “[separating] the book from its author, the word from the voice, the idea from the shape of the brow in which it arose, the poet from his life” to be unnecessary.²⁴² Beginning “Contemporaries” with his most controversial portrait is no mere provocation on Voloshin's part: it is a statement about his critical philosophy, an assertion that an author's life and works are separate but nevertheless intertwined.

The subsequent portraits bear a similar ethos. After the three pieces on Briusov, Voloshin provides two on Sologub, one that juxtaposes Sologub and Andreev, and two on Andreev. Voloshin again compels the reader to compare and contrast the various “faces” of each author's oeuvre (insofar as these articles are individually concerned with their subjects' varied work in drama, poetry, translation, prose, etc.), as well as juxtapose each author to one another (with the Sologub-Andreev article segueing between the two authors' article clusters). While acknowledging that “Contemporaries” was never published in Voloshin's lifetime, we can still be certain of this sequence's significance: it is maintained across both Voloshin's original plan for the volume (552) and in the 1988 Nauka edition (see the table of contents on 847).

Before proceeding to the portraits themselves, we should note that Andreev has once more become an intermediary figure here, as he was in both Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* and Chukovskii's *From Chekhov*. As I will demonstrate, his structural import in “Contemporaries” hinges precisely on the theme of *lichnost'* and its relevance for any discussion of an author's work. We will circle back to him at the end of our discussion after having explored Voloshin's various representations of archetypal Symbolist *lichnosti*, which rest upon a sustained masquerade that Voloshin picks apart. We will begin with Briusov, whose opening trio of portraits reflects Voloshin's more biographical method literary criticism, and demonstrates its particular interpretative potency before the Symbolist life.

***Lichnost'* and Masquerade in Voloshin's Portraiture**

Voloshin's first portrait of Briusov is particularly rich in biographical detail, and superlatively so in the collection: strained as their relationship might have been, Voloshin was closer to Briusov than he was with any other Symbolist save Ivanov.²⁴³ Before turning to the poetry collection that serves as the portrait's impetus, Voloshin describes his first encounter with Briusov: a 1903 meeting of Merezhkovskii's Petersburg-based Religious-Philosophical Society in which Briusov seems to accord entirely with his setting. The poet exhibits a pale, catlike face punctuated by

²⁴² These letters are reproduced in the notes to the Nauka edition of *Faces* on pages 721-2.

²⁴³ On the history of Voloshin and Briusov's professional and personal relationships, see V. A. Manuilov and V. Erevani, “Valerii Briusov i Maksimilian Voloshin,” in *Briusovskie chteniia 1971 goda* (Yerevan: Aistan, 1973), 438–74. This article reproduces not only numerous letters between the two figures, but also numerous passages from Voloshin's notes about Briusov's manner, appearance, and living circumstances, as well as his unpublished memoirs about the poet.

piercing, attentive eyes; these make him appear to be a “frantic, zealous schismatic,” all of which is enhanced by a poor, indifferent “seminarian's” (*po-seminarskii*) posture (407). However, Voloshin then notes how, several months later, he understood that face in the exact opposite way, thinking that it revealed Briusov to be the most “foreign” element of those meetings (408). This is perhaps Voloshin's subdued way of registering the looming fissure between the Petersburg and Moscow branches of the Russian Symbolist movement (Briusov famously being the architect of the latter). However, Voloshin soon upends this second judgment of the poet as well on the basis of a particular literary event: “But now, with *Paths and Crossroads*, the first volume of the complete collection of his works, in front of me, I'm again returning to that first impression of his face; I think that it was true” (ibid).

These opening paragraphs demonstrate several meaningful developments in literary critical portraiture, and point to techniques that will soon be adopted by authors of memoir-portraits. “My first impression” (*pervoe vpechatlenie*), the first words of Voloshin's essay, make for a useful, if likely unintentional, refutation of Aikhenval'd's brand of criticism: Voloshin presents an impression not as a reliable, instinctual access to the true essence of a thing or person, but rather as an isolated moment of perception tied to a unique set of circumstances. Voloshin's first impression is conditioned by the Society's otherwise pallid participants²⁴⁴ and by his novice's nervousness: he self-critically admits that he arrived at the meeting anxious to encounter the “idealized” members of this “schismatic church,” in which he sought “the faces of faith, passion, and frenzy” (408). Voloshin does not dismiss the critic's subjective point of view, but presents that point of view as malleable and subject to change – much as Briusov's own artistic maturation is reflected in *Paths and Crossroads*, which compiles the poet's earliest, most naïve works. Thus, from the very beginning of this portrait specifically and “Contemporaries” in general, Voloshin asserts the capacity for (and necessity of) biographical evolution and retrospective evaluation in both the author and the critic.

Paths and Crossroads gives Voloshin license to assess Briusov's own capacity for evolution. Voloshin sees a certain degree of artistic stasis in Briusov's oeuvre, particularly where his representations of women (who are invariably prostitutes) is concerned (411). However, Voloshin does identify the years 1896-8 as a period in which Briusov enters into “important internal work” (412) with his literary heritage. He “turns to centuries past...and seeks there similarities and correspondences for the definition of his own 'I'” (413). Voloshin thus reads Briusov's early poetry more generously than Aikhenval'd: he suggests that the assumption of various historical identities in Briusov's lyric voice represents conscious self-fashioning rather than thefts from others' creative *lichnosti*. We should expect as much from a critic who sees masquerade as one means of preserving a deeper individuality.²⁴⁵

244 Merezhkovskii is simply described as having a “nervous, feminine voice” and Vasili Rozanov is said to have a “tragic brow” and fingers that cover his eyes as he listens to a talk; the other historical personages become a mass of “pale faces,” “enormous gray beards,” and “dark *klobuks* [a head covering for Orthodox monastics],” despite the fact that Voloshin sees each of these individuals as “a page out of history” (407). No other significant visual details are offered.

245 While Briusov's poetic masquerade helps him construct a variety of creative identities, this very tendency is, according to Voloshin, the origin of Briusov's inability to represent women. Voloshin claims Briusov treats women no differently than “a centurion arriving in Rome from some far-off camp, a freelance knight marching into a subjugated city, or a sailor disembarking to land for a short time in a large Mediterranean port. Behind just such faces (*litsa*) [Briusov] loves to conceal his own face (*litsa*), telling tales of love” (415). The artistic interrelationship between Briusov's self-fashioning and trouble with women seems to have precedent in

Voloshin treats Briusov's self-transformative spirit as symptomatic of his age. As mentioned, the first book of *Faces* labels masquerade “a sacred achievement (*zavoevanie*) of the individuality of the spirit” (122), the means through which individual identity is paradoxically preserved within the ritualized performance of society's “general formulas” of behavior.²⁴⁶ Variations on the word *zavoevanie* appear numerous times in Briusov's portrait. Briusov, a “poet-conqueror” (*poet-zavoevatel'*), is positively juxtaposed to Blok's “poet-dreamer,” Bal'mont's “poet-wizard,” and Ivanov's “poet-hierophant” (408). Voloshin also speaks of Briusov's poem “I” (“Ia,” 1899) as manifesting the “avid gaze of a conqueror” (*zhadnyi vzgliad zavoevatelia*) such as Alexander the Great (*Aleksandr Zavoevatel'*) (413). Briusov's attempt to create antiquarian identities for himself becomes the quintessential manifestation of the “sacred achievement” that has only just been realized in Russia; hence Briusov's primary status in *Contemporaries*.

However, Voloshin also suggests that Briusov's creation of a fluid, transhistorical public identity on the basis of his poetry remains but a partial success: biography inevitably seeps in and disrupts the formula. In an extended passage – significantly, one of the sections of the article that Briusov most objected to – Voloshin states that:

Надо знать географические, климатические и моральные условия, в которых развивается его талант. Надо знать, что он рос в Москве на Цветном бульваре, в характерном мещанском доме с большим двором, заваленным в глубине старым железом, бочками и прочим хламом. (В «*Urbi et Orbi*» он посвятил целую поэму его описанию.) Как раз в этом месте в Цветной бульваре впадает система улочек и переулков, спускающихся с горы, кишмя кишасей кабаками, вертепами, притонами и публичными домами. Здесь и знаменитая Драчевка и Соболев переулок. Этот квартал – Московская Субурра. Улицы его полны пьяными и безобразными сценами, он весь проникнут запахами сифилиса, вина и проституток. (410)

One must know the geographical, climatological, and moral conditions in which his talent developed. One must know that he grew up in Moscow on Tsvetnoi Bul'var, in a characteristically bourgeois house with a large courtyard, its interior saturated with old iron. (In *Urbi et Orbi*, he dedicates an entire poem to its description.) At precisely this place, a system of alleys and cross-streets that descend from the mountain meet on Tsvetnoi Bul'var, teeming with swarming taverns, grottoes, dens, and brothels. Here is the renowned Drachevka and Sobolev cross-street. This neighborhood is Moscow's Suburra. Its streets are full of drunks and monstrous scenes; it is entirely permeated by the smells of syphilis, wine, and prostitutes.

Voloshin contends that Briusov's living conditions exerted an inevitable influence on his

Briusov's own life as well. In Joan Delaney Grossman, “Valery Briusov and Nina Petrovskaiia: Clashing Models of Life in Art,” in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 122–50. Grossman suggests that Briusov's tumultuous, life-creative relationship with the Symbolist poet Nina Petrovskaiia failed precisely due to Briusov's tendency to seek ever new ideational models for his life and art.

246 Ram, “Masks of the Poet, Myths of the People,” 572.

character and art. No matter how much he engages in historical masquerade, he cannot escape his biography. Worse than that: his biography actually *inflects* his historical masquerade. Voloshin likens Briusov's Tsvetnoi Bul'var to Suburra – the thoroughfare that doubled as ancient Rome's commercial center and red-light district. This is not Rome, the seat of conquering caesars, as Briusov's self-mythologization would have it; this is the base, urban Rome, the gritty underbelly of empire that can only be imaginatively transcended through art and artifice. Briusov's invented poetic lineage thus comes to represent the conscious and ultimately unsuccessful evasion of his actual, bourgeois heritage. In Briusov's portrait, Voloshin's life and work are thus inevitably, if not ideally, intertwined.

Voloshin's first portrait of Briusov establishes a pattern that we see in “Contemporaries” other entries. Many of Voloshin's other pieces are similarly dedicated reviews of a particular publication, yet likewise frequently start with physiognomic description and Voloshin's account of his first meeting with that publication's author. These ekphrastic moments perhaps serve as Voloshin's nod to Vallotton's caricatures that precede the entries in de Gourmont's *Livre des masques*. However, Voloshin remains skeptical of any equivocation of physiognomy and *lichnost'* for two reasons: first, because immutable physical appearance is less important than the various social masks that one dons voluntarily; and second, because physiognomy is not objective science, but rather an act of interpretation that is inevitably delimited by the observer's own prejudices. Implicit in both pitfalls is the improper equivocation of physical face, mask, and inner *lichnost'*.²⁴⁷

We see such interpretative caution in several places throughout “Contemporaries.” Voloshin's description of Sergei Gorodetskii, for example, nearly makes him out to be a classical statue: wavy hair of this “young faun” falls into “characteristically disorganized locks, the style of which conveys well the ancient portrayals of captive barbarians.” The poet's appearance accords with his first poetry collection *Fury* (*Iar'*, 1907), whose title, “a wonderful old word,” similarly implies a pure, vivid, originary state (464). However, Voloshin again underscores how specific historical and biographical circumstances can produce motivated misreadings of *lichnost'*. Seeing Gorodetskii for the first time at Ivanov's tower, he is drawn to an entirely different set of features. “But when I saw him in the depth of the room in the evening light *en face*, he then reminded me of the poets of the 1820s. I imagined a young Mickiewicz with a moustacheless face and curly sideburns around his ears” (ibid). The case of Mikhail Kuzmin presents additional opportunities for misreading. His *Alexandrian Songs* (*Aleksandriiskie pesni*, 1906) strive for an antiquarian air – fitting for the poet's “beautiful Greek profile” that resembles those that “one can see in representations of Pericles and on a bust of Diomedes” (471). However, Voloshin suggests that turn-of-the-century Russian millenarianism could motivate this particular reading of the poet's life and works. He wonders if his visage, with its “uncanny, huge eyes, with the weariness of millennia,” has “emerged now, here [...] in tragic Russia” to remind his fellow poets of their looming obsolescence and death (477).

247 This issue emerges in Voloshin's third portrait of Briusov, which concerns his translations of Verharen. Voloshin notes what he thinks of as Verharen's key facial feature – a prominent wrinkle that divides his forehead, “like two widely spread wings of a bird in flight.” He metonymically conflates it with the poet's being: “This wrinkle is he himself. In it lies his sorrow, his flight” (427). He compares this to the photograph which serves as the frontispiece for Briusov's collected translations of Verharen. Voloshin dislikes this particular image, and states that it distorts Verharen's *lichnost'* in much the same way that Briusov's Russian translations distort Verharen's poetic style.

Voloshin's skepticism towards physiognomical reading reaches its apogee in the portrait of Aleksandr Blok. Voloshin's highly complimentary assessment of Blok's poetry is preceded by an extensive preamble on the distinct visages of Bal'mont, Ivanov, Briusov, Bely, and Blok. Voloshin likens these to a "long string (*ozherel'e*) of Japanese masks, each of which remains in one's eyes by virtue of the distinctness (*chetkost'*) of its grimace" (484). This casual statement echoes numerous themes of *Faces*, such as the tension between individuation and generalization, and the connection between masks and performance (here, curiously, via Japanese Noh theater). The subsequent physiognomic descriptions follow a familiar pattern: Voloshin likens the poets' physical features to historical prototypes (e.g. Ivanov possesses a "quiet, Shakespearean face [*lik*]," while his beard recalls "archaic representations of Greek warriors on ancient objects" [484-5]), and remarks upon their differences and similarities (e.g. Briusov and Belyi's faces exhibit "beastliness" [*zverinost'*], although the latter's is "covered by the dim light of madness" [485]). Blok, however, is presented as something of an anomaly amongst his contemporaries:

Среди этих лиц, сосредоточенных в одной черте устремленности и страстного порыва, лицо Александра Блока выделяется своим ясным и холодным спокойствием, как мраморная греческая маска. Академически нарисованное, безукоризненное в пропорциях, с тонко очерченным лбом, с безукоризненным дугами бровей, с короткими вьющимися волосами, с влажным изгибом уст, оно напоминает строгую голову Праксителева Гермеса, в которую вправлены бледные глаза из прозрачного тусклого камня. Мраморным холодом веет от этого лица. Рассматривая лица других поэтов, можно ошибаться в определении их специальности: Вячеслава Иванова можно принять за добросовестного профессора, Андрея Белого за бесноватого, Бальмонта за знатного испанца, путешествующего инкогнито по России без знания языка, Брюсова за цыгана, но относительно Блока не может быть никаких сомнений в том, что он поэт, так как он ближе всего стоит к традиционно-романтическому типу поэта – поэта классического периода немецкой поэзии. (485)

Amongst these faces, all concentrated within a single feature of inclination, of passionate outburst, the face of Aleksandr Blok stands out by virtue of its clear and cold serenity, like a Greek mask in marble. Academically drawn, impeccable in its proportions, with a finely traced brow, with the impeccable arches of his eyebrows, with short, curly hairs, with the moist twist of his lips, [this face] recalls the severe head of Praxiteles' Hermes, into which pale eyes of dim, translucent stone have been set. This face breathes with a marble-like coldness. Surveying the faces of other poets, one can be mistaken in one's assessment of their specializations: one can take Viacheslav Ivanov for a conscientious professor, Andrei Belyi for a man possessed, Bal'mont for a famous Spaniard traveling incognito throughout Russia without any knowledge of the language, and Briusov for a gypsy, but in regards to Blok, one can't have any doubt that he is a poet, for he, more than anyone, stands closest to the traditionally Romantic type of poet – the poet of the classical period of German poetry.

All of Voloshin's typical rhetorical gestures are here, albeit in an intriguing, seemingly contradictory configuration. Blok's face is likened to an ancient prototype, specifically, a work of sculpture from ancient Greece; however, that very statuesque reserve distinguishes him from his fiery contemporaries. Voloshin further discusses those contemporaries, noting the potential misreadings that one might make of Russian poets' personalities based upon their physical features: Briusov, endowed with bourgeois status and a *byt*-suffused residence of which he is loath to admit, could never be a nomadic gypsy; Bal'mont's mellifluous poetry could never proceed from a foreigner's awkward Russian. Yet he also states that Blok's face cannot but betray his true nature and profession – the exception that proves the general rule about physiognomic interpretation's unreliability.

Voloshin's larger point, however, is not that the lines of Blok's poetry can be straightforwardly read on the lines of his face. After all, as we know from Kuzmin and Gorodetskii, any observer so inclined (or conditioned) can locate on a poet's visage the stamp of whichever historic or ancient culture inspires that poet. Rather, this moment in Blok's portrait – one of the most ostentatiously comparative in *Faces* – is methodologically important in and of itself. On the one hand, the Modernist tendency towards individualization is portrayed, paradoxically, as a characteristically common (*sobornyi*) project of Symbolism: each individual's right to self-mythologize is reinforced by others'. On the other hand, it is only when these faces are aggregated – when one is seriously asked to consider the difference between Blok's ice-cold serenity with his compatriots' white-hot passion – that those differences become truly apparent. These juxtapositions yield interpretative clarity, just as Voloshin's juxtapositions of his first and later impressions of a given poet do. If nothing else, Blok's portrait suggests that no phenomenon should be examined in isolation, for comparison illuminates the contours of our mis/readings.

Although the brunt of “Contemporaries” is dedicated to Symbolist writers, Voloshin occasionally steps outside of this literary subculture, and the resultant portraits reinforce the value of comparison. In these moments, Voloshin exhibits a degree of holistic thinking that partakes of Chukovskii's anxieties about the literary market and its preferred publication formats. The joint portrait of Fedor Sologub and Leonid Andreev, and the ancillary portraits that precede and follow it, demonstrate as much. Excepting the two articles about Russian translations of Francophone poetry, this is the only work in *Contemporaries* that explores the oeuvres of two authors simultaneously, making it the most explicitly comparative individual entry in Voloshin's portrait gallery and, perhaps, the entirety of *Faces*.

The primary subject of this portrait is the potential for misreading authorial *lichnost'* that compendiums and miscellanies might yield. Like most of the entries in “Contemporaries,” it is occasioned by a specific publication: the third miscellany released by the turn-of-the-century publication house Shipovnik.²⁴⁸ As Voloshin states, this miscellany begins with Andreev's novella *Darkness (T'ma, 1907)* and ends with (what would ultimately become the first part of) Sologub's novel *Spells of the Dead (Nav'y chary, 1907)*. For Shipovnik, this was not an atypical combination of authors: the publisher's reputation rested on its willingness to print the most notorious and fashionable works of contemporary Russian literature, regardless of their particular aesthetic. Cultural commentators found this eclecticism to be problematic,²⁴⁹ and Voloshin in

248 For a useful, if biased, account of Shipovnik's activities prior to its closing in 1917, see L.A. Kel'dysh, “Al'manakhi izdatel'stva ‘Shipovnik,’” in *Russkaia literatura i zhurnalistika nachala XX veka: 1905-1917: burzuzno-liberal'nye i modernistskie izdaniia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1984), 257–94.

249 Aleksandr Blok lamented this eclectic tendency of early twentieth-century miscellany in his article “A Survey of

particular insisted that the casual leader would be led astray by the unwitting juxtaposition of Sologub and Andreev: no one would have thought to connect these two authors were it not for their incidental appearance in the same miscellany. He asserts that a taste for Andreev's "tortured strivings" would necessarily preclude an appreciation for "the bitter sarcasm, the subtle references, the complex mythology, and the classical simplicity of Sologub's language" (443).

However, in a characteristic move, Voloshin presents this judgment as his first impression. The juxtaposition that initially seemed "impossible and unbelievable" soon comes to suggest "that the editors of Shipovnik had, as it were, a mysterious but fully defined plan" (449). The middle portion of the portrait explores myriad conclusions that one could draw from this juxtaposition, and Voloshin – like Chukovskii and Aikhenval'd – presents Andreev as something of a sounding board: his hyperbolicism allows readers to better calibrate their responses to subtler authors, such as his newfound neighbor Sologub. Voloshin uses Andreev to calibrate the relationship between Realism and Symbolism, the latter of which he defines as follows:

Быть символистом значит в обыденном явлении жизни провидеть вечное, провидеть одно из проявлений музыкальной гармонии мира [...] Символ всегда переход от частного к общему. Поэтому символизм неизбежно зиждется на реализме и не может существовать без опоры на него. Здесь лишь одна дорога – от преходящего к вечному. Все преходящее для поэта есть напоминание, и все обыденные реальности будничной жизни, просветленные напоминанием, становятся символами. Поэтому по существу своему символизм ясен и прозрачен, и если он является иногда запутанным и темным, то это не вина символизма, а вина либо плохого поэта, либо невнимательного читателя. (445-6)

To be a Symbolist means foreseeing the eternal in the everyday phenomenon of life, seeing one of the manifestations of the musical harmony of the world [...] The symbol is always a passage from the individual to the general. Therefore Symbolism is inevitably founded on Realism and cannot exist without its support. Here there is but one road, leading from the transient to the eternal. For the poet, the transient is a reminder, and the everyday realities of humdrum life, illuminated by this reminder, become symbols. Therefore, by its very nature, Symbolism is clear and transparent, and if it sometimes seems muddled and dark, then this is not the fault of Symbolism itself, but rather of a bad poet or an inattentive reader.

Such a definition of Symbolism is by no means original or idiosyncratic; again, Voloshin's statement seems to borrow heavily from his mentor Ivanov, who likewise asserted that authentic Symbolism is founded upon the interplay of realism and idealism in aesthetic activity.²⁵⁰

Literature in 1907" ("Literaturnye itogi 1907 goda") and he singled out the editorial choices of Shipovnik for particular rebuke: "One need not even point out how little all of this links up (*viazhaet mezhdu soboiu*): it's as if all of the discord of Russian intelligentsia art was purposely placed before the face of innumerable people unfamiliar with [that art]." Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1960), v. 5, 224.

250 See Ivanov's article "Two Forces in Contemporary Symbolism" ("Dve stikhii v sovremennom simvolizme"), in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, v. 2, 536-561.

However, Voloshin's particular articulation of this definition makes for a felicitous comparison with Andreev's method, which is described as follows: "He in no way endeavors to see through to (*prozret'*) the general in the particular; quite the opposite – he lowers every abstract concept to the particular, clothing it in realistic and often completely unfounded signs (*priznaki*)" (447). Like his Symbolist compatriots, Andreev seeks to assert the relationship between the general and the particular; he merely proceeds in the opposite direction, dragging ideals down to earth, yielding warped, uncanny representations of real life.²⁵¹

This inversion of Symbolist tropes is important for Voloshin, who, as always, wishes to stress the relational qualities of contemporary culture via a comparative framework. Voloshin eschews vocabulary that would absolutely distinguish authors or aesthetic camps from one another, and it is Andreev's idiosyncratic aesthetic that makes such comparisons possible. Voloshin, in a characteristically Symbolist (albeit uncharacteristically scientific) fashion, makes this point with a synaesthetic metaphor:

Но между группой «Знания» и декадентами тоже не противоречия, а есть только та иррациональность, что вообще существует между реализмом и символизмом. Леонид Андреев и Сологуб соединены в одной книге только нумерацией страницы: от 9 до 67 – Андреев, от 189 до 305 – Сологуб. Не похоже ли это на страницу учебника физики, где мы читаем, что вибрации от 32 до 32768 мы воспринимаем в качестве звука, и те же самые вибрации между 35 трильонами и двумя квадрильонами – в виде света? Я хочу сказать, что та безвыходность отчаяния, которая одинаково живет в обоих этих писателях, в Леониде Андрееве является нам в виде звука, т.е. крика во «Тьме», а в Сологубе в виде света, озаряющего целую систему темной вселенной. Искусство их так же несравнимо, как звук и свет, хотя рождено из того же потрясения человеческой души. (444)

But between the group "Knowledge" and the Decadents there is also no contradiction, but merely that irrationality that lies between Realism and Symbolism. Leonid Andreev and Sologub are united in a single book only through the numbering of the pages: Andreev goes from 9 to 67, Sologub from 189 to 305. Does this not resemble a page from a physics textbook, where we read that vibrations from 32 to 32768 we perceive as sound, and those very same vibrations between 35 trillion and 2 quadrillion as light? I wish to say that that hopelessness of desperation which lives equally in both of these writers appears to us as sound in Leonid Andreev, that is, as a cry in *Darkness*, and as light that illuminates the entire system of a dark universe in Sologub. Their arts are just as incomparable as light and sound, even though they are born from the very same tremors of the human soul.

Voloshin thus suggests that nominally distinct artists and aesthetic camps are not incompatible; they simply exist on different extremes of the same wavelength, and it is the authors' (and readers') capacities to perceive wide portions of those wavelengths that render comparisons

251 Voloshin twice likens Andreev's stories to "*trompe l'oeil*" images (445, 447), and suggests that his characters appear more as "mannequins" than as real people (445).

possible. Indeed, such juxtapositions are necessary for anyone who attempts to grasp the culture of a given historical moment, which inevitably – if often imperceptibly – links all the participants in a given cultural field.²⁵² Thus, for Voloshin, it seems that every miscellany, however chaotically eclectic, becomes a possible point of entry into a given culture; one must simply learn to read it with a Symbolist's eye for paradigmatic connections – the kind of eye that *Faces* seeks to cultivate in its readers.

Andreev is useful not only as a sounding board for Symbolism; he also demonstrates the folly of absolutely identifying a writer's oeuvre with that writer's *lichnost'* (and vice versa). It is comparison with the Symbolist Sologub that truly makes this apparent. Sologub possesses a fluid and complex identity composed of outward (public) and inner (private) selves; he proves capable of change, donning various masks that shield the originary creative *lichnost'*, obscuring it. Andreev – as he does aesthetically – proceeds in the opposite direction:

В любом рассказе Леонида Андреева видишь сразу и средоточие его души, и окружность его творчества. Как личность он сказывается целиком в каждом своем произведении и замыкается в правильный круг. У Сологуба нечто иное: в каждом из его произведений видишь только один отрезок, окружность, и лишь по изгибу его мысленно представляешь себе, где его центр, но не можешь ни обозреть сразу всего круга, ни коснуться его срединного огня. Несмотря на свою видимую прозрачность, Сологуб поэт бесконечно сложный, и для того чтобы познать его душу, надо вычислить орбиты всех его произведений. И тот, кто сделает это, увидит, что он стоит посреди своих планет, подобно Пламенному Змию, который служит для него неизменным символом Солнца. (448)

In any short story by Leonid Andreev, you immediately see both the center of his soul and the circumference of his oeuvre. As an individual, he wholly declares himself in every work and encloses himself within a perfect circle. Sologub's case is different: in every one of his works, you see but a single segment, a circumference, and only through his contortions can you mentally conceive where his center is; still, you can neither immediately survey the entire circle, nor touch upon his central fire. His evident transparency notwithstanding, Sologub the poet is endlessly complex, and in order to truly know his soul, one must calculate the orbits of all of his works. And whoever does this will see that he stands in the center of his planets, just like the Fiery Dragon that serves as his unchanging symbol of the sun.

Without contending that Voloshin is polemicizing with the “radial” constructions of personality

²⁵² Voloshin asserts this position via his rejection of the more frequent comparison of Andreev and Dostoevskii. While such a comparison seems to “involuntarily suggest itself,” he finds it to be flawed: “Insofar as Leonid Andreev manifests himself as an individual (*lichnost'*) in his works, he could be one of Dostoevskii's heroes, but as an artist, he takes the opposite path” (445). In other words, clichés about Andreev's writing (its hyperbole, its concern for the extremities of the human psyche, its potentially fraught relationship with “Realism” as such, etc.) make for an easy but ultimately false equivalence with Dostoevskii. Thus, for Voloshin, Andreev and Dostoevskii are less united by their similar aesthetic than Andreev and Sologub are by their shared epoch.

articulated in Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii's portrait collections,²⁵³ we might suggest that his approach to artistic personality and the geometrical metaphors thereof represents a more versatile version of the same. Andreev, so overbearingly consistent in his artistic method, tempts us to equate oeuvre and *lichnost'*: everything pivots around him in a "perfect circle." This absolute reading of the author is precisely what Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii perform in their portrait collections. Sologub, on the other hand, represents a far more complex phenomenon, one that demands a different kind of interpretive apparatus. He is an entire solar system: his "radii" (points that are equidistant from a center) are actually "orbits" (planetary bodies that revolve around a central sun from different distances and on different vectors), suggesting that entries in artist's oeuvre can have sundry relations to their originary *lichnost'*. From the vantage point of any individual work, any individual planet, the ultimate center and ultimate peripheries of Sologub's solar system remain obscure; one must calibrate their various orbits against one another in order to truly grasp the writer's essence. Thus, if Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii construct a holistic map of the literary field through flattened, eminently relatable literary personalities, then Voloshin goes one step further. He insists that *individual artists* (or at least artists of Sologub's caliber) are not simple entities; they too must be grasped holistically, as an aggregate body of distinct but ultimately linked variables.

Conclusion

Voloshin's *Faces of Creativity* is a pivotal document in the development of Russian literary portraiture, even if its intended gallery remained unpublished in Voloshin's lifetime. The question here is not necessarily one of influence and reaction, as it was for Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii; the question here is Voloshin's individual portraits synthesize and articulate *lichnost'*. Unlike contemporary literary portraitists, Voloshin insisted that a writer's life and works were, by and large, irreducible to one another. While such resonances between these separate phenomena might theoretically exist, they were likely products of an individual observer's impression, which was itself not an instinctive, unmediated insight into an essence, as Aikhenval'd would have it; rather, that impression was determined by a particular time, place, and personal inclination. Voloshin's portraiture is thus the first to take seriously, and self-consciously, Wilde's dictum that portraiture is really autoportraiture.

We must acknowledge that Voloshin's insight in this regard proceeds from Symbolist thought – but, indeed, is not delimited by it. Symbolism's *kruzhek* culture fostered an interpersonal intimacy that could not but inflect one's interpretation of a given writer's work. Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii examined their subjects from afar, synthesizing those writers' *lichnosti* from the only material available to them – their works. Voloshin was, comparatively speaking, far more familiar with his subjects; not only was able to contextualize his own perspective on these authors, he was able to see fissures between life and works where his predecessors presumed solid ground. And yet, informed as Voloshin's perspective was by Symbolist sociability, often remained alien to Symbolism itself. The Symbolists' life-creative

253 See Chs. 2.2 and 2.3. Voloshin's article on Andreev and Sologub was published in *Rus'* on December 19, 1907, predating the appearances of the first full reprinting (1911) of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes* and the third printing (1909) of Chukovskii's *From Chekhov*. Consequently, it also precedes the first articulations (made in these later editions' prefaces) of the geometrical metaphors that express the essence of creative *lichnost'* and the literary field alike.

projects likewise sought to collapse the boundaries between life and art, harmonizing them; Voloshin, alienated by such practices, insisted that a writer's "integral face" (*tsel'nyi lik*) must include that which did *not* harmonize with that writer's manner of public self-presentation. In asserting that the individual creator can possess multiple faces, Voloshin's *Faces* posits that easy equivalences between life and work are no longer tenable – a conclusion that might be liberating, in the case of Sologub, or damning, in the cases of Briusov and Andreev.

In such circumstances, it is not surprising that masquerade becomes the operative trope of Voloshin's *Faces*, nor that this metaphor, like Voloshin's critical biographism, transcends its origins in Symbolist thought. For Vsevolod Meierkhol'd (the director of Blok's *The Puppet Show* [*Balaganchik*, 1906], the most notable Symbolist appropriation of *commedia dell'arte*), the genre's masked protagonists allowed for "grotesque" comparisons between new and old forms, between reality and convention. Indeed, it even allowed one to distinguish the boundary between life and art, which had been falsely and (in a Saussurean sense) arbitrarily²⁵⁴ connected by nineteenth-century Realists and twentieth-century Symbolists alike. One might be tempted to say that the parodic unmasking of a puerile Symbolism in *Puppet Show*²⁵⁵ has its critical equivalent in Voloshin's portraiture. His gallery presents similarly "grotesque" juxtapositions of lived experience and artistic text, of private persona and public personae, of integral *lichnost'* and multiple masks. In this – as in its combination of literary criticism and memoir – Voloshin's *Faces* points to an exit from literary portraiture's "life as works" model, and points toward pivotal post-Revolutionary developments within the genre.

254 In his study of early twentieth-century Russian drama (one far more semiotically than sociologically inclined than that of Catriona Kelly), J. Douglas Clayton connects grotesque capacities of *commedia dell'arte* masquerade to the "questioning of the conventional sign" faced by European modernity and answered by Saussurean linguistics. J. Douglas Clayton, *Pierrot in Petrograd: The Commedia dell'arte/Balagan in Twentieth-Century Russian Theatre and Drama* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 45.

255 For a discussion of how the play's masks contribute to the parodic ethos of Meierkhol'd's *Balaganchik*, see McQuillen, *The Modernist Masquerade: Stylizing Life, Literature, and Costumes in Russia*, 163-172.

Ch. 2.5: Conclusion

The literary portrait collections of Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin are highly symptomatic documents of late imperial Russian culture. They sought to engage a readership that had become more socially and economically heterogeneous in the early twentieth century. The popular orientations of Aikhenval'd's *Silhouettes of Russian Writers* and Chukovskii's *From Chekhov to Our Days* are reflected in their prefaces' didactic rhetoric – overtly scholarly in the case of the former, cleverly entertaining in the latter – and evidenced by the multiple printings garnered by each collection. For both Aikhenval'd and Chukovskii, it was essential that the portrait collection provide a holistic and approachable representation of the literary field of the time, one that accounted for both, on the one extreme, Symbolist poetry and, on the other, Realist prose. Voloshin's *Faces of Creativity*, too, finds ways of bridging this divide, albeit in a more traditionally Symbolist framework, one that is founded on the innate depth of the Symbolist *lichnost'* and points beyond the straightforward conflation of life and works.

Silhouettes, *From Chekhov*, and *Faces* each take pains to treat such absolute binarisms or divisions as faulty: indeed, they all endeavor to point out the thematic, conceptual, and even aesthetic common ground between artists whom (and in Voloshin's case, artistic media that) we would be more likely to disassociate from one another today. For the Impressionist Aikhenval'd, the same inadequate cognitive operations can corrupt the aesthetics of an “art for art's sake” poet such as Briusov and a writer of tendentious prose such as Gor'kii, while the poetry of Bunin can be simultaneously outmoded and (therefore!) extremely modern. For the playful Chukovskii, the euphonious form of Bal'mont's arch-Symbolist poetry can express the speed of urban existence that works of middlebrow culture (Pinkerton novels, chase films, etc.) treat more directly in their content. For the erudite Voloshin, the masquerade of the modern public sphere serves as a totalizing metaphor for late imperial Russian culture and social life alike.

Diverse as they are, these critics' portrait collections are further unified by certain recurrent features in their content. Within each individual vision of a holistic cultural system, the figure of Leonid Andreev represents something of a useful go-between: a writer whose concern for contemporary events places his political sympathies amongst the Realists, but whose artistic methods nevertheless allow for comparison with a more Modernist aesthetic. To be sure, many Modernist assessments of Andreev (both contemporary and retrospective) found in the author a reflection of their own movement's gradual disintegration and fragmentation,²⁵⁶ but Andreev was similarly useful to popular critics as well: he made an excellent sounding board for anyone seeking to construct a holistic vision of the Russian literary field. For Aikhenval'd, he demonstrated how one might travel from Gor'kii to Briusov, and from prose to poetry; for Chukovskii, Andreev's hyperbolic works threw the most pressing topics and themes of modern Russian culture into high relief; for Voloshin, he demonstrated, via comparison, the ultimate depth of the Symbolist personality. Andreev thus stands as something of an enigmatic keystone for late imperial Russian culture, though he is often deemphasized in our modern histories of that period's literature. These critics' portrait collections – literary artifacts similarly underserved by such histories – reveal his more central, or at least symptomatic, position.

We might also briefly remark upon the positions of these portraitists themselves.

²⁵⁶ See White, *Memoirs and Madness*, esp. 181-195, in which White discusses Andrei Belyi's shifting assessments of Andreev's work.

Tellingly, Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin all begin their lives on the peripheries of Russian cultural centers – the first two in Odessa, and the last in Crimea. Even after they are drawn to those cultural centers, they remain, in some sense, peripheral figures in regards to the dominant, Symbolist-driven *kruzhki* of the time. All three attend such groups' meetings and know their constituent members personally, to greater and lesser degrees. However, Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin are not bound by these *kruzhki* and the peculiar laws of power by which they operate – or, in Bourdieu's terms, the particular kind of capital that structures Symbolist relationships. Indeed, these critics transform their marginal positions into alternative sources of authority, and transform one kind of capital (or a lack thereof) into another. Aikhenval'd simplifies abstruse turn-of-the-century aesthetic doctrine within educational institutions, catering to particular groups – women, middlebrow readers – who possess little educational and cultural capital, respectively. For this, Aikhenval'd is awarded official recognition from the Academy of Sciences, garnering him a degree of political capital.

Chukovskii's professional authority proceeds more self-evidently from his straddling of various social spheres. He adopts the his mantle of (literary) detective, a figure uniquely capable of traversing multiple social spaces; he presents his critical acumen (which has already been recognized by Symbolist power brokers) as a product of autodidacticism and bootstrapping, making it theoretically available to Russia's “Hottentots.” He positions himself such that his low social capital and middling educational capital are transformed into greater cultural and financial capital. Even Voloshin, the author among these three who was most integrated into Symbolist *kruzhki*, purposefully positions himself as a more peripheral figure. Marginalized by his distaste for life-creation, he turns literary criticism into a kind of biographical unmasking, the deconstruction of the social praxis by which leading Symbolists derive their authority. At the center of each of these enterprises is literary portraiture, a genre whose power stems from its appeal to Modernist and middlebrow audiences alike. Straddling such readerships and social formations, it affords its practitioners the most advantageous combination of cultural and financial capital.

Thus, from their championing of Andreev, to their engagement of multiple readerships, to their ability to garner their authors novel forms of authority within the cultural and social fields, the literary portrait collections of Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin all obtain as highly symptomatic artifacts of late imperial culture and Russian modernity writ large. However, the literary portrait genre proves to be a surprisingly protean one that transcends its historical genesis. Just as its formal and epistemological features (as they were inherited from Pater and de Gourmont) were adapted to Russia's distinct set of social and cultural conditions at the turn of the century, so too did the portrait gallery format acclimate itself cultural milieus beyond the late imperial period. After 1917, literary portraiture continues to thrive, even as it transforms into a rather Janus-like institution: it simultaneously adapts to the conditions of the Soviet literary marketplace, in which its didactic function remained in full effect, and remains a viable and indeed frequently employed vehicle for the discussion (and often redemption) of pre-Revolutionary culture. Literary portraiture also continues to thrive among émigré authors, in whose hands its connections to the late tsarist period remain intact; surprisingly, however, their work in the genre criticizes many of the architects of the Silver Age, often in terms just as vicious as those of Soviet ideologues (even if the motor of their critique remains fundamentally different). It is to this new, heterogeneous body of literary portraiture, with its own attendant

contradictions, to which we now turn.

Ch. 3.1: The Literary Portrait as Memoir in Post-Revolutionary Russian Culture

Part 3 of this dissertation takes us into the post-Revolutionary epoch, and considers the literary portrait's evolution from a genre of criticism into a genre of memoir. For reasons practical and purposeful, these chapters will resemble one another less than those that concerned Aikhenval'd, Chukovskii, and Voloshin in Part II. In Ch. 3.2, I will examine Vladislav Khodasevich's *Necropolis* (1939), a book that structurally resembles the literary critical portrait galleries of Part 2, yet filters the young Chukovskii's *enfant terrible* tone and Voloshin's skepticism towards Symbolist life-creation through the lens of bitter retrospection. In Ch. 3.3, I will largely dispense with my inquiries into the poetics of an individual portrait collection, and instead focus on how the mature Kornei Chukovskii's memoir-portraits of Aleskandr Blok and Maksim Gor'kii change in tone, structure, and function across the various iterations of their author's memoirs, published as many as forty-five years apart from one another. Finally, in Ch. 3.4, I will engage in a more interart-oriented study of Iurii Annenkov's creative work: famous for his graphic art and portraiture prior to his emigration, he achieved fame as a costume and set designer abroad – but continued to engage with Russian cultural history via his voluminous collection of memoir-portraits.

In delimiting my inquiry to these three figures, I am voluntarily eschewing a comprehensive account of literary portraiture in post-Revolutionary Russia. Soviet-era scholarship has already cataloged much of this material, while generally excluding from this corpus anyone who operates outside the approved Belinskii-Gertsen-Gor'kii pedigree.²⁵⁷ Part 2 of this dissertation already sought to correct the gap in this genealogy that was coincident with late imperial culture and literary Modernism; Part 3 will seek to extend this line of continuity to the émigré portraiture that the Soviet-era history largely excludes (Khodasevich, Annenkov), and the Soviet portraiture whose organic connections to Modernism and late imperial culture it largely de-emphasizes (Chukovskii). Of equal importance to such varieties of interepochal and international continuity, however, is a fundamentally new development in literary portraiture – its turn towards memoir, which must be briefly contextualized here.

Our suspicions of Soviet mythmaking notwithstanding, Maksim Gor'kii does indeed appear to be central to the early developments in Soviet life-writing that serve as a background to the development of Russian memoir-portraits. We might first consider Gor'kii's orchestration of the biographical series *Lives of Remarkable People* (*Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei*), overseen then and to this day by the publishing house Molodaia gvardiia. This series was originally initiated by the publisher F. F. Pavlenkov in 1889, and produced nearly 200 biographies for a popular audience before the press was shut down in 1915.²⁵⁸ Gor'kii revived the name and spirit of Pavlenkov's enterprise in 1933 (a task which, if specious Soviet sources are to be believed, he intended to undertake even before the Revolution).²⁵⁹ He served as the series' editor until his

257 Furthermore, such scholars trace the origin of the literary portrait to sketch-like moments in longer prose texts, which distorts and all-too-Russifies the wider European traditions of the genre. Again, see Barakhov, *Literaturnyi portret*.

258 On Pavlenkov's series, see T. I. Nepomniashchaia, "Biograficheskaia biblioteka F. F. Pavlenkova 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei' kak tip izdaniia," *Kniga: issledovaniia i materialy* 19 (1969): 114–22.

259 See the foreword to S. N. Semanov, ed., *Katalog 1933-1973* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1974), 6-7. Kornei Chukovskii corroborates this story in his introduction to the 1967 Molodaia gvardiia publication of Gor'kii's memoirs; see Kornei Chukovskii, "M. Gor'kii i 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei,'" in *Literaturnye portrety*, by

death in 1936, at which point a series of other editors assumed control. The series possessed a didactic import not so distinct from the Plutarchian comparative biography on which it undoubtedly modeled itself,²⁶⁰ and frequently represented a remarkable intersection between the interests of the mass reader and Soviet (and post-Soviet) academics.²⁶¹ Gor'kii's efforts thus laid the groundwork for the continuation of comparative biography into Soviet letters, which proved vital to the continued relevance of literary portraiture.

Beyond his editorship of the fledgling *Lives* series, we can also point to Gor'kii's portraits of his literary and political contemporaries as a vital influence on the development of the genre. Like their pre-Revolutionary generic progenitors, these portraits were published as discrete texts about diverse figures (Gor'kii profiled both Vladimir Lenin and Lev Tolstoi) in distinct periodicals, and were then compiled into a single volume – not coincidentally, under the aegis of *Lives*.²⁶² Gor'kii was likewise instrumental, as both a contributor and editor, to the Soviet incarnation of portrait *collections*. While compiled memoirs of earlier Russian authors became a prominent feature in turn-of-the-century publishing,²⁶³ Gor'kii all but initiated the enterprise for Soviet literary culture with his 1922 *Book about Leonid Andreev (Kniga o Leonide Andreeve)*, whose eponymous subject had died three years prior. Gor'kii, possibly drawing on the commemorative volume model used by Russian academics to celebrate the lives of their deceased colleagues,²⁶⁴ solicited memoir-portraits from many Russian authors who knew Andreev, and then edited the volume.²⁶⁵ Gor'kii – who, upon his return to Russia in 1928, cemented his status as the Soviet Union's exemplary writer – was himself the subject of just such a volume, the 1928 *Gor'kii: A Collection of Articles and Reminiscences about M. Gor'kii (Gor'kii: Sbornik statei i vospominanii o M. Gor'kom)*. Figures such as Viktor Shklovskii and Kornei Chukovskii penned memoir-portraits for it, nominally praising Gor'kii's positive influence on Russian and Soviet literary culture, while simultaneously asserting that they – frequent targets of ideologically motivated criticism during the late 1920s – had a place within that culture too. We might interpret this as yet another, more dire confirmation of Wilde's

Maksim Gor'kii (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1967), 8.

260 Inna Bulkina, "The Lives of Remarkable People: Between Plutarch and Triapichkin," *Russian Studies in Literature* 49, no. 2 (2013): 87–95. On the Plutarchian ethos of Pavlenkov's pre-Revolutionary biographical series of the same name, see Stephen Moeller-Sally, "Parallel Lives: Gogol's Biography and Mass Readership in Late Imperial Russia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (1995): 62–79.

261 Viktor Shklovskii's 1963 biography of Lev Tolstoi, as well as his curious 1936 biography of Marco Polo, witnessed publication under the aegis of *Lives of Remarkable People*; more recently, Lev Losev's acclaimed critical biography of Iosif Brodskii was published by the post-Soviet incarnation of *Lives*, and was subsequently translated by Jane Ann Miller and released the Yale University Press in early 2012. For more on *Lives*, see Ch. 3.3.

262 Gor'kii's *Portraits of Remarkable People (Portrety zamechatel'nykh liudei)* was released in 1936, and was followed by the posthumous volume *Literary Portraits (Literaturnye portrety)*, first published in 1963 and reissued four years later.

263 This phenomenon might be connected to Ivan Sytin (1851-1934), the businessman and publisher who cornered much of the turn-of-the-century market on educational materials. In the years leading up to WWI, Sytin's press produced numerous texts dedicated to quasi-biographical accounts of specific nineteenth-century Russian authors (Gogol', Nekrasov, Dostoevskii, etc.) in a mosaic-like form that picked and chose from numerous memoirs of those authors' contemporaries. On the trajectory of Sytin's career, see Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 1985, 97-101.

264 On this phenomenon, see Andy Byford, *Literary Scholarship in Late Imperial Russia: Rituals of Academic Institutionalization* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association: Maney Pub., 2007).

265 White, *Memoirs and Madness* translates this work and breaks down each entry in the volume piece by piece.

otherwise cynical dictum: such portraiture is indeed as much a statement about its creator as its subject. Indeed, one scholar has designated this entire collective memoir format – which she calls the “contemporaries” genre – as an instrument of social advancement, a tool for positing and strengthening mentor-mentee relationships among the Russian intelligentsia.²⁶⁶ Thus, as both the orchestrating author and exemplary subject of collective literary portraiture, Gor'kii's influence on the post-Revolutionary fate of the genre is undeniable.

However, Gor'kii's centrality in ideologically-driven Soviet narratives of the genre's development does not include his centrality in less orthodox narratives thereof. Indeed, Khodasevich, Chukovskii, and Annenkov's memoir-portrait collections – which Soviet scholarship ignores or mollifies – all seem to pivot around Gor'kii in some way, even if their conclusions about the author are rather distinct. Gor'kii's ubiquity in these portrait galleries represents less a counterargument to Realist-oriented genealogies of Russian literary portraiture than a simple truth about the circumstances of post-Revolutionary existence in (most often) Petrograd. Amidst the material scarcities and political upheavals of the Civil War era, one's professional status as writer meant much more than one's nominal allegiance to a given aesthetic camp. In this sense, such memoir-portraits articulate the same kind of holistic heterogeneity as the literary critical portrait collections that I profile in Part 2: their search for a holistic aesthetic synthesis has simply been sublimated to the documentation of actual, experiential common ground between diverse authors.

The ubiquity of Aleksandr Blok in such collections likewise suggests as much. Aesthetically and biographically speaking, it is easy to read Blok as the ying to Gor'kii's yang, especially from our twenty-first century position of retrospection: the former was an aristocrat by birth and Symbolist by inclination, while the latter played up his nominal status as revolutionary hobo and was later canonized as the godfather of Socialist Realism. However, in reading Khodasevich, Chukovskii, and Annenkov's various portraits about Blok and Gor'kii, one is persistently struck not only by their close institutional proximity in the early post-Revolutionary years,²⁶⁷ but also by how they both emerge as ciphers for the Revolution's failure to live up to its promises. Indeed, this is one of the most essential insights afforded by *memoir-portraits*, in contradistinction to their literary-critical predecessors. Examining Gor'kii and Blok just on the basis of their distinct aesthetic proclivities, it is all too easy to play into well-worn literary historical narratives (the suppression/obsolescence of Blok's Symbolism, the coronation of Gor'kii's Socialist Realism, etc.); to examine the drift between these writers' artistic and biographical selves, their public and private personae, is to reveal Blok and Gor'kii's surprisingly mutual centrality to – and, contradictorily, their mutual homelessness within – the sphere of Soviet culture as a whole.

The continued twinning of Blok/Symbolism and Gor'kii/Realism is but one motif that will emerge across the next three chapters. As with Part 2, however, my various authors – and I myself – will treat such intersections rather differently across each chapter. As I will discuss in Ch. 3.2, Khodasevich's *Necropolis* represents one of the premier examples of Russian memoirs that seek to critique and “bury” Russian Symbolism.²⁶⁸ To this end, Khodasevich unexpectedly

266 See Walker, “On Reading Soviet Memoirs.”

267 This is also very apparent in Kornei Chukovskii's diary, one of the most vital documents of the post-Revolutionary cultural intelligentsia: Blok and Gor'kii share space in the entries therein. See Chukovskii, *Dnevnik 1901-1929*.

268 See Rylkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety*.

uses Gor'kii as a means of critiquing Symbolist life-creative practice. As I detail in Ch. 3.3, however, Chukovskii will treat both Blok and Gor'kii (usefully distinct members of the Soviet literary pantheon) as more enduring individuals whom he needs to instrumentalize in his own self-fashioning. This distinction points to an essential difference in these author's circumstances: in emigration, Khodasevich can critique his now-deceased contemporaries as much (and as bitterly) as he likes; in Soviet Russia, Chukovskii must rely on their literal and metaphorical patronage even after they have passed on. Indeed, Chukovskii's circumstances are even more complex, given that he must re-edit and re-write his memoirs at various periods to accord with the vicissitudes of Soviet cultural history. Hence my more diachronic orientation in Ch. 3.3: it is more interesting and less problematic to trace developments in Chukovskii's portraiture over time, calibrating their edits with the vicissitudes of Soviet cultural history, than to take any one iteration of his memoirs to be his "authoritative" portrait collection.

This diachronic apparatus will likewise obtain in Ch. 3.4, my discussion of Iurii Annenkov's portraiture. However, it will be married to a more interart approach, given that I will be comparing Annenkov's 1922 collection of graphic art, *Portraits*, to his 1966 collection of memoir-portraits, *Diary of My Meetings*, which he published in emigration. Rarely remarked upon now, these collections were vital documents in their own time. *Portraits* represented either a swan song for the pre-Revolutionary cultural intelligentsia, or a statement of the most advanced post-Revolutionary aesthetic, depending on whom one asked. *Diary*, along with Sergei Makovskii's contemporary memoir-portrait collections,²⁶⁹ served as a vital biographical source on Blok, Akhmatova, and other poets for Russianists living outside the Soviet Union, and further illuminated groundbreaking Soviet cultural phenomena, such as the staged festival *The Storming of the Winter Palace* (1920). However, Annenkov also provides me the opportunity to address a pivotal topic referenced in the very beginning of this dissertation: how exactly literary portraiture and its visual namesake might be fruitfully compared to one another. Modern-day scholars – to say nothing of their intellectual predecessor Gotthold Lessing and his famous 1766 essay *Laocoön* – have long debated the grounds for such interartistic comparisons, not least when it comes to matters of portraiture.²⁷⁰ Rarely have they been presented with someone who, like Annenkov, so directly and purposefully participates in both media, and who integrates his visual portraits into his literary ones, often seeking to enhance or correct the impression that they gave some forty years prior. For this reason, Ch. 3.4 will adopt a broader and occasionally more art-historical approach to its topic, bringing to the surface much of the obscured provocation in the term "literary portrait."

Thus, all told, the subsequent three chapters will pursue similar arguments about the heterogeneity of the turn-of-the-century Russian literary field as demonstrated by literary portraiture, but will further examine how certain variables – the act of writing in emigration, developments in Soviet history and culture, and cross-media inquiries into human personality – affect the construction of literary portrait galleries themselves.

269 See Makovskii, *Portrety sovremennikov* and Makovskii, *Na Parnase* "Serebriianogo veka."

270 See, for example, Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance* and Richard Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait-Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Ch. 3.2: Vladislav Khodasevich's *Necropolis*: Writing Myth out of the Symbolist Life

One of the premier memoirs about Russia's Silver Age, Vladislav Khodasevich's *Necropolis* (*Nekropol'*, 1939) is frequently cited as a vital biographical source on various Symbolist writers. However, it is rarely discussed in and of itself. *Necropolis*' scholarly heyday may have occurred in the early 1990s, when its definition of Symbolist life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*) was cited front and center in the introduction of *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism* (1994), the seminal scholarly treatment of that subject in Anglo-American scholarship:

Symbolism did not want to be merely an artistic school, a literary movement. It continually strove to become a life-creating method, and in this was its most profound, perhaps unembodiable truth. Its entire history was in essence spent in yearning after that truth. It was a series of attempts, at times truly heroic, to find a fusion of life and art, as it were, the philosopher's stone of art.²⁷¹

The Symbolist life, in other words, was possessed of the same attributes as theurgic Symbolist art. Aesthetically organized behavior was not only semiotically rich, but also mystically endowed, capable of transforming the world, overcoming biology, and transcending (or bringing about) the looming apocalypse.²⁷² Notwithstanding the relatively neutral language of its above definition, life-creation becomes an object of bitter critique in *Necropolis*: the volume chronicles the collapse of these lofty Symbolist projects and the pettiness of their architects.

Examining the volume's wider content enriches and complicates Khodasevich's seemingly straightforward definition of Symbolist life-creative practice. *Necropolis* compiles nine previously published portraits of various Silver Age personalities – not all of whom are Symbolists. The sequence in which these personalities appear, the sequence in which Khodasevich wants us to *encounter* them, is essential to the volume's critique of Symbolist practice, though perhaps counterintuitively so at first glance. *Necropolis* begins with a portrait of Nina Petrovskaia (an extremely minor Symbolist personality, more famous now for her love affairs with Valerii Briusov and Andrei Belyi than for her short stories and critical articles) and ends with a portrait of Maksim Gor'kii (whose Symbolist qualifications are quite obviously lacking). In a text famous as a settling of accounts with Symbolism and its leading authors, the peculiarity of these bookends should not be overlooked. Indeed, approached as a unified volume, *Necropolis* provides access to a richer vision (and critique) of life-creation than has been traditionally thought, richer than its oft-cited definition of life-creation suggests.

I will argue that Khodasevich sequences the individual portraits of *Necropolis* with two goals in mind: compelling his reader to experience Symbolist life in a properly Symbolist, life-creative way; and to present alternatives (however imperfect) to Symbolist tactics of life-creation. This approach recognizes the critical potential operating behind the opening trio of

271 qtd. in Irina Paperno, "Introduction," in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1–11, 1-2. Although Khodasevich places the words *zhizn'* and *tvorchestvo* in close proximity to one another and argues for the two concepts' inextricability within the Symbolist worldview, the neologism *zhiznetvorchestvo* is generally attributed to the scholarship of Lidiia Ginzburg and Iurii Lotman.

272 See Matich, *Erotic Utopia* for further exploration of these themes.

portraits (dedicated to Petrovskaiia, Briusov, and Belyi, the participants in one of Russian Symbolism's most notorious love triangles)²⁷³ and assigns pivotal significance to those portraits (of Mikhail Gershenzon and Gor'kii, a critic and non-Symbolist writer, respectively) that are normally considered anomalous within the collection. I will perform a close reading of these portraits, arguing for their structural and thematic unity with their neighbors, and show how *Necropolis'* overarching structure is inseparable from Khodasevich's critique of life-creation.

Necropolis in the Context of Russian Émigré Life-Writing

David Bethea describes Khodasevich's poetic eye as “stereoscopic,” capable of “perceiving two moments of time simultaneously.”²⁷⁴ This metaphor, a fertile one for discussing Khodasevich's poetry, might be equally fertile when applied to *Necropolis* itself: recollection is the motor of life-writing, and the transcendence of linear time was a pivotal trope of Symbolist life-creation, the volume's primary subject. Indeed, Khodasevich's varied treatments of Symbolism as a way of life make frequent reference to time and temporal deviation. Younger than his literary peers, Khodasevich (1886-1939) experienced what he called the Symbolist “atmosphere” just when it was starting to dissipate. His “belatedness”²⁷⁵ afforded him a stereoscopic perspective on Symbolism as a whole – simultaneously an insider's and outsider's one, in which his youthful passion was tempered by the movement's decline. Indeed, such belatedness alienated Khodasevich from several of Symbolism's major tenets – life-creation specifically among them.

Russian Symbolist life-creative practice distinguishes itself from its notable western European antecedents in several important ways. In applying to life those creative energies typically directed at artistic production, Russian Symbolists outdid both Baudelarian dandyism, which endorsed the cultivation of theatrical personae in everyday life, and Wildean clichés about life imitating art more than vice versa.²⁷⁶ Symbolist *zhiznetvorchestvo* was no mere project of archly performed individualism; as Khodasevich recognized, its ethos was communitarian, one in which the transformation of life demanded earnest group participation and even the sublimation of one's personal will to larger goals.²⁷⁷ This ethos found application in various spheres: journalism, as in Briusov's endeavor to cultivate a unique discourse for a specifically Symbolist readership; mythical playacting, as in Belyi's Argonaut group that sought new, theurgic, and ultimately esoteric ways of living in the face of the looming apocalypse; and even

273 Briusov famously transformed this love triangle into his roman à clef *The Fiery Angel* (*Ognennyi angel*, 1908).

The recently compiled correspondence of Briusov and Petrovskaiia sheds further, essential light on the trio's relationships; see Valerii Briusov and Nina Petrovskaiia, *Perepiska, 1904-1913*, ed. N. A. Bogomolov and A. V. Lavrov (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2004).

274 David Bethea, *Khodasevich, His Life and Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 74, 305. This formulation proceeds from the double-exposed photograph that motivates Khodasevich's long poem “Sorrento Photographs” (“Sorrentinskie fotografii,” 1926).

275 See his 1928 article “On Symbolism” (“O simbolizme”) in V. F. Khodasevich, *Sobranie sochinenii: v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moskva: Soglasie, 1996; hereafter listed as *SS*), v. 2, 173. For Khodasevich's comments on his biographical “belatedness” vis-à-vis his artistic contemporaries, see his 1933 autobiographical sketch “Infancy” (“Mladenchestvo”), *SS*, v. 4, 190.

276 Dennis Ioffe, “Modernism in the Context of Symbolist ‘Life-Creation’: ‘Lebenskunst’ and the Theory of ‘Life ↔ Text’ Sign Systems,” *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* 40 (2006): 22–55.

277 See the concluding line of “On Symbolism,” in which he designates the movement “an instance of collective creation” (*sluchai kollektivnogo tvorchestva*); *SS* II, 177.

marriage, as in the sexless union between Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Gippius, and a series of third parties, as well as the union of Aleksandr Blok and Liubov' Mendeleeva, which some Symbolists treated as a world-historical event.²⁷⁸

Khodasevich embraced this communitarian ethos upon his first exposure to Symbolism, but his desire to aestheticize life alongside other belated Symbolist initiates²⁷⁹ abated when he saw how damaging such collective activity could be. He did not participate in the erotic triangle, one type of life-creative project that was arguably the most pivotal to Russian Symbolism, having acquired something of an institutional status within the movement.²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, he was particularly privy to the spectacular collapse and lingering effects of the Briusov-Belyi-Petrovskaia triangle, and Khodasevich's critique of this particular institution is particularly damning. However, both that critique and the centrality of erotic triple unions within the Symbolist movement becomes obscured when his definition of *zhiznetvorchestvo* is quoted in isolation and treated as paradigmatic statement about the fusion art and life. Restoring this definition to its primary context in *Necropolis* (i.e. the first of three portraits chronicling the Petrovskaia-Briusov-Belyi love triangle), one sees that the efficacy of Khodasevich's critique lies in his book's ability to make statements about *lives* in the plural.

What is it that makes Symbolist life-creation so destructive? For Khodasevich, I would argue, the archetypal Symbolist life was “broken”²⁸¹ because life-creative interpersonal relations, especially erotic love triangles, demanded that its participants warp, deny, or transcend conventional conceptions of biography and lived experience. From Vladimir Solov'ev's utopian belief that immortality might be achieved through sexual abstinence, to the apocalyptic power of the Blok-Mendeleeva union, to Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's chaste triple unions that defied the cyclical reproductive function of marriage,²⁸² Symbolist life-creative projects viewed time as an obstacle to be battled. Human life and conventional sexual relations became means to an end. For Khodasevich, if one failed to understand these temporal distortions inherent within Symbolist life-creation, one failed to understand Symbolism itself. Only a sense of stereoscopy – as per Bethe, the ability to simultaneously re-experience past moments of earnest life-creative practice and the mundane time that this practice unsuccessfully sought to overcome or occlude – makes worthy, critical Symbolist life-writing possible, and as a belated figure within the Symbolist movement, his perspective was more stereoscopic than anyone's.

Necropolis thus makes intelligible a set of lives that resist biographization and a transcendent sense of time that defies narrativization. This accomplishment was hard-won,

278 On these phenomena, see Jonathan Stone, “The Literal Symbolist: Solov'ev, Briusov, and the Reader of Early Russian Symbolism,” *Russian Review* 67, no. 3 (July 1, 2008): 373–86; Alexander Lavrov, “Andrei Bely and the Argonauts' Mythmaking,” in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 83–121; and Matich, *Erotic Utopia*, respectively.

279 See the portrait of Samuil Kissin (Muni) in *Necropolis*. All citations from *Necropolis*, in-text and otherwise, are drawn from V. F. Khodasevich, *Nekropol': vospominaniia; literatura i vlast'; pis'ma B.A. Sadovskomu* (Moskva: SS, 1996), as it is currently the most thoroughly annotated (by N. A. Bogomolov) edition of this text. All other citations of Khodasevich's work will be drawn from *SS*, as indicated above.

280 On the erotic triangle in Russian Modernism, see Matich, “The Symbolist Meaning of Love: Theory and Practice” and *Erotic Utopia*.

281 Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 19.

282 On these phenomena and the various turn-of-the-century attempts to transcend biology (and, I would argue, biography) through erotic means, see Matich, *Erotic Utopia*.

however, and cannot be understood outside of Khodasevich's historical context. Émigré literary culture of the 1920s and 30s was already flooded with memoirs about the Symbolists well before *Necropolis* was published 1939, and²⁸³ *Necropolis* itself consisted of discrete works that Khodasevich wrote and published between 1924 and 1938. Khodasevich welcomed this bounty of memoirs: he believed Symbolist literature to be so wrapped up in Symbolist lives that the movement could not be understood without extensive biographical commentary (which, like Chukovskii, pitted Khodasevich against the Formalists; see. Ch. 3.3).²⁸⁴ However, Khodasevich did not refrain from critiquing these memoirs' representational strategies, especially where Symbolists' interpersonal connections and senses of time are concerned. *Necropolis* must be understood as a rejoinder to these earlier instances of Symbolist life-writing.

Andrei Belyi's *The Beginning of the Century* (*Nachalo veka*, 1933), the second book in his autobiographical trilogy, represents a useful foil for Khodasevich's project. Khodasevich wrote about this book for the émigré newspaper *Renaissance* (*Vozrozhdenie*). His review characterizes Belyi's text as something of a mixed bag. He begins by mocking the foreword to the Soviet edition of *Beginning*, penned by the ideologue and politician Lev Kamenev.²⁸⁵ He particularly objects to Kamenev's primary critique of Belyi's memoir: that it does not engage with its "protagonists' ideas." Khodasevich counters that "the task of the memoirist is precisely the representation of people, and not their ideas," adding that "descriptions of personal connections are more useful than juxtapositions of literary tendencies."²⁸⁶

Even by this metric, however, Khodasevich suggests that Belyi's text falls short. Khodasevich traces its weaknesses to Belyi's willful transformation of his earlier, superior *Reminiscences about Aleksandr Blok* (*Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Bloke*, 1921). Suffering from "literary depression" at his creative obsolescence in post-Revolutionary culture, embarrassed by Blok's unflattering assessments of his work in recently published private correspondence, Belyi gradually transformed these memoirs – which swelled in length but increasingly narrowed their focus to their author's particular circumstances – into savage caricatures of Blok's generation.²⁸⁷ Compelled to update the work through a series of ever-

283 For an overview of Symbolist-oriented memoirs of this time, and a convincing argument concerning these works' collective attempt to preserve Silver Age culture by burying it, see Rylkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety*, 45-65.

284 On Khodasevich's gratitude for these memoirs, see, "On Symbolism," *SS*, v. 2, 174. On Khodasevich's objections to Russian Formalism, see his essay "On Formalism and the Formalists" ("O formalizme i o formalistakh"), *Ibid.*, 153-8. For a perspective that reconciles Khodasevich and Formalism, see John Malmstad, "Khodasevich and Formalism: A Poet's Dissent," in *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance: A Festschrift in Honor of Victor Erlich*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson and Stephen Rudy (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1985), 68–81.

285 In his review, Khodasevich is oddly coy about the degree to which he was personally acquainted with Kamenev: both participated in the same cultural organizations of the early Soviet period. In his short memoir "The White Corridor" ("Belyi koridor," 1925), Khodasevich describes in scathing, sarcastic detail the vanity and insincerity of Kamenev and other Kremlin-based cultural power brokers in the immediate post-Revolutionary years; see *SS*, v. 4, 241-261.

286 Khodasevich, "*Nachalo veka*" ("*The Beginning of the Century*"), in *SS*, v. 2, 321. For Kamenev's introductory essay, see Andrei Belyi, *Nachalo veka* (Moscow: Gos. izd. khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1933), iii-xv.

287 For more extensive and diplomatic accounts of Belyi's engagement with memoir writing, see Lazar Fleishman, "Bely's Memoirs," in *Andrei Bely: Spirit of Symbolism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 216–41, and the 1989-1990 Khudozhestvennaia literatura editions of Belyi's autobiographical trilogy with commentary and introductory materials by A.V. Lavrov.

changing historical circumstances, Belyi's task became downright Sisyphean. But Khodasevich contends that Belyi “no longer wanted to be a historian [...] As a historian, at all capable of evaluating events and people, of understanding causes and locating effects, Belyi definitively crossed himself out (*sebia okonchatel'no zacherknul*).”²⁸⁸

In Khodasevich's eyes, the otherwise valuable *Beginning* remains flawed as a specifically *Symbolist* memoir. Belyi pivots his account of Symbolism's collective life around himself, rather than presenting “Symbolism as the axis of his life in general”;²⁸⁹ he reads all Symbolists' tsarist pasts (the “causes”) out of his particular Soviet present (his own unfortunate “effects”), a teleological fallacy. Indeed, as Khodasevich makes clear (and not without sympathy), Belyi's increasingly dire financial, medical, and political circumstances prevented him from thinking in any moment save his Soviet present. Thus, it is not only Belyi's increasingly bilious perspective that “corrupt” the text: the exigencies of rushing publication on an ever-lengthening narrative produce *Beginning's* “disproportionality, dashes forward, and repetitions,” identified by Khodasevich as its ubiquitous weaknesses.²⁹⁰ Simply put, Belyi's text – whether conceived as a willful distortion of the past or an unwitting capitulation to the present – is anything but stereoscopic.

In mounting this critique against Belyi's book, Khodasevich is arguing that forms of life-writing must be appropriate to the content of that subject's life (or those subjects' lives). Khodasevich does not reject linear auto/biography out of hand; indeed, one of his most successful prose works, a biography of Gavril Derzhavin (*Derzhavin*, 1931) employs just such a format. Khodasevich sought to recuperate this eighteenth-century court poet, widely dismissed in the early twentieth century, as a viable model for life and literary production in the post-Symbolist, émigré age.²⁹¹ Derzhavin's ever-more-perfecting synthesis of life and work, art and civic duty are rendered in a linear, teleological, and traditionally biographical form entirely adequate to it (and to Khodasevich's regenerative project). For Khodasevich, such a linear auto/biographical form was untenable for Belyi's bilious, backward-looking account of Symbolism – or, for that matter, anyone's account thereof, given the temporal distortions at the heart of Symbolist life-creation.

Khodasevich answers this representational quandary with *Necropolis*, whose gallery format overcomes the numerous pitfalls of linear narrative. Juxtaposing (and gently re-editing) fixed impressions written as many as fifteen years ago, Khodasevich (unlike Belyi) strives for a stereoscopic fidelity to present *and* past moments. Khodasevich further sublimates Symbolist life-creation's transhistorical energies into a bluntly formal component of his work: *Necropolis'* readers finish one author's portrait and move onto the next, repeatedly transporting themselves backwards in time.²⁹² Within individual portraits, deviations from linear, chronological narrative

288 *SS*, v. 2, 327.

289 *ibid*, 324.

290 *ibid*, 326.

291 See Angela Brintlinger, *Writing a Usable Past: Russian Literary Culture, 1917-1937* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000). Brintlinger suggests that Khodasevich's fragmentary biography of his poetic hero Pushkin failed because Pushkin's tragic demise too closely resembled the willful self-destruction of Symbolist *zhiznetvorchestvo* to be useful. On similar rejections of Pushkin in Russian émigré circles, see Galin Tihanov, “Russian Emigre Criticism and Theory between the World Wars,” in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 144–62, esp. 156–62.

292 This is doubly borne out by the fact that *Necropolis* does reproduce the order in which Khodasevich wrote its

throw into relief the distortions that life-creation compelled the Symbolists to visit upon their own biographical time (unlike in *Beginning*, where such deviations are byproducts of the text's rushed publication).

Necropolis' greatest accomplishment, however, is that it provides a composite representation of discrete Symbolist lives in the plural: unlike in Belyi's nominally myopic text, the portrait gallery format weighs its profiled Symbolists more equally. This format represents a verisimilar achievement in regards to the ethos of collective life-creation: to employ the language in which Khodasevich rebuffs Kamenev, it inherently posits the Symbolists' "personal connections" as their greatest – and most destructive – "idea." By initiating *Necropolis* with portraits of Petrovskaia, Briusov, and Belyi, by making us repeatedly relive this trio's romantic travails, Khodasevich makes the erotic love triangle – so transcendent in its aims, so repetitive in its practice – the premier example of Symbolist life-creative activity.

Thus, both across its portrait gallery and within its constituent portraits, *Necropolis'* structure reproduces the poetics of collective Symbolist *zhiznetvorchestvo* in order to critique it. It is this feature that allows Khodasevich's text to simultaneously be a memoir of Symbolist relationships and a critical history of Symbolist ideas – one that positions itself as a conceptual rejoinder to Belyi's rival account of Symbolism, more righteous and stereoscopic in its critique.

The Architecture of Khodasevich's City of the Dead

Despite the fact that *Necropolis'* poetics are essential to Khodasevich's critique of life-creation, his contemporaries, as well as subsequent scholars, have typically maintained that the work lacks an obvious structure. (See Fig. 4 below.) Khodasevich's contemporary Vladimir Weidlé praised the volume's unity, likening its sequence of portraits to a "classical tragedy,"²⁹³ but his opinion remains an outlier. More frequently, scholars and critics have regarded only the first five portraits, which are dedicated to a variety of Russian Symbolists (Petrovskaia, Briusov, Belyi, Muni, and Aleksandr Blok) and the Acmeist Nikolai Gumilev, as truly cohesive. Correspondingly, those portraits in *Necropolis'* second half (on Gershenzon, Fedor Sologub, Sergei Esenin, and Gor'kii) are variously dismissed as deviations or aberrations undermining the integrity of the volume.

Such was the case with V. S. Ianovskii, another of Khodasevich's contemporaries and a fellow émigré critic, whose review laments that Sologub and Esenin's portraits destroy *Necropolis'* greater unity.²⁹⁴ However, this criticism of the second half of *Necropolis* seems a mere feint, designed to gloss over the true diversity of the life-writing strategies in the first half. The famously Freudian psychologism in Belyi's portrait in no way resembles Khodasevich's impressionistic accounts of the minor Symbolist personalities Muni and Nina Petrovskaia; still less does it resemble the rather prosaic account of Briusov's rise and fall. The turn towards non-

constituent portraits. Khodasevich's portraits, ordered by their sequence in *Necropolis*, were respectively completed in the following years: 1928, 1924, 1938, 1926, 1931, 1928, 1926, and 1936.

293 Vladimir Veidle, "V. F. Khodasevich: *Nekropol'*," *Sovremennye zapiski* 69 (1939): 393–94. Weidlé's peculiar take on the collection also distinguishes itself by its optimism. He describes *Necropolis* as "not a city of the dead, but a village of the living," citing the vivacity of Khodasevich's portrayals. He also calls Gor'kii's portrait the best in the collection; this entry in the volume is the one most frequently ignored by subsequent scholars who focus on Khodasevich's portrayal of his Symbolist contemporaries.

294 V.S. Ianovskii, "V.F. Khodasevich. *Nekropol'*," *Russkie zapiski* 19 (1939): 198–99.

Symbolist figures in the final four portraits of *Necropolis* is ultimately no less disruptive to the collection's unity than the diversity of critical approaches exhibited in the first five, Symbolist-focused portraits.

In 1979, Nikita Struve, the grandson of Silver Age politician and intellectual Petr Struve,

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ :

	стр.
Предисловіе	5
Конецъ Ренаты	7
Андрей Бѣлый	61
Муни	100
Гумилевъ и Блокъ	118
Гершензонъ	141
Сологубъ	158
Есенинъ	179
Горькій	228

Fig. 4 – table of contents for Khodasevich's *Necropolis* (1939); note that it mistakenly leaves out Briusov's portrait, which is located between “The End of Renata” and “Andrei Belyi”

suggested another, more literary-historical interpretation for the architecture of Khodasevich's volume. Struve suggested that *Necropolis'* initial four portraits (Petrovskaia, Briusov, Belyi, Muni) concern the Decadents' pre-Revolutionary existence; the middle portrait (jointly dedicated to Blok and Gumilev) concerns the two “central and mutually opposed figures of the poetic renaissance”; and the final four (Gershenzon, Sologub, Esenin, Gor'kii) concern the post-Revolutionary fates of “writers from the people.”²⁹⁵ While the chronological component of Struve's theory holds water, the nominal unity of *Necropolis'* second half does not. In these works, Khodasevich rarely concerns himself with his subjects' origins, either because he is more interested in their post-Revolutionary life and works (Gershenzon, Gor'kii), or because the more appreciative portraits (Sologub, Esenin) focus on aesthetics rather than biography.

More recent assessments contend that if *Necropolis'* portraits are unified by anything, then it is the simple fact of their subjects' deaths. The point seems obvious, especially given the title of Khodasevich's collection, but it is critical. As one scholar has noted, Khodasevich endows each entry in *Necropolis* with a uniformly circular structure: he initiates each portrait with an

295 Nikita Struve, “Nekropol' V. Khodasevicha,” *Vestnik Russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 127 (1978): 105–23; 108-9.

“exposition” that foretells its subject's death,²⁹⁶ ensuring that the dominant principle of each portrait becomes its subject's end, rather than (as per Struve) its subject's origin. Given this formal consistency, however, does any thematic unity exist in the *content* of those deaths? As with most portrait collections, unity through heterogeneity is one interpretative possibility. Nikolai Bogomolov contends that *Necropolis* illustrates “the numerous variants of the Russian writer's fate in the first third of the twentieth century,” and further asserts that Khodasevich's diverse subjects are united by their blindness to their “epoch's ominous radioactivity” – a blindness by which “they turn out to be doomed.”²⁹⁷ Another scholar concurs, arguing that *Necropolis'* structure explores the “varied nuances” of death within in the poetics of life-creation. The volume first examines authors (Petrovskaia, Briusov, Belyi, Muni) who fetishize death and play with suicide as a creative act; the centerpiece of the collection, the joint portrait of Gumilev and Blok, then demonstrates how death enters the “collective, rather than personal realm,” when the exigencies of Soviet life transform “an aesthetic, voluntary, controlled event [i.e. a “life-creative” death] into a universally terrifying, indiscriminate reality.”²⁹⁸

This illuminating perspective still gives short shrift to the second half of the collection – particularly the pieces on Khodasevich's friends and mentors Gershenzon and Gor'kii. Admittedly, the primary position of “The End of Renata” (simultaneously the harshest and most profound portrait, dedicated to the marginal Petrovskaia) does suggest *Necropolis'* primary objective to be the interrogation of Symbolist life-creation. However, I believe that Gershenzon and Gor'kii's portraits are designed – or, at the very least, structurally obtain – as essential counterweights to the corrupted Symbolist lives that precede them, and thus deserve greater attention than they are normally afforded in discussions of *Necropolis* as an integral whole.

Nevertheless, they represent no *moral* counterweight to the Symbolist life. Gor'kii is hardly an exemplary figure, and Khodasevich suggests that his particular *non*-Symbolist brand of life-creation is just as self-conscious, false, and damaging as Petrovskaia's. However, on the whole, his portrait is a redemptive one, insofar as Gor'kii exhibits concern for the social function of the life that he has constructed for himself. Gor'kii even inspires *Necropolis'* revisionist project, affirming Khodasevich's prerogative to retrospectively examine turn-of-the-century writers' lives and works. This, too, is the function of Gershenzon's portrait. The dullness of his external life makes for a telling contrast with *Necropolis'* heady Symbolist content, and the work of Gershenzon, a scholar of literature (and the only non-artist in the collection), teaches Khodasevich the perspective that proper life-writing requires.

Thus, if the first five portraits of *Necropolis* foreground Khodasevich's critical objectives (i.e. a thorough critique of Symbolist life-creation), then “Gor'kii” and “Gershenzon” serve the more metacritical task of endowing Khodasevich with the method and mandate of (re)writing the life of the venerated Russian Author. Within *Necropolis'* architecture, these portraits foreground

296 N. V. Shteinikova, “Siuzhetno-kompozitsionnaia organizatsiia knigi Khodasevicha ‘Nekropol’,” in *Traditsionnaia slavianskaia kul'tura i sovremennyi mir: materialy III Kirillo-Mefodievskikh chtenii, 22 Maia 2008* (Astrakhan': Izdatel'skii dom “Astrakhanskii universitet,” 2008), 99–110.

297 N. A. Bogomolov, “Predislovie,” in *Nekropol': vospominaniia; literatura i vlast'; pis'ma B.A. Sadovskomu*, by V. F. Khodasevich (Moscow: SS, 1996), 7–15, 10–11.

298 Julia Zarankin, “The Literary Memoirist as Necrographer: Khodasevich, Tsvetaeva, Nabokov, and Proust” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2004), <http://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/305149747/fulltextPDF/777473B5E1674378PQ/1?accountid=14496>, 45.

the fact that Khodasevich possesses what Iurii Lotman calls the “right to write” someone's biography;²⁹⁹ they consequently warrant a more detailed exploration than most accounts of the collection provide. Indeed, such an exploration allows us to detect a subtler unity within the work's nominal heterogeneity: its sequence of portraits invites us to compare different strategies of life-creation, Symbolist or otherwise. Thus, Khodasevich's definition of Symbolist *zhiznetvorchestvo* ultimately becomes inextricable from the context of *Necropolis* itself.

Living and Reliving the Symbolist Life: *Necropolis*' Individual Portraits

Before discussing the counterfunction of “Gershenzon” and “Gor'kii,” we must explore the trio of portraits that open *Necropolis*, particularly “The End of Renata.” Cumulatively, Khodasevich's profiles of Petrovskaia, Briusov, and Belyi make for a fuller condemnation of *zhiznetvorchestvo* than any portrait, or excerpt therefrom, does in isolation.

One of *Necropolis*' governing, repeated figural expressions – the “net” of Symbolist relations – aptly describes the destructive effects of life-creation on biography.³⁰⁰ Life becomes constricted, trapped, turned in on itself, in the name of immortality, transcendence, or a cleansing apocalypse. As Khodasevich states in Petrovskaia's portrait, the Symbolists become “impossibly tangled (*slozhneishe zaputany*) in a common net of loves and hatreds, both personal and literary” (Khodasevich 1996 21); those who manage to squeeze through the net are left with irredeemably “broken lives” (19). In either case, their personality becomes distorted beyond recognition, as Khodasevich indicates in this statement (previously encountered in Ch. 1.1):

Отсюда – лихорадочная погоня за эмоциями, безразлично за какими. Все «переживания» почитались благом, лишь бы их было много и они были сильны. В свою очередь, отсюда вытекало безразличное отношение к их последовательности и целесообразности. «Личность» становилась копилкой переживаний, мешком, куда сыпались накопленные без разбора эмоции – «миги», по выражению Брюсова: «Берем мы миги, их губя.» Глубочайшая опустошенность оказывалась последним следствием этого эмоционального скопидомства. Скупые рыцари символизма умирали от духовного голода – на мешках накопленных «переживаний». (22)

Hence the feverish pursuit of emotions, regardless of their kind. All “experiences” were worshiped as a blessing, so long as they were numerous and powerful. From this in due turn arose the indifferent attitude to their sequence and expedience. “Personality” [*lichnost'*] became a moneybox of experiences, a sack into which the indiscriminately accumulated emotions were stuffed – “moments,” in Briusov's

299 In his article “Literary Biography in a Historico-Cultural Context” (“Literaturnaia biografiia v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste”), Lotman suggests that calibrating the culturally variable relationship between the right to be possessed of a biography and the right to write someone's biography would be a useful method for “typological classification of cultures.” He suggests that Romantic paradigm is one in which “he who possesses the biography gives himself the right to it...and he himself writes (*opisyvaet*) it.” Iurii Lotman, *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh* (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 1992). v. I, 376.

300 On Khodasevich's use of the word “net” (*set'*) in *Necropolis* and his critical articles about Symbolism, see Zarankin, “The Literary Memoirist as Necrographer.”

expression “We gather moments, destroying them.” The deepest ruination proved to be the final consequence of this emotional hoarding. The covetous knights of Symbolism died from spiritual hunger – on the sacks of accumulated “experiences.”

By treating personality as an object of aesthetic construction, the Symbolists transform authentic biographical time into something mannered and suspect. “Moments” and “experiences” transcend their drab origins in raw linearity (*posledovatel'nost'*), beyond laws of cause and effect. They become physical objects that one can gather and compile, in a formless sack or crude moneybox, for future use. For Khodasevich, the Symbolist life becomes one of magnitude (numerous, powerful experiences) rather than sequence, of stasis rather than progress. As suggested by the metaphor of the moneybox (or an infantilizing piggybank, a sign of arrested development), those moments become eminently fungible. In such circumstances, the Symbolist personality likewise risks becoming fungible, as Petrovskaiia demonstrates. She repeatedly serves as lover and muse to various Symbolist poets, transforming herself into “one of the main loops in that [Symbolist] net” (21) – never recognizing how much this pivotal role constricts her, how repetitive it makes her actions, how severely it curtails her biography.

The shortcomings of the Symbolist life – transcendent in theory but bleakly repetitive in practice – is no better expressed than in the scare-quoted *perezhivaniia*, a vital word in Khodasevich's text. Nouns and verbs formed from the Russian word *zhit'* (“to live”) are ubiquitous in *Necropolis*, and while they are perhaps an ordinary phenomenon in life-writing, they receive an ironic sheen in light of the volume's morbid title. Khodasevich often appends prefixes to the verb *zhit'* in order to demonstrate how far from the conventional life a Symbolist tends to stray. Of these prefixed variants, *perezhivat'/perezhit'* appears the most frequently, and its numerous, contextually dependent meanings – which we might render in English as to *experience*, to *relive*, to *live through*, to *outlive*, to *survive*, to *endure*, to *suffer* – all have their resonance within the text. Variations thereof frequently appear throughout Petrovskaiia's portrait specifically³⁰¹ and *Necropolis* generally,³⁰² and their repetition seems far from accidental. The

301 Other examples of *perezhivanie*-derived formulae include the following: “*Liubov' i vse proizvodnye ot nee emotsii dolzhny byli perezhivat'sia v predel'noi napriazhennosti i polnote, bez ottenkov i sluchainykh primesei, bez nenavistnykh psikhologizmov*” (23) (Love, and all emotions proceeding from it, were to be experienced with the utmost intensity and fullness, without nuance and incidental adulterations, without hateful psychologisms); “*Pora bylo nachat' 'perezhitat'*. Ona uverila sebia, chto tozhe vliublenu” (ibid.) (It was time to begin 'experiencing.' She convinced herself that she, too, was in love.); “*No eto bylo bolee 'perezivaniem pokaianiia', chem pokaianiem podlinnym*” (24) (But this was more an 'experience of repentance' than genuine repentance); “*Vriad li verila ona, chto ee magicheskie opyty pod rukovodstvom Briusova v samom dele vernut ei liubov' Belogo. No ona perezhivala eto, kak podlinnyi soiuz s d'iavolom*” (25) (It's doubtful that she believed that her magic experiences under Briusov's guidance would in reality would win her back Belyi's love. But she experienced this as a genuine union with the devil); “*To, chto dlia Niny eshche bylo zhizn'iu, dlia Briusova stalo ispol'zovannym siuzhetom. Emu tiagostno bylo beskonechno perezhivat' vse odny i te zhe glavy*” (26) (That which remained life for Nina became for Briusov a spent plot. He found it onerous to endlessly relive the same chapters over and over).

302 Khodasevich says of Muni, “*My perezhivali te gody, kotorye shli za 1905-m: gody dushevnoi ustalosti i poval'nogo estetizma*” (74) (We endured and endured those years that followed 1905: years of spiritual fatigue and mass aestheticism); of Sologub, “*To zveno cepi, ta zhizn', kotoruiu izzhival na nashikh glazakh poet Fedor Sologub, sodержala dlia nego velikoe mnozhestvo perezhivaniu. 'vostorgov,' govoria ego slovom (i slovom Pushkina)*” (113) (That link of a chain, that life, which, in our eyes, the poet Fedor Sologub lived up, contained for him a great multiplicity of experiences, 'raptures,' to use his word [and Pushkin's]); of Esenin, recently

capacious verb *perezhivat'* and its nominalization *perezhivanie* help Khodasevich define the various destructive tendencies within Symbolist life-creation.

In Khodasevich's idiom,³⁰³ the verb does not so much imply a passive endurance of outside forces. Rather, it describes a life actively lived from a motivated, ultimately false, and unwittingly masochistic point of view: “In connection with an opaqueness, an unsteadiness of the lines by which, for these people, reality acquired its contours, life events were never experienced (*perezhivalis'*) as *only* and *simply* biographical (*zhiznennye*): they immediately became a part of an internal world and a part of creativity” (21). For the Symbolists, life is insufficiently lively; life-creation must always intervene on its behalf. To properly critique life-creation, Khodasevich must simultaneously represent the Symbolist life both from within its aestheticized world and from without; he must demonstrate how ontologically neutral events are hyperbolically *experienced* when they pass through the Symbolists' life-creative net.³⁰⁴ The ultimate irony is that these seemingly kairotic experiences – events thick with meaning and the potential for transformation³⁰⁵ – become sources of chronic repetition in the Symbolists' hands.

This is never more the case than in *Necropolis'* first portrait, “The End of Renata,” where Khodasevich foregrounds the tendency towards repetition and imitation inherent in Petrovskaia's character. Khodasevich states, apropos of the Symbolists' thirst for “experiences,” that “[a] real feeling is personal, concrete, inimitable (*nepovtorimo*). An invented or inflated one is deprived of these qualities” (23). Examining *nepovtorimo* with an eye towards its etymological connections with time and sequence, we might literally translate it as “unrepeatable,” and conclude that, for Khodasevich, authentic life requires forward movement, change, and evolution. Khodasevich peppers the text with references to years and even specific dates, providing a briskly moving backdrop of historical change. Petrovskaia, however, repeats the same emotions, behavior, and actions – modeled on those of Renata from Briusov's roman à clef *The Fiery Angel* – throughout. Having “became used to (*szhilas'*) this role” (26), Petrovskaia transforms her life into a

arrived in Petrograd and experiencing the intoxicating atmosphere of Symbolist culture, “*iavilsia s zapasom izvestnykh nabliudenii i chuvstv. A 'idei' esli i byli, to oni im perezhivalis' i oshchushchalis', no ne osoznavalis'*” (121) (He appeared with a supply of notorious observations and feelings. And if there were 'ideas,' then they were experienced and sensed by him, though not fully cognized by him). Other prominent uses of *perezhivat'/perezhit'* will be explored in-text.

303 It is worth noting that Grigorii Vinokur (1896-1947), a Soviet Pushkinist and fellow traveler of the Formalists, employed the word *perezhivanie* in a similar context around the same time as Khodasevich. Speaking of “experience” as the concept that negotiates between capital H History and the individual's exposure thereto, Vinokur states that an author's *perezhivaniia* give the scholar “the right to speak about private life as a creation (*o lichnoi zhizni kak tvorchestve*)” – a formulation that seeps into Ginzburg and Lotman's later works. See G. O. Vinokur, *Biografiia i kul'tura* (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1997), esp. 44.

304 Invoked above, Lotman's discussion of those with the “right to a biography” and those with the “right to write biography” further illuminates Khodasevich's *perezhivat'sia*-derived constructions. Lotman suggests that “the distinction between 'the non-biographical' life and the biographical one consists in that the second admits the contingencies of real events through the cultural codes of the epoch.” Lotman, *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, v. I, 371. Lotman's transitive verb (*vtoraia propuskaet sluchainost' real'nykh sobytii skvoz' kul'turnye kody epokhi*) is significant: it demonstrates that history might be *voluntarily* and *selectively* experienced by someone with the right to possess and consciously construct a biography.

305 For a definition of *kairos* and *chronos* (the two Greek words for “time”), see Frank Kermode, *Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000), esp. 46-51. For a useful treatment of *kairos* and *chronos* in the Russian hagiographic life-writing (the traditions of which Khodasevich is writing against), see Kate Holland, “Novelizing Religious Experience: The Generic Landscape of ‘The Brothers Karamazov,’” *Slavic Review* 66, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 63–81.

preordained performance, perverting Wilde's dictum about art imitating life: she limits herself to a narrow, bizarre repertoire of poses and gestures to be relived ad infinitum, even when she should be undergoing biographical change.³⁰⁶

Near the end of the portrait, Khodasevich viciously underscores this point about Petrovskaia's characterological stasis by reproducing excerpts from her correspondence:

Сейчас я просматриваю ее письма. 26 февраля 1925: «Кажется, больше не могу». 7 апр. 1925: «Вы, вероятно, думаете, что я умерла? Нет еще». 8 июня 1927: «Клянусь Вам, иного выхода не может быть». 12 сентября 1927: «Еще немного, и уж никаких мест, никакой работы мне не понадобится». 14 сентября 1927: «На этот раз я скоро должна скончаться». Это – в письмах последней эпохи. Прежних у меня нет под рукою. Но всегда было то же – и в письмах, и в разговорах. (28)

I'm looking through her letters right now. February 26, 1925: "It seems I can't go on." April 7, 1925: "You likely think I've died. Not yet." June 8, 1927: "I swear to you, there's no other way out." September 12, 1927: "A little while longer, and I won't need anyplace, I won't need any work." September 14, 1927: "This time, I ought to soon die." This is from the letters in the last period of her life. The previous ones aren't in my possession. But it was always the same thing – in letters and conversations alike.

Khodasevich's characteristically precise, sequential reproduction of the letters' dates underscores the forward movement of time – movement that Petrovskaia's repetition of the same sentiment stubbornly refuses. These letters represent the most empirical embodiment of life-creation's corrosive influence: a stagnant, artificial *lichnost'* that runs counter to an evolving, natural biography. Unable to grasp this imperative, Petrovskaia dies speaking "with me [i.e. Khodasevich] in that strange language of the 1890s that at one time connected us, was common to us, but which since then I had nearly forgotten how to understand" (29). This juxtaposition between progress (Khodasevich's perfective "*ia pochti razuchilsia ponimat'*") and arrested development (Petrovskaia's imperfective "*govorila [...] na tom strannom iazyke*") is further cemented by the word "*obshchii*," another of *Necropolis'* governing keywords.³⁰⁷ Located here in Khodasevich's absolute past and Petrovskaia's eternal present, *obshchii* signifies the opposite of its literal definition, articulating a divide between the two figures. It also recalls the "common net

306 Khodasevich himself employs such a theatrical metaphor to describe *zhiznetvorchestvo*: "[...] *Neprestannoe stremlenie perestrivat' mysl', zhizn', otnosheniia, sami dazhe obikhod svoi po imperativu ocherednogo 'perezhivaniia' vleklo simbolistov k neprestannomu akterstvu pered samimi soboi – k raznyvaniu sobstvennoi zhizni kak by na teatre zhguchikh improvizatsii*" (22) (The continual endeavor to rearrange thought, life, relations, even one's customary behavior on the imperative of the next big "experience" drew the Symbolists towards a continual dissemblance before themselves – to the *performance* of their own lives, in a theater of corrosive improvisations; emphasis in the original). The temporal inflections of Khodasevich's language (*neprestannyyi, ocherednoi*) likewise link theatricality with cycles of empty novelty.

307 The verb "connected" ("*sviazyval'*") likewise recalls the language in Khodasevich's article "On Symbolism," where, after making reference to the same "common net of loves and hatreds," the author states, "*Ne rasputav etoi seti, ne poimesh' eti sviazi*" (Without untangling this net, you won't understand the connections). *SS*, v. 2, 126. In both cases, the Symbolists' "connections" are presented as abstruse objects located in the absolute past.

of loves and hatreds” (*obshchaia set' liubvei i nenavistei*) referenced in the beginning of the portrait. By harkening back to the beginning of the work, “*obshchii*” invites us to read Petrovskaia's life stereoscopically: we see the Symbolists' life-creative project as something that denies historical time – and, simultaneously, as a naive proclivity to be outgrown. Khodasevich successfully outgrows it; Petrovskaia does not.

Khodasevich's portrait of Briusov demands just such stereoscopic vision, not least because similar biographical paradoxes are realized more subtly: there is no stark juxtaposition of shifting historical context to immutable personal content, as in the treatment of Petrovskaia's letters. “Briusov” consists of fourteen sections, most of which are dedicated to its eponymous subject's characterological traits. Khodasevich begins many of these sections with imperfective verbal constructions, suggesting an inquiry into habitual behavior – not inconsequentially, behavior having to do with Symbolist creativity and interpersonal relations – rather than narrative progress.³⁰⁸ However, Khodasevich innocuously peppers the first nine, “timeless” sections with historical dates (in their sequence: 1909, 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1907-1914). These dates suggest that, contrary to Briusov's articulation of an unchanging, “imperfective” character, history presses on, however imperceptibly, in the background. The tenth section begins with a forceful perfective verb, foregrounding the passage of time and Russian history: “How and why did [Briusov] become a communist?” (*Kak i pochemu on sdelalsia kommunistom?*) (44).

Depending upon how one reads “Briusov,” this moment in the text can be either jarring, utterly predictable, or both. Khodasevich wants our reaction to be the last of these, the most stereoscopic option. Briusov's decision to embrace the Soviet regime can easily be read as surprising, given the presumed incompatibility of Symbolism's mysticism and the Soviets' materialism; reading it as inevitable, an outcome preordained by the Symbolist atmosphere that seeks world-historical (and only incidentally Revolutionary) transformation through joint activity, is also possible. However, Khodasevich's portrait encourages us to synthesize these two seemingly incompatible outcomes. The bluntness of the question “How and why did he become a communist?” becomes muted when we reframe it: how could Briusov's particular Symbolist life have permitted him to become anything *but* a communist? When we stereoscopically read Briusov's routinized, consistent behavior against the subtle forward movement of the portrait, we find ubiquitous evidence for Briusov's nominally unthinkable future. One characterological section of the portrait, initiated with a discussion of Briusov's love for meetings and organization, demonstrates as much:

Он страстную, неестественную любовью любил заседать, в особенности – председательствовать. Заседая – священнодействовал. Резолюция, поправка, голосование, устав, пункт, параграф – эти слова нежили его слух. Открывать заседание, закрывать заседание, предоставлять слово, лишать слова

308 Here are the first lines from the opening sections of “Briusov”: “*U nego byla primechatel'naia manera podavat' ruku*” (35) (He had a noteworthy way of extending his hand); “*On ne liubil liudei, potomu cho prezhe vsego ne uvazhal ikh*” (36) (He did not love people because, first of all, he did not respect them); “*On liubil literaturu, tol'ko ee*” (37) (He loved literature, and literature alone); “*Ego roman s Ninoi Petrovskoi byl muchitelen dlia oboikh, no storonoiu, v osobennosti stradaiushchei, byla Nina*” (38) (His affair with Nina Petrovskaia was torturous for both parties, but the party that suffered most was Nina); “*On strastnoiu, neestestvennoiu liubov'iu liubil zasedat', v osobennosti – predsedatel'stvovat'*” (43) (With a passionate, unnatural love, he loved to attend meetings, and to preside over them in particular).

«дискреционную властью председателя», звонить в колокольчик, интимно склоняться к секретарю, прося «занести в протокол», – все это было для него наслаждение, «театр для себя», предвкушение грядущих двух строк в истории литературы [...] В конце девяностых или в начале девятисотых годов он, декадент, прославленный эпатированием буржуа, любящий только то, что «прочно» и «странно», вздумал, в качестве домовладельца, баллотироваться в гласные городской думы – московской городской думы тех времен! (43)

With a passionate, unnatural love, he loved to attend meetings, and to preside over them in particular. Attending meetings was a holy, ritualized performance. Resolution, amendment, voting, statute, point, paragraph – these words were music to his ear. Opening meetings, closing meetings, calling on someone to speak, denying the right to speak “upon the discretionary power of the chairman,” ringing the bell, intimately leaning over to the secretary, asking her to “record something in the minutes” – all of this was sheer pleasure, “theater for oneself,” a foretaste of his future two-line entry in the history of literature [...] At the end of the 1890s or beginning of the 1900s, he, a Decadent, celebrated as a shocker of the bourgeoisie, loving only that which was “solid” and “strange,” got it into his head that, in his capacity as a landowner, he would campaign in the city дума elections – the Moscow city дума of that time!

This statement resides directly between the discussions of Briusov's pre- and post-Revolutionary literary and organizational activities, and rereading this section, resonances with preceding and subsequent moments in the portrait emerge. There are echoes of Briusov's orchestration of the early Modernist movement (34), and a foretaste of the “many meetings, statutes, resolutions!” (48) that endeared the Soviet state apparatus to his managerial side. To condemn Briusov for his Soviet turn is to deny that his similarly unscrupulous actions – his naked, often unprincipled desire for control – helped to propagate Russian Symbolism. Khodasevich uses this paradox to counter, or at least enhance, émigré memoirists' condemnation of Briusov, who remained in Russia after the Revolution.³⁰⁹ For Khodasevich, the only meaningful criticism one can marshal against Briusov is how naïve and tone-deaf his drive for power ultimately was: the bourgeois Briusov's attempts to enter the Moscow Duma prior to the liberalized period of 1906 are no more ridiculous than his integration into the post-1917 workers' state. Khodasevich thus lays the blame for Briusov's myopia at the feet of Symbolism: its heady, isolated atmosphere blinds him to both of these historical realities, leaving him trapped in an untenably eternal present of his own making.

Such voluntary blindness, endemic to the Russian Symbolist life, is never clearer than in “Andrei Belyi,” which rounds out *Necropolis'* heterogeneous opening triad. The Oedipal psychologism employed throughout this portrait proves amenable to the aspectual pair

309 Khodasevich's portrait of Briusov (originally published in 1924) arguably polemicalizes with Zinaida Gippius' own (1922), which was republished in her memoir collection *Living People (Zhivye litsa)*, 1925). Indeed, several of the portraits in *Necropolis* seek to counter Gippius' damning portrayals of Briusov and Sologub, authors who – unlike Gippius' émigré – remained in the Soviet Union and sought to integrate themselves into the post-Revolutionary state's cultural apparatus. For Khodasevich's critique of Gippius' memoirs, see his review “*Living Persons*” (“*Zhivye litsa*”) in *SS*, v. 2, 127-134.

perezhivat'/perezhit', and makes clear that Belyi's early family life preconditions his Symbolist worldview. Khodasevich reports, “‘Torn,’ in his words, between his parents, Belyi, whatever the occasion, would relive (*perezhival*) their relative rightfulness and error. Any phenomenon seemed ambiguous, was revealed two-sidedly, equivocably (*dvustoronne, dvuznachashche*)” (54). The ambiguity inherent in these two adverbs recalls Symbolism's fascination with obscure connections between discrete planes of existence; the imperfective *perezhival* suggests that Belyi remains forever trapped between them.

This compulsion for repetition inflects the entire Petrovskaiia-Briusov-Belyi love triangle, and figuratively reinforces the aspectual dynamics of *perezhivat'/perezhit'*. The trio seeks emotional pain: this is the most cultivated, the most life-creative experience, and to *endure* (perfective: *perezhit'*) it is to emerge on the other side of *kairosis*, stronger and forever changed. However, having each at one point witnessed and endured the death throes of one life-creative romantic entanglement, Petrovskaiia, Briusov, and Belyi repeatedly seek out other ones, so that they might *relive* (imperfective: *perezhivat'*) those experiences from a slightly different angle and achieve the same (non-)result.³¹⁰ The Symbolist life necessarily collapses the multiple meanings within this aspectual pair, and *Necropolis'* portrait gallery structure reifies that experience further: having “endured” one account of the Petrovskaiia-Briusov-Belyi love triangle's collapse (“The End of Renata”), we move to the next portraits (“Briusov,” “Andrei Belyi”) in order to “relive” that collapse. Thus, the sequence of *Necropolis'* first three portraits reproduces the constrictive net of communal Symbolist life-creation in all its tragic potency, fleshing out the various components of *zhiznetvorchestvo* foretold in Petrovskaiia's portrait.

Its structural importance in the opening trio of portraits notwithstanding, Belyi's portrait contains an intriguing statement that might be applied to all of the entries in *Necropolis*. Khodasevich justifies the unflattering portrayal of his friend with the conviction that “truth cannot be petty, for there is nothing higher than truth. To Pushkin's 'ennobling deceit’³¹¹ one wishes to juxtapose the *ennobling truth*,” which is the only thing that can ensure “fullness of understanding” and hence yield “representations that are [not] threatening to history” (51). This phrase should mark a transition in our discussion, not only because it sums up how Khodasevich treats other authors, but also because it provides a connection to Gershenzon and Gor'kii's nominally anomalous portraits. I will conclude by arguing that these often overlooked entries play a vital role in *Necropolis'* larger architecture. “Gershenzon” and “Gor'kii” echo the earlier Symbolist portraits in vital ways, enriching our understanding of *zhiznetvorchestvo* beyond the word's Symbolist connotations.

Gershenzon's portrait stands out as the most laudatory entry in *Necropolis* – a feature that no doubt stems from the critical affinity that Khodasevich felt between himself and his subject. Beyond Gershenzon's status as a probing, incisive scholar of literature, he and Khodasevich are further united by their mutual concern for straightforwardness and honesty: Gershenzon's critical mantra of “Frankness!” (*Nachistotu!*) (102) expresses the same self-righteous ethos of

310 In the commentary to the Briusov-Petrovskaiia correspondence, Nikolai Bogomolov remarks upon this repetitive dynamic: “...One cannot but feel the degree of [Briusov's] connection with his lover, who for five years kept drawing him towards new repetitions of that which, seemingly, had already been fully pursued (*do kontsa ispytannogo*).” Nikolai Bogomolov in Valerii Briusov and Nina Petrovskaiia, *Perepiska, 1904-1913*, 45.

311 The juxtaposition of base truth to ennobling deceit is drawn from Pushkin's 1830 poem “The Hero” (“Geroi”), in which Pushkin's lyric subject claims to prefer the latter to the former. On Khodasevich's conception of the ennobling deceit, see Brintlinger, *Writing a Usable Past*.

Khodasevich's "ennobling truth." Curiously, Gershenzon's concern for frankness would seem to originate from that same tragic flaw as the Symbolists' life-creation. Khodasevich states that "[Gershenzon's] obstinacy partly flowed out (*vytekalo*) of his approach to work" (104), recalling a statement from Petrovskaiia's portrait: "Part of [the Symbolists'] creative energy and part of the internal experience was embodied in [their] writings, and part was incompletely embodied, and flowed off (*utekala*) into life, like electricity flows off (*utekaet*) when not grounded" (19).

This insidious transference between the nominally separate spheres of art/work and life unites the two parties, but beyond this shared feature, Gershenzon and the Symbolists could not be more different. If the Symbolists' governing word is the noun *perezhivanie*, which expresses their mannered ways of life, then Gershenzon's is the preposition *bez* ("without"), which communicates his desire to live simply. Gershenzon does without many things: irony (101), poses and sentimentality (102), and, in his criticism, mercy (104). Without performing an outsized disdain for material comforts (according to Khodasevich, a typical pose for "shaggy 'people of ideas'"), Gershenzon nevertheless lives a spartan lifestyle, abhorring the superfluous (*ne liubiashchii lishnego*) (98) and remaining a "maximalist" only in matters of thrift, economy, and domesticity (99). Indeed, such proclivities permit him to artfully and modestly endure the hardships of post-Revolutionary existence³¹² – unlike the hapless Symbolists, who cannot but mediate that existence through abstruse, destructive codes of meaning. Thus, while Gershenzon and the Symbolists both permit the energies of their creative work to infect their life, in Gershenzon's case, this impulse does not so much destroy life as perpetuate it. His comparatively unassuming portrait thus returns the heady content of the heretofore Symbolist-oriented *Necropolis* to earth.

"Gershenzon" not only posits more tenable outlets for the energies of life-creation; it also metacritically confers the vital "right to write" biography upon *Necropolis*' author. This prerogative emerges in Khodasevich's discussion of Gershenzon's "intuitive" approach to historical scholarship.³¹³ Initially figured as an obstinate ignorance of external facts in favor of the critic's subjective impressions, Gershenzon's critical method comes to resemble that employed by Khodasevich's literary historian, who, having been born "late," is more capable of faithfully assessing Symbolist auto/biographies. In Gershenzon's words: "I, perhaps, know more about Pushkin than he himself did. I know what he wanted to say and what he wanted to conceal, and even that which he uttered without understanding it himself, like Pythias" (104). In this quote we hear echoes of Khodasevich's own critical position in *Necropolis*: the wisdom of the belated critic, his insight into his subjects' unconsciously directed behavior (especially in the cases of Belyi, Briusov, and Petrovskaiia), and his prerogative of revealing that which his subjects' modesty conceals.

Gershenzon, obstinate and straightforward as he may have been, was possessed of his own concealing modesty. At the beginning of the portrait, after remarking upon the strange circumstances that compel historians to write about poets, never hoping that poets will one day reciprocally work their craft on them, Gershenzon laughs at Khodasevich's offer to do just that, saying, "Don't write about me" (96). Khodasevich must violate his subject's directive: if Gershenzon modestly thinks himself unworthy of a biography, then, by the logic of *Necropolis*,

312 In the face of post-Revolutionary poverty, Gershenzon not only sells his excess books, but conceives of clever ways to get two uses out of a single cigarette filter and jury-rigs makeshift ovens to preserve firewood (99-100).

313 For an exploration of Gershenzon's critical methods, see Brian Horowitz, *The Myth of A.S. Pushkin in Russia's Silver Age: M.O. Gershenzon, Pushkinist* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

that very modesty endows him with not only the right to a biography, but the imperative of having one. The fascinatingly mundane “Gershenson” thus becomes a structural and metacritical counterweight to *Necropolis*' Symbolist portraits, once again demonstrating that holistic treatments of late imperial culture are more revealing of Symbolism than narrowly Symbolist treatments of the same.

However, it is through Gor'kii's portrait, the final work in the collection, that Khodasevich most pointedly polemicizes with Symbolist life-creation, albeit with different methods. If Gershenson's portrait represents the thematic inversion of most Symbolist life practices, then Gor'kii's portrait, counterintuitively, mirrors them. Take the following account of Gor'kii's formative years:

Он вырос и долго жил среди всяческой житейской скверны. Люди, которых он видел, были то ее виновниками, то жертвами, а чаще – и жертвами, и виновниками одновременно. Естественно, что у него возникала (а отчасти была им вычитана) мечта об иных, лучших людях. Потом неразвитые зачатки иного, лучшего человека научился он различать кое в ком из окружающих. Мысленно очищая эти зачатки от налипшей дикости, грубости, злобы, грязи и творчески развивая их, он получил полуреальный, полувоображаемый тип благородного босяка, который, в сущности, приходился двоюродным братом тому благородному разбойнику, который был создан романтической литературой. (160)

He grew up and for a long time lived among all kinds of everyday nastiness. The people whom he saw were its culprits or its victims, or more frequently, its culprits and its victims simultaneously. It was only natural that a dream about other, better people arose in him (and was partly invented by him). He then learned to distinguish the undeveloped embryos of another, better person in any one of those around him. Mentally cleansing these embryos of the savagery, coarseness, spite, and filth that stuck to them, and artistically developing them, he received the half-real, half-imagined type of the noble hobo, who, in essence, was related to the cousin of that noble bandit who was created by Romantic literature.

The damning coincidence of victimhood and culpability broadly unites Gor'kii's life practices with those of the Symbolists. Moreover, both Gor'kii and the Symbolists emerge and remain subsequently trapped within a peculiar atmosphere of ambiguous phenomena: *polureal'nyi* and *poluvoobrazhaemyi*, the pointedly prefixed adjectives that Khodasevich applies to Gor'kii's experiences, recall thematically similar words (such as the adverbs *dvustoronne*, and *dvuznachashche* of Belyi's portrait) that Khodasevich uses to describe the cognitive dissonance demanded of participants in Symbolist life-creation.³¹⁴ Finally, both Gor'kii and the Symbolists develop perceptual faculties that permit them to navigate these confusing half-worlds. However, Gor'kii's dream (*mechta*) seems more a psychological coping mechanism than the Symbolists' voluntary, imaginative tendency toward vision (*vidénie*). The Symbolists' search for a mysterious

314 See also Khodasevich's description of how he and Muni navigated everyday life in a “Symbolist dimension” (74), another famous and oft-cited passage from *Necropolis*.

future leaves them paradoxically trapped in an eternal present, while Gor'kii's imagined foreknowledge of a better world merely diminishes the importance of the current, embryonic moment.

However, this facet of Gor'kii's life-creation – which would seem to represent a vital departure from that of the Symbolists – does not escape criticism. Khodasevich states that Gor'kii “would not endure cheerlessness and demanded hope of a person at any cost, and in this his distinctive, obstinate egoism communicated itself: in exchange for his concern he demanded for himself the right to dream about the better future of that person whom he would help” (166). This made him an “obstinate worshiper and creator of ennobling deceits (*vozvyschaiushchie obmany*),” one who “regarded any kind of disappointment, any kind of petty truth (*nizkaia istina*) as the manifestation of a metaphysically vile foundation” (ibid).³¹⁵ Here, inverted echoes of Khodasevich's “ennobling truth” and the “obstinate” Gershenzon's mantra of “Frankness!” effectively damn Gor'kii's program.

The final sections of “Gor'kii” further demonstrate its eponymous subject's destructive life-creative practices. Khodasevich relates several incidents that preceded Gor'kii's 1921 emigration from Russia, including times when he promised to act on others' behalf, or wrote supplicatory letters to Soviet organizations that he never followed up on (or even sent in the first place). Khodasevich suggests that all of these actions represent not only Gor'kii's tendency towards “ennobling deceit” (noble because they give others the energy and hope to go on); they also demonstrate Gor'kii's capacity for *self*-deception, his need to feel accomplished, worthy, and helpful, even when he knew his actions would ultimately disappoint and thus harm others.³¹⁶ Khodasevich twice describes such activities as Gor'kii's “theater for himself” or “theater for its own sake” (*teatr dlia sebia*; 168, 170) – a phrase that, significantly, he also employs in his assessment of Briusov's managerial bombast (43).³¹⁷ This net of linguistic linkages between “Gor'kii” and *Necropolis*' portraits of Symbolists harkens back to and even extends themes from the first half of the volume. Gor'kii's particular brand of life-creation – in which he creates *other* people's lives as well as his own – can be just as egocentric and destructive as that of the Symbolists, however comparatively ennobling it might appear from without.

How, then, does Gor'kii represent a counterweight to Symbolist life-creative practice? How is his portrait a redemptive one? I would argue that Gor'kii becomes positive insofar as he is the closest modern approximation of Derzhavin, a figure who – in Khodasevich's definition – attempts to construct a new and better world in which the aesthetic, political, and biographical *positively* enhance one another.³¹⁸ Certain sections of “Gor'kii” ring with a Derzhavinian tenor:

315 See Brintlinger, *Writing a Usable Past*, 71-3, on Khodasevich's discussion of truth and deceit vis-à-vis Gor'kii.

316 Khodasevich relates how one of Gor'kii's lies “forced [a mother] to experience (*perezhit*)(!) the news of her son's death for a second time” (168), and that Gor'kii had “purposefully lead himself into delusion” (*narochno vvel sebia v zabluzhdenie*) (169). Such vocabulary might remind us of the nominal “unrepeatability” of emotions and capacity for self-delusion seen in Petrovskaia's portrait.

317 Khodasevich is borrowing this phrase from Nikola Evreinov, the early twentieth-century playwright, theorist, and Symbolist sympathizer who penned the trilogy *Theater for Oneself* (*Teatr dlia sebia*, 1914-16). While Evreinov advocates playacting and theatrical performance as a kind of positive therapy and return to forms of communal drama, Khodasevich employs the term ironically, noting the self-interest of Symbolists' “theater for themselves” and the untenable roleplaying that life-creation demanded of others. On Evreinov, see Sharon Marie Carnicke, *The Theatrical Instinct: Nikolai Evreinov and the Russian Theatre of the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: P. Lang, 1989), esp. 80-90.

318 On the harmony of Derzhavin's biography, again see Brintlinger, *Writing a Usable Past*, esp. 70-1.

В этих довольно слабых, но весьма выразительных стихах [...] заключен как бы девиз Горького, определяющий всю его жизнь, писательскую, общественную, личную. Горькому довелось жить в эпоху, когда «сон золотой»³¹⁹ заключался в мечте о социальной революции как панацее от всех человеческих страданий. Он поддерживал эту мечту, он сделался ее глашатаем – не потому, что как уж глубоко верил в революцию, а потому, что верил в спасительность самой мечты. В другую эпоху с такую же страстностью он отстаивал бы иные верования, иные надежды. [...] Вся его литературная, как и вся жизненная, деятельность проникнута сентиментальной любовью ко всем видам лжи и упорной, последовательной нелюбовью к правде. (162)

It's as if these rather weak but nevertheless striking lines [...] contain Gor'kii's motto, which defined his entire life – writerly, social, and personal. Gor'kii happened to live in an epoch when the “golden dream” was contained within a dream of social revolution as a panacea for all human suffering. He supported this dream, he made himself into its herald – not because he believed in the revolution, but because he believed in the salvation of the dream itself. In a different epoch, he would have stood for different faiths, different hopes, with just the same passion. [...] The entirety of his literary activity, just like his personal activity, was penetrated with this sentimental love for all aspects of the lie, and a stubborn, concomitant hatred of the truth.

Here we might see flickers of a failed twentieth-century Derzhavin: one whose varied selves (biographical, artistic, political) operate in alignment with rather than against one another, one whose creative energies and dreams of a better future lend themselves to constructive world-building rather than destructive life-creation. It is the *epoch* that corrupts this otherwise positive hero, the *epoch* that forces him to harness his otherwise worthy energies to untenable, ultimately disenobling causes.

Paradoxically compelled both to write inspiring, progressive lives and to live one himself, Gor'kii embodies a life of negation and subtraction rather than assertion and addition. Writing of Gor'kii's life as a shadow that follows and dwarfs him (172), Khodasevich underscores the tragic impotence of the author's favorite mantra: “Don't do it, or you'll spoil your biography.” Or: “Do what you must, but then you'll spoil your biography” (173). This, then, is Gor'kii's curse: he knows just as well as the Symbolists that he is creating an artificial life for himself; he simply understands that life not as a static performance of character but *as a biography*, that is, as a *written life*, one to be reproduced and propagated throughout Soviet society as a didactic model and emblem of social progress. His net of interpersonal relations is infinitely wider than that of Petrovskaiia, and moving towards the glorious horizon of the future, he must tread carefully, lest he destroy others' lives by destroying his own. Gor'kii embraces evolution, but in doing so, also traps himself in anticipation of an eternally deferred, utopian future. If this instinct is ultimately more commendable than those of the Symbolists, it nevertheless deprives him of a properly

319 The references to “these lines” and Gor'kii's “golden dream” (*son zolotoi*) come from a poem uttered by a character in Gor'kii's 1902 play *The Lower Depths* (*Na dne*).

stereoscopic vision.

Gor'kii escapes the artificiality of his cynically future-oriented life in the portrait's final lines, where he shows himself to be capable of retrospection and revisionism:

Перед тем как послать в редакцию «Современных Записок» свои воспоминания о Валерии Брюсове, я прочел их Горькому. Когда я кончил читать, он сказал, помолчав немного:

– Жестоко вы написали, но – превосходно. Когда я помру, напишите, пожалуйста, обо мне.

– Хорошо, Алексей Максимович.

– Не забудете?

– Не забуду. (175)

Right before sending my memoirs of Valerii Briusov to the editors of *Contemporary Notes*, I read them to Gor'kii. When I finished reading, he said, after falling silent for a time:

“You wrote that cruelly, but wonderfully. When I die, please write about me.”

“Yes, Aleksei Maksimovich.”

“You won't forget?”

“I won't forget.”

Given *Necropolis'* otherwise acerbic tone, this somewhat saccharine exchange makes for an odd conclusion to the volume. However, this conversation contains numerous echoes of other portraits, and these echoes demonstrate why “Gor'kii” represents a pivotal entry in *Necropolis'*: they demand that we perceive the work in its entirety, stereoscopically. Links to the Symbolist-oriented portraits are self-evident. The portrait of Briusov (chronologically, Khodasevich's first, written in 1924) receives positive, metacritical commentary from Gor'kii, whose appreciation of the text's cruelty (finally!) affirms Khodasevich's remarks on “ennobling truth” from the beginning of Belyi's portrait. More immediately, Gor'kii's directive to “Write about me” serves as an inverted echo of Gershenzon's “Don't write about me”³²⁰: if the latter's modesty makes him a worthy biographical subject, then the former's acknowledgment that his biography must be rewritten makes him similarly worthy. Khodasevich signals his intent to revise Gor'kii's monumental, invented biography by foregrounding his use of the author's given name, Aleksei Maksimovich.³²⁰

In *Necropolis'* final lines, then, Gor'kii the man and “Gor'kii” the portrait bestow upon Khodasevich this right to (re)write his contemporaries' biographies. In a collection whose entries' opening paragraphs foretell their subjects' grim ends, it is no coincidence that the last portrait concludes with a mandate to return to the beginning. Nor is it a coincidence that Gor'kii provides Khodasevich with this mandate. Gor'kii may have harmed himself and others with his particular

³²⁰ This gesture, of course, is not ostentatious: Gor'kii could not but be addressed as “Aleksei Maksimovich” in conversation, as “Maksim Gor'kii” was merely his pen name. However, Khodasevich includes few conversations *as such* in Gor'kii's portrait – and indeed, refers to him as “Gor'kii” throughout; thus, the force of this modest name and patronymic shines through all the more. Conversely, Khodasevich repeatedly calls Andrei Belyi by his original name “Boris Nikolaevich” in the excerpted conversations that Khodasevich includes in his portrait.

brand of life-creation, but his acknowledgment of this fact redeems him and throws the Symbolists' myopia into further relief. Structurally, conceptually, and biographically, *Necropolis* counters the end of Renata (Petrovskaia's role in Briusov's roman à clef), who is unaware that she *never* really existed, with the end of Gor'kii, who knows all too well that Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov effectively *no longer* does. Stereoscopically reading these portraits against one another, we witness in *Necropolis*' final portrait the genesis of Khodasevich, writer of Russian lives.

Conclusion

Khodasevich's understanding of *zhiznetvorchestvo*, cited in definition form at the beginning of this article, does not exist in a vacuum. It was influenced by the youthful experiments with life-creative practice conducted by him and his friends, by their attempts to understand the world in “Symbolist dimensions” even as those dimensions were shrinking. It was in dialogue with other, rival memoiristic accounts of Symbolism, such as Belyi's autobiographical trilogy, which similarly pondered what literary form could best express the content of a Symbolist life. And it was inflected by the certainty that Symbolism was a *collective* life-creative project, a philosopher's stone that passed through many philosophers' hands. For this reason, reading Khodasevich's pithy definition of Symbolist life-creation in isolation is to miss its point. We should instead consider how this definition is enriched by the content – Symbolist and otherwise – that surrounds it. The opening trio of portraits dedicated to Petrovskaia, Briusov, and Belyi manifests the essence of Symbolist *zhiznetvorchestvo*: it allows us to experience (and re-experience...and re-experience) the trials of the erotic love triangle and the arrested development of the Symbolist personality – phenomena that go hand in hand. The portraits dedicated to Gershenzon and Gor'kii explore Khodasevich's understanding of alternative, non-Symbolist forms of life-creation, and reenact the process by which Khodasevich, uniquely endowed with a stereoscopic perspective, earns the “right to write” Russian authors' lives – again, phenomena that go hand in hand. Such interconnectedness – between moments, between people, between portraits – defines *Necropolis*, and the connections between life, creation, and life-creation cannot be observed outside of the volume's architectural whole.

Ch. 3.3 – Kornei Chukovskii's Memoir-Portraits: (Re)writing the Myths of the Russian Writer

Discussing Kornei Chukovskii's post-Revolutionary literary portraiture presents a unique set of challenges. Comparison with Khodasevich (Ch. 3.3) is instructive here. Khodasevich's *Necropolis* compiled nine memoir-portraits that were composed over a fifteen-year period and required little editing for republication in book form. Chukovskii's memoir-portraits, on the other hand, were variously composed over a forty-year period, and many witnessed meaningful edits in structure and content most every time they were compiled and republished – in 1940, 1959, 1962, 1965, and 1967. These compilations possessed different names, different sequences, and entirely different sets of constituent portraits.³²¹ Saying that Chukovskii returned to the portrait genre throughout his career thus represents something of an understatement: many times, he was returning to the same portraits.

For this reason, in lieu of previous chapters' discussions of portrait gallery architecture, I will focus on historical changes to specific portraits. This inquiry will yield other revealing insights, specifically into the vicissitudes of Soviet cultural history and Chukovskii's protean status therein. Indeed, more than any other body of work profiled in this dissertation, Chukovskii's memoir-portraits embody Jeffrey Wallen's definition of literary portraiture as a genre that, like its visual antecedent, trades in “discrete moments” that define its subject (living or dead) rather than providing a “continuous story.” For this reason, portraiture represents “an opportunity for exploring the character, the consciousness, the way of thinking of the subject not in relation to a series of events or within a chronological development, but as a still active, rather than an historically determined, person.”³²² While Wallen is discussing the poetics of a literary portraiture, his words might also be taken more literally: changes in Chukovskii's memoirs reflect how fluid, historically contingent Soviet mythologies of the writer routinely demanded new and different versions of its heroes, leaving them historically “undetermined” long after they had passed. However, we might apply Wallen's statement not only to Chukovskii's subjects, but to Chukovskii himself. The changes that Chukovskii made to his portraiture arguably reflect his deft capacity for “active development” amidst the vicissitudes of Soviet cultural politics.

For this reason, this chapter on Chukovskii's memoir-portraits will employ a slightly different format than the preceding chapters. The discussion of Chukovskii's historical and intellectual context, though broad, will largely profile him in the 1920s, the period when he first turned to portraiture for the purpose of memoir writing.³²³ The section on his methodology will consider his resistance to the more panegyric tendencies in Soviet life-writing. Finally (for economy's sake), my close readings will consider only portraits of Aleksandr Blok and Maksim Gor'kii, pivotal figures in Chukovskii's professional development. These close readings will proceed diachronically, moving from the portraits' original 1920s incarnations to their final

321 Kornei Chukovskii, *Repin, Gor'kii, Maiakovskii, Briusov : vospominaniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1940); Kornei Chukovskii, *Iz vospominanii*. (Moscow: Sov. pisatel', 1959); Kornei Chukovskii, *Sovremenniki: Portrety i etudy* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1962); Kornei Chukovskii, *Sovremenniki: portrety i etudy* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1963); Kornei Chukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965), v. 5; and Kornei Chukovskii, *Sovremenniki: Portrety i etudy* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1967). Each of these versions possessed slightly different sequences of portraits and slight changes in content.

322 Jeffrey Wallen, “Between Text and Image: The Literary Portrait,” 55. See also Ch. 1.2.

323 See Ch. 2.3 for Chukovskii's pre-Revolutionary literary-critical portraits.

1960s ones. Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate how Chukovskii uses the portrait genre to craft fluid, pragmatic, and historically contingent selves for his subjects and himself alike.

Chukovskii's Place in Soviet Culture, from “Chukovshchina” to “Uncle Kornei”

Chukovskii died in 1969 a beloved children's author, luminary of Soviet intellectual life, winner of the Lenin Prize, and honorary doctor of Oxford University – an impressive curriculum vitae that was hard won. His children's poetry was famously subject to periodic public campaigns against its uselessness, and was sometimes banned outright. His work in literary criticism and biography was similarly assailed, and from multiple sides. Emigre critics, the Russian Formalists, Marxists, and even sympathetic Anglo-American scholars all found fault with his methods and conclusions, and would often treat his memoirs with condescension.³²⁴

Chukovskii endured all of this thanks to his gregariousness, generosity, and capacity to forge friendships across professional, political, and geographical divides. As publications about him are quick to note, there was hardly a cultural figure with whom he did not have some kind of connection. Trials that tainted or prematurely claimed the lives of his contemporaries (poverty during the NEP period, the horrors of the 1930s and World War II, strained relations with publishers and Soviet authorities) were weathered thanks to friendships with Gor'kii, Anna Akhmatova, Iurii Tynianov, and others who provided him with material goods, political support, and spiritual nourishment. Such interpersonal connections endow his life-writing with a great deal of documentary value, a fact to which Michael Heim's recent English translation of Chukovskii's diary attests.³²⁵

However (as one might suspect), such life-writing represents more than a neutral account of Chukovskii's contemporaries. In his diary, Chukovskii frequently laments such attacks on his work, fearing that they might yield fatal consequences for his career and family. However, in his memoir-portraits – a far more public genre of life-writing – he exercises more strategy, correctly seeing them as a tool with which he can deflect or counter his critics' arguments. Just as those arguments against him changed with time, edits to his memoir-portraits reflect his shifting tactics of intellectual self-defense. Early versions of these works see him emphasizing safer facets of his oeuvre over other, more politically fraught ones – or conversely, appealing to his friends' political authority when his work in one professional sphere needs defending. Later incarnations of these portraits reveal a more aged Chukovskii to be possessed of greater cultural capital: he edits them in accordance with the recognition that his once-problematic works finally achieved, and celebrates himself as much as he does his subjects. These alterations demonstrate the portrait genre's orientation towards synthesis rather than chronology, a feature that turns out to be advantageous for a politically beleaguered portraitist: material can easily be shuffled, condensed, expanded, or excised when the exigencies of history demand it.

To understand this fluid self-fashioning that emerges throughout Chukovskii's portraiture, we should first turn to the 1920s, a period when his status in Soviet letters was far from unassailable. While he retained some of the name recognition afforded by his pre-Revolutionary *enfant terrible* status, the new market for literary criticism demanded that he evolve. He

324 Vaninskaya, “Korney Chukovsky in Britain,” esp. 388-9.

325 Kornei Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). See also Martha Hickey's extensive use of this diary as a documentary source in her book *The Writer in Petrograd and the House of Arts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009).

developed new vocabulary and turned to new concerns that intermittently (and incompletely) borrowed from recent Formalist thought.³²⁶ He sought to avoid inflammatory polemics, and thereby mirror the intellectual rigor and theoretical bent of the new Soviet age. In assimilating this spirit of the age, however, Chukovskii did not go as far as to adopt an explicit, exclusive focus on social or economic questions: he felt that a Marxist perspective could be limiting, blinding the critic to otherwise worthy art. Thus, in the immediate post-Revolutionary years, the evolving autodidact Chukovskii remained outside both academic Formalism and orthodox Soviet criticism. This interstitial position left him vulnerable to attacks on methodology and choice of subject as well. In the early 1920s, Chukovskii's recurrent critical projects focused on Nikolai Nekrasov and the recently deceased Blok, poets who occupied vital positions in the early Soviet literary canon. In contemporary Soviet thought, the former was celebrated as a civic poet and friend of the proletariat, while the latter was esteemed for his well-meaning but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to shed his “aristocratism” and greet the Revolution. To say anything unorthodox about either was to invite controversy, and Chukovskii's idiosyncratic criticism did just that.

Boris Eikhenbaum and Lev Trostskii took Chukovskii's works to task in the early 1920s,³²⁷ but Nadezhda Krupskaiia, Lenin's widow, proved to be the most dangerous. An ad hominem attack published in *Pravda* on February 1, 1928 accused Chukovskii of hating Nekrasov,³²⁸ and found further proof of the author's bourgeois sympathies in his playful children's poem “The Crocodile” (“Krokodil,” 1917). This component of her attack had, arguably, the more devastating and long-standing effect on Chukovskii's career, since, at that time, Krupskaiia chaired the board on children's literature at the State Academic Council. His poetry was banned from publication, and although that ban was eventually lifted, charges of *chukovshchina* – the epithet Krupskaiia invented for his work – haunted Chukovskii for years to come.

If Chukovskii's work in literary criticism, scholarship, and children's literature were all subject to attack in the 1920s, then his work as a translator proved slightly less problematic. This was in no small part due to the direct patronage of Gor'kii, under whose aegis Narkompros' World Literature publishing house was launched in 1918. During a period of financial hardship and political uncertainty, this initiative gathered numerous literary “fellow travelers” (Blok, Nikolai Gumilev, Evgenii Zamyatin, and others) under a single roof, tasking them with the translation of European, American, and East Asian masterworks with which the newly minted

326 See his early lecture “Akhmatova and Maiakovskii” (1920) and articles on Nekrasov (compiled in *Nekrasov: Stat'i i materialy*, 1926) where he employs a somewhat Formalist approach to poetic meter – an approach that Boris Eikhenbaum would go on to ridicule; see below.

327 In article celebrating the demise of “subjective and impressionistic criticism” in the post-Revolutionary world, Eikhenbaum recalls with mocking irony how Chukovskii's lectures on Blok criticized the “scholarly docents” (i.e. the Formalists) for their focus on literary science at expense of the poet's soul. He contends that Chukovskii did not understand this science, lambasting his recently published but not fully realized “discoveries” about certain metric idiosyncrasies in Nekrasov's work. See Boris Eikhenbaum, “Metody i podkhody,” *Knizhnyi Ugol* 8 (1922), accessed on <http://www.chukfamily.ru/Kornei/Biblio/eihenbaum.htm>, 7/28/2015. Trostskii lambasts Chukovskii's *Book on Aleksandr Blok*, claiming, in essence, that it is contradictory (a frequent charge marshaled against his criticism) and that it treats Blok as a Russian chauvinist rather than someone who attempted to reach out to the Bolsheviks. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005), 110-11.

328 Krupskaiia no doubt arrived at this conclusion (as had other Soviet apparatchiks) on the basis of Chukovskii's 1922 essay “The Poet and the Hangman” (“Poet i palach”). In this work, Chukovskii dissected the canny, calculated panegyric that Nekrasov wrote to Count Mikhail Murav'ev, notorious for violently suppressing the Polish uprising, in the (dashed) hopes that Murav'ev would refrain from closing the journal *The Contemporary*.

Soviet citizenry needed to become familiar. Although Chukovskii had to contend with Gor'kii's mercurial pronouncements on what the public did and did not need to read, his editorship of the Anglo-American section provided him with joy (and, vitally, a small salary). The World Literature project lasted six years and amounted to a financial and practical failure. However, it cemented Chukovskii's complex friendships with Blok and Gor'kii, boosted his credentials as a translator, and provided fodder for his later books on translation theory.

Chukovskii's pragmatic patchwork of professions does not really distinguish him from his contemporaries; widespread post-Revolutionary financial hardship compelled much of the creative intelligentsia to assemble a motley array of income sources. What truly set Chukovskii apart was his fascination with the creative personality, a topic that, at that time, had been largely dismissed by both Formalist and Marxist aesthetic thought. In a 1920 letter to Gor'kii, Chukovskii rightly (and self-righteously) proclaims his alienation from contemporary critical trends: he remains cold to the secondary (*pobochnyi*), political question of Maiakovskii's attitude towards the Revolution, and laments the Formalists' mere interest in “measure, number, and weight.” To such works he juxtaposes a more “universal criticism,” exemplified by his article “Akhmatova and Maiakovskii” (1920), that might be equally intelligible to artists, students, and politicians through its orientation towards personality and “the author's soul”: “I study the favorite devices (*priemy*) of a writer, his predilection for these or those epithets, tropes, figures, rhythms, words, and on the basis of this purely formal, technical, scientific analysis I draw psychological conclusions, I recreate the inner personality (*dukhovnaia lichnost'*) of the author.”³²⁹ Naturally, such proclivities align well with the methods and goals of literary portraiture.

This overriding concern with creative personality bubbles up throughout Chukovskii's career, in his criticism, his translation, and even his works for and about children³³⁰ – but never more so than in his memoirs. To understand this concern, we must not only contextualize Chukovskii within Soviet biography; we must also locate the origins of the alternative biographical methodology that Chukovskii claims for himself – one that positions the memoir-portrait as a corrective to the wrongheaded principles of Soviet life-writing.

The Recuperative Irony of Chukovskii's Portraits

The primary vehicle for life-writing in Soviet Russia was the *Lives of Remarkable People* series (*Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei*; hereafter *LRP*). Gor'kii founded *LRP* in conjunction with the journal *Ogonek* in 1933,³³¹ conceiving of it as a more rigorous version of F.F. Pavlenkov's pre-Revolutionary popular biographical library of the same name. He sought to update that series' Plutarchian function³³² by crafting a new gallery of historical heroes – authors and artists, scientists and inventors, and, later, politicians, military leaders, and revolutionaries – who could teach young Soviet readers how to live. As time went on, the series' print runs and repertoire of

329 V. A. Keldysh, ed., *Neizvestnyi Gor'kii: k 125-Letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1994), 111.

330 Chukovskii's daughter, the author and dissident Lidiia Chukovskaia, cites one of her father's early articles in a discussion of his early critical works: “One must respect a child's soul...It is the soul of a creator and an artist.” Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Pamiati Detsva* (Moscow: Vremia 2012), 212.

331 Molodaia gvardiia assumed publication duty for the series in 1938, and *Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei* continues to be published under its auspices to this day.

332 See Ch. 3.1.

“great men” increased, as did the varieties of life-writing that it accommodated: memoirs about contemporary figures, rather than biographies of historical ones, became fair game. At all times, however, *LRP* remained an earnest enterprise in didactic hero-worship, in which an account of a well-lived life had to conform both to contemporary political expedience and enduring Soviet values.

Although certain versions of Chukovskii's memoirs were published under the auspices of the *LRP*, he sought to construct an alternative, Anglo-American genealogy of life-writing traditions for himself, seeking to escape the hagiographic, Plutarchian model preferred by Soviet biographical tradition. In a 1941 essay, “How I Came to Love Anglo-American Literature” (“*Kak ia poliubil anglo-amerikanskuiu literaturu*”), Chukovskii states, “When I was writing my portraits (*kharakteristiki*) of Russian authors, I felt that colossal help which the great master of historical portraits (*istoricheskie portrety*) Lytton Strachey and his whole school rendered unto me” (*SS*, v. 3, 487). Chukovskii would return to his adoration for Strachey in his Oxford speech in 1962, stating that Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) “struck [him] with its elegant and caustic irony” the first time he read it (*ibid* 489). He goes on to claim that Strachey and other English biographers helped him see Russian books anew, particularly memoirs – and, within that specific category of prose, Gor'kii's famed memoir-portrait of Lev Tolstoi (1919) especially.

Strachey's status as a pioneering biographer notwithstanding, *Eminent Victorians'* cutting irony, directed against the cloying pieties of Victorian life-writing, alienates him from Soviet biographical practice.³³³ The *LRP* cultivates a corpus of imitable heroes; Strachey's collection cuts inherited heroes down to size. Freudian irony and Soviet hero-worship, Modernist iconoclasm and Classicist panegyric, seem incompatible with one another.³³⁴ Indeed, Chukovskii's often fawning memoirs seem distant from the acerbic *Eminent Victorians*. Perhaps (in his Oxford speech at least) Chukovskii exaggerated his indebtedness to Strachey to endear himself to his English audience. However, if we take him at his word, it is worth considering what *kind* of irony might be available to Chukovskii within the bounds of Soviet life-writing.

Strachey famously applied modern, Freudian principles of interpretation – a focus on the unconscious, repressed desires of his subjects; an acknowledgment of his subjects' seemingly discontinuous, multiple selves that nevertheless obtain as an integral whole – into his writing. Chukovskii's assertion that he “was not wild about” Freud aside,³³⁵ his portraiture often approximates aspects of Strachey's Freud-derived inquiries into personality. His interest in authors' divided selves is evidenced even in the titles of his 1920s proto-portraits *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet* (1924) and *The Two Souls of Maksim Gor'kii (Dve dushi Maksima Gor'kogo, 1924)*. Both of these studies are divided into two discrete sections that focus on distinct and often mutually irreconcilable components of each subject's composite *lichnost'*.³³⁶ Chukovskii's subsequent memoirs synthesize these separate observations about Blok and Gor'kii's

333 For more on Strachey's place in the development of twentieth-century biographical practice, see Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses* and Saunders, *Self Impression*.

334 Chukovskii seems aware of this contradiction, and mitigates it somewhat in his Oxford speech by also claiming his affection for the biographies written by Hesketh Pearson (1887-1964). Chukovskii claims that Pearson's “irony did not prevent him from feeling a humble piety towards the greatness of great people” (*SS*, v. 3, 489-490). Pearson's works appealed to a much more middlebrow readership than Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, and – not coincidentally – several of his works were translated for inclusion in the *LRP* series.

335 Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 145.

336 The formal and thematic dichotomies that accrue in these memoirs represent an advancement over Chukovskii's pre-Revolutionary portraiture, wherein life and work are mirror images of one another; see Ch. 2.3.

personalities into a more organic whole, and thus represent the most tenable (within Soviet life-writing conventions) acknowledgment of a heterogeneous yet unified Freudian self.³³⁷

Consequently, Chukovskii's portraits possess a kind of “multidimensional deconstructive irony” that is central to modern life-writing practice, one that the scholar Richard Hutch has traced back to Strachey's biographical works. Strachey prefers the “irony of juxtaposed facts” that resist panegyric, unidimensional constructions of the biographical subject; his texts similarly “‘made space’ in how individuals may be encountered in texts about them;”³³⁸ Chukovskii seems to prefer the same. Unlike Strachey, however, Chukovskii does not destroy cultural icons so much as attempt to recuperate that which Soviet idolatry occludes: namely, the authentic “soul” of the author. Chukovskii emphasizes the private sides of Blok and Gor'kii that seem incongruous with their public personae, presenting such contradictions as vital components of these writers' composite personalities.

In these efforts, one can arguably see Chukovskii engaging with the construction of his own biography. This is not only because the Blok in memoir-portraits could be presented in such a way that he redeemed Chukovskii's earlier scholarship on the poet, or that Chukovskii could quote Gor'kii's flattering assessments of his work in children's literature and translation. Indeed, the desire to provide multidimensional portraits of his contemporaries speaks to Chukovskii's own desire not to let his own personality become homogenized. His diary is replete with episodes in which he is irked by others' attempts to define him unidimensionally. A 1925 entry recalls how, when Chukovskii was a child, the absence of his unknown father made him a mere bastard in the eyes of the government, as well as his young adult friends, who had no patronymic to call him by.³³⁹ From the 1920s to the 1960s, others' attempts to reduce him to a single facet of his diverse professional life become a frequent, irritated refrain in his diary, as in this entry, dated December 25, 1925:

When my Gorky book [i.e. *Two Souls*] came out last year, there wasn't a review anywhere, though hacks pilfered its ideas right and left in their articles. I'm forced into silence as a critic, because RAPP has taken over criticism and they judge by Party card rather than talent. They've made me a children's writer. But the shameful way they've treated my children's books – the persecution, the mockery, the suppression, and finally the censors' determination to ban them – has forced me to

337 On the history of Freud's reception in Russia, see Martin A Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). On 1920s Marxist critics' flirtation with Freudian methods of interpretation, see Maguire, Robert A, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Ithaca, NY: Corn, 1968), esp. 204-215.

338 Richard A. Hutch, “Strategic Irony and Lytton Strachey’s Contribution to Biography,” *Biography* 11, no. 1 (1988): 1–15, 7, 4.

339 Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 160-2. Beth Holmgren, performing a feminist, psychoanalytically-informed reading of Lidiia Chukovskaia's portrait of her father, argues that such early experiences forged Chukovskii's professional drive and his lifelong desire to provide children with a positive, well-rounded, and liberating education. In making himself into a renaissance man of the late imperial period, and absorbing heterogeneous social and familial roles into his single person, Chukovskii seems to have acquired a uniquely multidimensional personality for his time. On Chukovskaia's biography of her father, see Beth Holmgren, *Women's Works in Stalin's Time: Lidiia Chukovskaia and Nadezhda Mandelstam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 29-43.

abandon that arena as well.³⁴⁰

The threat of being rendered unidimensional even steals into Chukovskii's professional victories.³⁴¹ Praise of any one facet of Chukovskii's oeuvre creates a spiral of shame and doubt about the others: his creative energies should be dispersed among other, additional projects; his conventional scholarship receives accolades, occluding the innovations in other, more daring works. Having examined Chukovskii's life-writing, one gets that sense that his deconstruction of others' monolithic lives belies a desire for his own multidimensional self.

However, this drive for multidimensionality for both portraitist and subject frequently ran up against matters of historical contingency. What he was permitted to say about himself and others changed, and tracking such changes in Chukovskii's portraiture provides insight into his struggle for a complex *lichnost'*. Such close reading also demonstrates the flexibility of his favored genre: its status as a synthetic text allows for flexible, expedient reshufflings of its constituent parts that nevertheless leave the whole personality of his subject intact. This protean quality of the literary portrait mirrors Chukovskii's own protean nature, and demonstrates how portraiture might be made a site of resistance against the constraints of Soviet life-writing.

Jane Gallop's recent discussion of the "death of the author" helps us to articulate as much. Gallop reexamines that well-worn post-structuralist phrase, tackling a variety of theoretical and non-theoretical texts by Barthes, Derrida, Sedgwick, and Spivak. Apropos of the latter, Gallop notes Spivak's documented struggle to compose a totalizing book rather than a collection of essays – to delve into the "once and for all" temporality of grand theory that guarantees eventual obsolescence, a particular brand of authorial death. To this mode of writing Spivak contrasts the "persistent present" of shorter, non-book-length works that capture her current position, and the interpretative energies of the moment, before the author has time to reconsider or change her mind. This kind of writing, Gallop states, is not so much theoretical as it is *strategic*:

At stake in the distinction [between theory and strategy] may be the same two temporal modes we saw in [Spivak's] 1986 interview. While theories strive to be "once and for all," strategies belong to the "moment by moment." A strategy (unlike a theory) would "match the situation." [...] If strategy, unlike theory, is situational, moment-by-moment, inclusion in a book risks undoing that temporality, turning the strategy into a theory, making it "once and for all."³⁴²

340 Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 175-6. Justified accusations that others pillaged his criticism of Blok, Nekrasov, Chekhov, and Maiakovskii are likewise peppered throughout the diary, and speak to his fear that people would not take him seriously as a critic and scholar. Upon receiving the Lenin Prize for his book *Nekrasov's Craft (Masterstvo Nekrasova, 1952)*, these suspicions were ironically confirmed for him, as he considered this piece of scholarship the worst that he ever produced. *Ibid.*, 480.

341 Apropos of his pyrrhic victories in children's writing: "This trip to Moscow has confirmed that a directive about loving my children's verse must have come down from on high. People are going overboard, in fact, and that frightens me. I know my worth, but I must say I was more comfortable when they reviled me than I am when they praise me. The way people in Moscow treat me now you'd think I'd never written anything but children's verse, though when it comes to children's verse I'm a classic. I find it all highly offensive" (302). Apropos of his criticism: Viktor Shklovskii (who earlier harangued Chukovskii's work on the Futurists) tells Chukovskii to pay to his strength and become a critic, and abandon children's literature and his work on "the men of the sixties," this compliment acquires a bitter, ironic tinge; see Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 275.

342 Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press,

“Strategy” would be an apt way of describing the appeal of Chukovskii's preferred genre of the literary portrait. “Once and for all” theories of non-Marxist origin were impractical and ultimately dangerous during his lifetime: from the Revolutionary moment, to the backtracking of the NEP period, to the conservative Stalinist turn, to the liberal revisionism of Khrushchev's thaw, to the backslide into Brezhnev's stagnation, dramatic shifts in what was considered right and wrong, permissible and impermissible, demanded a certain ideological flexibility among artists in the Soviet Union. They had to develop strategies for maintaining their cultural and political capital in the face of change. Chukovskii's portraits roll with each of these historical punches because they are not beholden to ephemeral grand theories: brief, they don't take long to write (unlike his *Nekrasov's Craft*, which took too long and disappointed its author too much), and can thus better engage the zeitgeist; synthetic, they allow for elements of their subjects' lives to be muted, excised, or reshuffled without compromising the whole.

The strategic expedience of the portrait stems from its privileging of “biographemes,” a concept that Gallop borrows from Roland Barthes' *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971). Barthes defines the biographeme as a biography reduced “to a few details, to a few preferences, to a few inflections [...] whose distinction and mobility could travel outside any destiny and come to touch [...] some future body.”³⁴³ The synecdochal and synthetic portrait, as I argued in Part I, is diametrically opposed to the totalizing narrative of biography; for this reason, perhaps the portrait represents the genre of the biographeme par excellence.³⁴⁴ The *mobility* of the biographeme – its ability to be reshuffled and reframed in a synthetic portrait; the portrait's ability to be resequenced within its constituent gallery – allows for the construction and constant rearticulation of protean personality. To use Barthes' terms, Chukovskii's subjects, revisited in so many portraits, “travel outside the destiny” prescribed for them at any particular moment in Soviet history and by Soviet biographical conventions.³⁴⁵ Individual biographemes from Blok and Gor'kii's lives come to “touch” Chukovskii's “future body” long after Blok and Gor'kii have died. Consequently, these writers allow Chukovskii to reshape his own destiny, to continually reforge his standing within and continuing relevance to twentieth-century Russian culture.

“He Speaks the Truth”: Chukovskii's Blok

Chukovskii's portraits of Blok distinguish themselves by their early pedigree. Leonid Andreev

2011), 121-2.

343 See Barthes' *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 9; qtd. in Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author*, 45.

344 On the biographeme's resistance to the “progressional narrative of biography,” see also Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 38-40.

345 Gallop's discussion of destiny demonstrates the permanence of monumental Soviet biography versus the protean nature of Chukovskii's portraiture: “The urn and the stele, lasting monuments, are, as Barthes puts it, 'instructors of destiny.' They maintain solidity, unity; the only immortality they grant is one that has no body, no touching, no life. They are, as Barthes says, 'closed objects'; they hold things in; they do not allow dispersion; they do not allow anything to 'travel outside of destiny'; they do not allow anything of the dead out to 'come touch some future body.' The author as institution, the author taught by literary history, is a monument, an epic destiny; that author cannot touch us. But Barthes imagines another author, a friendly body, a mortal author, who even after he is dead, can 'come touch some future body.' Ibid., 47.

excepted,³⁴⁶ Blok was the first Russian writer whom Chukovskii profiled in the memoir-portrait format. The portrait first saw publication in Andrei Belyi's idiosyncratic journal *Notes of Dreamers (Zapiski mechtatelei)* in 1922. Titled “Blok's Last Years” (“Poslednie gody Bloka”), it formed a triptych with Belyi and Vil'gelm Zorgenfrei's memoirs of the poet.³⁴⁷ Chukovskii revised the work for inclusion in *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet*, his 1924 book-length treatment of Blok's life and oeuvre. He revised that portrait again some forty-five years later, including it in his 1959 collection of memoir-portraits, *From My Memories (Iz vospominanii)*.³⁴⁸ Each of these revisions witnessed Chukovskii inserting new material, removing old material, and (often bewilderingly) altering the sequence of most of the material that remained otherwise intact.

One might explain many of these edits from an aesthetic point of view: the last of these portraits builds to a fuller, richer vision of Blok than prior ones, which schizophrenically jump from topic to topic. However, many of these changes warrant historical and biographical commentary as well. As Galina Rylkova has shown, emigres and Soviet citizens, politicians and literary theorists, fellow travelers and Proletkult poets all routinely used Blok's death as a phenomenon by which they might calibrate and their relationship to the Revolution and to literary history.³⁴⁹ While Chukovskii's portraits trace a half-century's worth of vicissitudes in Soviet *blokovedenie*, they also testify to how, even some forty-odd years after the poet's death, Blok's cultural capital in Soviet literary history could be marshaled by others for self-fashioning purposes.

Let us first discuss the structure of the 1922 version of Chukovskii's portrait. Like its subsequent incarnations, it exhibits anxiety over how to start, a question made all the more complex by the literary portrait's non-linear poetics: one need not start at the true chronological beginning of the subject's life. Fittingly, the 1922 version, written soon after Blok's death, feels like an obituary. Chukovskii remarks upon how Blok was beloved before all other contemporary poets, and he moves nimbly from his own personal love for Blok's oratorical style, to the adoration that shone on the faces of Blok's audiences, to Blok's nearly expressionless face (the “calm and beautiful face of a doomed man”) during performances, to Blok's slow fading away in his final years. This focus on Blok's end would seem to conform to the then-collective opinion about Blok's creative obsolescence after he wrote *The Twelve*. Chukovskii, however, will push back on this position as the text proceeds.

The passage immediately following this one ironizes contemporary discourse on Blok:

Однажды в Москве мы сидели с ним за кулисами Дома Печати и слушали, как на подмостках какой-то словоблуд, которых так много в Москве, весело

346 Most scholarly editions state that Chukovskii's memoir-portrait of Andreev was published in the Gor'kii-edited *Book about Leonid Andreev (Kniga o Leonide Andreeve)* in 1922, the same year that his memoir-portrait of Blok was written and published. Vaninskaya points out that Chukovskii's memoir-portrait of Andreev was first published in the Petrograd journal *Literary Messenger (Literaturnyi vestnik)* in 1919, and in that same year, even witnessed translation and publication in the English journal *The Living Age*. Vaninskaya, “Korney Chukovsky in Britain,” 388.

347 Kornei Chukovskii, “Poslednie gody Bloka,” ed. Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi, *Zapiski mechtatelei* 6 (1922): 155–83.

348 Subsequent, cosmetic edits to “Aleksandr Blok” were made for the 1962, 1965, and 1967 editions of the collection *Contemporaries*, but they are insubstantial enough that I will refrain from commenting on them here.

349 Rylkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety*, 23-44.

доказывал толпе, что Блок, как поэт, уже умер: «Я вас спрашиваю, товарищи, где здесь динамика? Эти стихи мертвечина и написал их мертвец». Блок наклонился ко мне и сказал: – Это правда. И хотя я не видел его, я всею спиной почувствовал, что он улыбается: – Да, я действительно умер. Это он говорит правду. (1922 155-6)

One time in Moscow, he and I were sitting behind the wings of the Printing House and listened to how on the scaffolding some phrasemonger (of whom there were many in Moscow) joyfully demonstrating to the crowd that Blok, as a poet, had already died: “I ask you, comrades, where's the dynamism here? These poems are rotting flesh, and a dead man wrote them.” Blok bent over to me and said, “It's true.” And although I didn't see him, I sensed it with my all my spine: he was smiling. “Yes, I've truly died. He's speaking the truth.”

The adoration of Blok's pre-Revolutionary audiences gives way to the Soviet speaker's condescension. However, Blok's affirmation of his creative death allows each of the parties their victory: the “windbag” scores his political point, Blok seems all the more humble, and Chukovskii becomes a more sympathetic figure than the anonymous, uncouth representative of Soviet power. This productive triangulation between an anonymous figure/crowd, profiled author, and Chukovskii himself is often found in Chukovskii's portraiture when Soviet discourse about cultural heroes needs a corrective.

For all his sympathy, however, Chukovskii is not immune to contemporary opinion about Blok: discussion of *The Twelve*, the poem that all but determined Blok's legacy in the early Soviet era, dominates much of the portrait.³⁵⁰ However, reducing Blok to his swan song represents a unidimensionalizing and thus untenable tactic; one senses that Chukovskii wishes to counter it. In the final section of the portrait, he does so by examining *The Twelve* through the lens of Blok's correspondence with its illustrator, Iurii Annenkov. Recurrent in the final section of the portrait are references to how the elder Blok and young Annenkov, men of “different generations,” might find artistic kinship in this work; this assertion, however tenuous,³⁵¹ rejects contemporary canards about how *The Twelve* expresses the incompatibility of different Russian generations.³⁵² Furthermore, we are told how, in response to Blok's concerns about illustrating the work's primary female character, Annenkov “searched all of Moscow for the appropriate Kat'ka,” and “drew twelve different Kat'kas, but felt that each was not right” (182). Blok's post-Revolutionary literary work spins Annenkov into Blok's pre-Revolutionary poetic paradigm: seeking the shifting visage of the Beautiful Lady against an unwelcoming cityscape. In showing *The Twelve's* capacity to unite rather than absolutely distinguish different epochs, Chukovskii

350 Much of the second half is concerned with Blok's non-poetic creativity between 1918 and 1921; we will turn to such material in subsequent discussions of other, later versions of the Chukovskii's portraits.

351 Blok and Annenkov were only born some eight-and-a-half years apart – although, in Khodasevich's conception of *fin-de-siècle* history, this would place Annenkov in the post-Symbolist generation. On Khodasevich, see Ch. 3.2; on Annenkov, see Ch. 3.4.

352 Rylkova notes that Trotskii was one of the most vociferous proponents of the division between pre- and post-1917 generations; see *The Archaeology of Anxiety*, 38-40. Blok was something of an exceptional poet for Trotsky, the lone Symbolist who “reached out” to the Bolsheviks and attempted (while ultimately failing) to remake himself into a “realist” poet. Chukovskii's comments about the affinity between Blok and Annenkov would therefore be anathema to Trotskii's portrayal of Blok.

argues for a subtler reading of the poem within Blok's oeuvre than was typically permitted in 1922.

This concern for multidimensional complexity becomes more pronounced in the 1924 version of the portrait, retitled “A.A. Blok as a Person” and reprinted in *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet*.³⁵³ Significantly, this book presents two distinct versions of Blok in two discrete sections: the first a memoir (a revised version of the 1922 portrait), profiling a man unnaturally, perpetually focused on destruction and collapse; the second a dedicated chronological study, profiling Blok's ever-evolving, ever-more-perfecting art.³⁵⁴ The first relies on synthesis of chronologically distant but thematically similar biographical moments; the second relies on sequential accretion that demonstrates progress and change. The simultaneous existence of these divergent representational strategies bespeaks Chukovskii's continued anxiety over how to initiate the discussion of Blok's life – and how to render it multidimensionally.

Chukovskii begins the 1924 memoir-portrait not with Blok's death but with his childhood, guided all the while by excerpts from the poet's unfinished, quasi-fictionalized autobiographical epic *Retribution* (*Vozmezdie*, 1910-1921). Chukovskii peppers the text with quotes from Blok's shorter pre-Revolutionary lyrics, highlighting contrasts between the poet's supposedly idyllic aristocratic upbringing and his tumultuous inner life – a conflict of subjectivity rather than history. This contradiction is mitigated by Blok's all-encompassing fascination with destruction (*gibel'*): “catastrophe showed the poet that those people cleansed by a great storm become eternally beautiful” (1924, 12).

These remarks – all new material in the work – are both typical and atypical of 1924. Discussion of Blok's legacy was no longer dominated by *The Twelve*, and Chukovskii's repeated references to *Retribution* reflect the mid 1920s' widespread critical interest in Blok's biography and lineage – a biographical turn that produced an almost Max Nordau-like perspective on Blok's “degenerate” aristocratic identity.³⁵⁵ Chukovskii engages with such content, providing a succinct checklist of judgments typically encountered in Marxist assessments of Blok's oeuvre. While stating that he agrees with such assessments in general, Chukovskii plays up their stodgy, polemical language and class-based categorizations, countering them with his own critical ideal:

Но говоря о гении, попытаемся хоть в самой малой мере пережить его гениальные думы и чувства, взволноваться его мученической и пророческой лирикой. Все эти схемы, быть может, и правильны, но где тот всеобъемлющий дух, который мог бы одновременно и классифицировать поэтов по ярусам социального строя и мучительно переживать их лирику? Либо то, либо другое,

353 Kornei Chukovskii, *Aleksandr Blok kak chelovek i poet: vvedenie v poeziuu Bloka* (Petrograd: Izd-vo A.F. Marks, 1924).

354 The second section of *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet* is likewise a revision of older material, specifically Chukovskii's insightful 1922 study *A Book about Aleksandr Blok* (*Kniga ob Aleksandre Bloke*). Both this essay and its 1924 incarnation in *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet* consider Blok's oeuvre on the basis of the three-volume Musaget edition of his collected works (1911-12) and the epic poem *The Twelve* (*Dvenadtsat'*, 1918). Within each individual volume of the Musaget edition, Chukovskii manages to isolate recurrent vocabulary and poetic devices, which allows him to present Blok's art as a three-stage biographical development (much as the dialectical, post-“On the State of Russian Symbolism” Blok wanted); see also Stone, “Aleksandr Blok and the Rise of Biographical Symbolism,” which explicates the process by which Blok's earlier poetic cycles were re-edited in accordance with their chronology in the Musaget edition.

355 Ryilkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety*, 40-1.

но одновременно – этого почти никогда не бывает. (1924, 15-16)

But in speaking about genius, we will attempt to at the very least experience his brilliant thoughts and feelings, to become enraptured by his martyrly and prophetic lyric poetry. All of these schemata, perhaps, are correct, but where is that all-embracing spirit which could simultaneously classify poets on the basis of the tiers of their social stratum and poignantly experience their lyric poetry? Either one or the other, but at the same time – this hardly ever happens.

In Chukovskii's mind, it is rare to find a critic who can simultaneously conduct objective analysis of a poet while experiencing that poet's art in an authentic way. He suggests that an outright Marxist perspective, however correct its narrow conclusions might be, already precludes an authentic encounter with art. An “all-embracing” critic, on the other hand, can do both, and the bifurcated structure of Chukovskii's *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet* strives to do just that – if not truly “simultaneously,” given that each task is given its own discrete section. The more impressionistic, empathetic, memoir-oriented first half of the work is complemented by the second, more rigorous, analytical account of Blok's poetic art. Chukovskii mandates multiple, seemingly incompatible reading methods and seemingly incompatible conclusions, rather than reducing the content of Blok's life to a crude, unidimensionalizing Marxist explanation. Embracing *Retribution*, Blok's sedate elegy to the gentry way of life, alongside *The Twelve*, his fiery account of the Revolution, is but the first step in Blok's recuperation.

While the remainder of the 1924 portrait is much the same as the 1922 version,³⁵⁶ the eulogistic opening to the 1922 portrait now sits curiously astride the new and old material. Blok's admission (“He speaks the truth”) acquires a new, different intonation here: no longer an opening salvo about the poet's obsolescence in Soviet Russia, it now reflects his disappointment in the unfulfilled transformative promise of revolution. Blok's statement of nominal obsolescence is preceded by the longest continuous passage of the reworked portrait, which I will excerpt here:

Он до конца не изменил революции. Он только не влюбил в революции то, что не считал революцией: все обывательское, скопидомное, оглядчивое, рабье, уступчивое. Он остался до конца максималистом, но максимализм его был не от мира сего и требовал от людей невозможного: чтобы они только и жили трагическим, чтобы они только и жаждали гибели, чтобы они были людьми. [...] Поэт и в революции оказался бездомным, не прилепившимся ни к какому гнезду; он не мог простить революции до конца своей дней, что она не похожа на ту, о которой он мечтал столько лет. [...] Отсюда его страшная тоска в

356 Blok adds citations from other writers' memoirs about Blok (framed such that they reflect Chukovskii's own conclusions), showing just how much the market was flooded with competing Blokiana three years after the poet's death. The reader's presumed familiarity with and possession of these documents becomes part of the portrait. Blok encourages his readers to turn to particular passages from Blok's prose, flip through specific pages of his collected works, even gaze intently on specific photographs of the poet. The then-unpublished materials from Chukovskii's own collection – private letters, satirical ditties Blok penned in Chukovskii's private almanac – acquire pride of place in the second half of the portrait. Blok will maintain these gestures in the later, 1959 and 1960s versions of his portraits, updating the page numbers to account for new and updated publications of Blok's work.

последние предсмертные годы. Он оказался вне революции, вне ее праздников, побед, поражений, надежд, и почувствовал, что ему осталось одно – умереть. (1924, 21-22)

To the very end, he did not betray the revolution. He simply did not fall in love with that which he did not perceive as being revolutionary *within* the revolution: all that was philistine, miserly, assessing, surveying, slavish, compliant. He remained to the end a maximalist, but his maximalism was not of this world, and demanded the impossible of people: that they would only live tragically, that they would only thirst for destruction, that they would be *people* [...] Even in the revolution, the poet turned out to be homeless, not sticking to any kind of nest; to the end of his days, he couldn't forgive the revolution for the fact that it did not resemble the one he had dreamed about all those years [...] Thence his awful anguish in the final years before his death. He turned out to be outside of the revolution, outside of its holidays, its victories, its defeats, its hopes, and he felt that the only thing left for him to do was to die.

Blok, then, is crestfallen by how brief and incomplete the revolutionary transformation was, that it was not “stormier and more fiery” (21). The anonymous windbag who decries the absent dynamism in Blok's work becomes an embodiment of all that is “debauched and vulgar” (*bludlivyi i poshlyi*) (ibid), that which a socialist revolution was supposed to have destroyed irrevocably. Blok's creative death and weary self-effacing “He speaks the truth” are not inevitable products of the new historical epoch to which he is alien; they suggest his alienation from the petty-bourgeois spirit that comes to afflict the Revolution itself. Thus, this moment represents no eulogy for Blok, as in the 1922 version: it eulogizes the truer, ideal vision of the Revolution that Blok himself espoused and represented.

In the thirty-five-odd years between when the 1924 version of the portrait was published and when Chukovskii sat down to compose his first full set of memoirs, much had changed. In a grotesque way, his once-maligned works on Blok had finally been recognized by the Soviet establishment: in numerous diary entries, Chukovskii states that other, lesser scholars had been stealing from his study of Blok's art while accusations of *chukovshchina* forced him to keep a low profile.³⁵⁷ The compulsion to write something fresh and honest about Blok possessed Chukovskii in the middle of the 1950s, the decade when anniversary celebrations of the poet reached their peak.³⁵⁸ In the face of such official celebrations, Chukovskii writes, “I must write

357 January 24, 1926: “...Because my works age quickly they are losing their only charm: their novelty. That's how Epokha ruined my *Book About Blok*. I wrote it while Blok was still alive, and they let it sit so long in the printer's office that Blok was dead by the time it appeared and books about Blok were crawling out of the woodwork” (Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 178). June 28, 1944: “...Now, during the Second [World War], everything I came up with working in blissful Lenin Library isolation, and much as I should be used to suchlike thefts – my Blok book was stolen, my Nekrasov, and my Mayakovsky article, and Yevdokimov stole my Repin article – I still find it terribly painful” (Ibid., 352). December 13, 1955: “...I went back to my old book on Blok and was chagrined to find that it has been completely robbed, pillaged and despoiled by today's Blok scholars, especially by 'Volodya' Orlov...Because the book was banned my finds have been taken over by clever rogues and rotters and now my priority is completely forgotten” (Ibid., 402-3).

358 Rylkova, *The Archaeology of Anxiety*, 29. Amidst such festivities, Chukovskii laments that he “should be writing about Blok,” but cannot for the sake of other, “odious” demands; Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 402.

about Blok and how he loved me during his last years, latched on to me, dedicated poems to me, wrote extraordinarily warm letters to me – and how he *despised* me in 1908-10.”³⁵⁹ Not only Chukovskii's Blok, but Chukovskii himself must be seen as multidimensional and capable of transformation: once a controversy-courting *enfant terrible* critic, he became a trusted friend and confidant of one of Russia's greatest poets in the waning years of his life.

Thus, anxiety about how now to include *himself* in his own memoirs becomes a primary motivation for edits to Chukovskii's 1959 portrait of Blok³⁶⁰ – and the primary material of the portrait itself. The work begins not with Blok's post-1917 obsolescence or his pre-Revolutionary aristocratic lineage, but with “numerous minor, everyday recollections of an old-timer, likely unnecessary for anyone,” that Blok's poetry produces in the aged Chukovskii. He locates Blok's opaque Symbolist poetry within specific, topographically precise memories of listening to and talking with Blok in pre-Revolutionary Petersburg. The heterogeneous poems to which Chukovskii's mind turns are no longer as provocative as they would have been in the *Twelve*-centric 1920s; why are they here? Chukovskii justifies this material in the following way:

Словом, со многими стихотворениями Блока у меня, как у старика петербуржца, связано столько конкретных, жанровых, бытовых, реалистических образов, что эти стихотворения, представляющиеся многим такими туманно-загадочными, кажутся мне зачастую столь же точным воспроизведением действительности, как, например, стихотворения Некрасова. (1959, 373)

Simply put, for me, old Petersburger that I am, there are so many concrete, generic, everyday, realistic images connected to many of Blok's poems, such that these poems, which many find foggy and mysterious, frequently seem to me as precise a reproduction of reality as, for example, the poems of Nekrasov.

On the one hand, such remarks seem to be the prerogative of an older man long separated not only from pre-Revolutionary reality, but from the political battles waged over Blok in the early 1920s: he is free to indulge in art for art's sake, and (more immediately) nostalgia for nostalgia's sake. However, these remarks also attest to his ability to realize a more multidimensional portrayal of Blok. A telling example: in an earlier version of the portrait, an aside about the “terrible order” (*strashnyi poriadok*) of Blok's day-to-day existence bubbles up awkwardly along importune remarks about post-Revolutionary theater (1924 40). However, in 1959, Chukovskii moves this discussion (almost verbatim) to the beginning of the portrait, alongside the discussion of Blok's gentry lifestyle. For Chukovskii, this “comfort and peace of a stable, measured, long-ago planned out life” is, vitally, incompatible with traditional conceptions of Blok, “the embodiment of homelessness, discomfort, catastrophe, and destruction” (1959, 376-7). Such a connection would have been less tenable in 1924, when Blok's aristocratic decadence, and his inability to shed that decadent heritage, dominated discussions about his art. At the same time, by displacing an individual's sense of “order” onto an entire social class, 1959 Chukovskii shows what is truly at stake in the destruction that so enralls Blok and permeates the poetry from even

359 Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969*, 409, 411.

360 This portrait can be found in Kornei Chukovskii, *Iz vospominanii* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1959).

the happiest years of his life. As someone who embraces the contradictory forces of order and destruction, who curses that which he loves, Blok seems all the richer, a multidimensional figure who cannot be reduced to any easy interpretation.

The polysemy of Blok's life and art is no better reflected in the way Chukovskii treats Blok's acknowledgment of his obsolescence in 1959. This moment acquires new resonances in the eighth and penultimate section of the portrait, reflecting the work's heterogeneous materials. Blok's quiet pronouncement ("He speaks the truth"; 413) now recalls his commitment to uncomfortable truths intoned in the sixth section, in which Blok states that he did not like one of Chukovskii's lectures about him (397). Moved to the middle of the portrait, the humorous, self-ironizing ditties Blok scribbled in *Chukokkala* (Chukovskii's personal almanac-diary hybrid) during the World Literature years (405-9) lead more effectively into Blok's wry smile at the theater. Finally, Blok's damning editorial about those authors who fled Russia and "could not endure the blows from the hammer of history" (411) deftly presages Blok's own graceful bow before history's judgment.

Blok's belief that his coarse opponent has "spoken the truth" about him echoes all these moments, making this episode ring with a combination of shame, ironic humor, pride, and exhaustion. It becomes a fitting capstone to the work as a whole, and to Chukovskii's extended edits to it. In the 1922 eulogy-portrait, this moment suggests a contemporary "established" truth about Blok – that he was obsolete and creatively spent; in 1924, it becomes a testament to Blok's convictions in the face of a disappointing revolution; in 1959, it echoes the multifarious, contradictory, and ultimately irreducible sides of Blok's personality. In other words, while the "He speaks the truth" episode begins as the one thing we do know about Blok, over the course of thirty-five years, it transforms into a means of recognizing and remembering *many* things we *ought* to know about him. This is not simply to say that the twilight of Blok's life acquires more nuance the further it is pushed into the portrait, when Chukovskii's chosen *siuzhet* more resembles the *fabula* of Blok's life. Rather, the migration of "He speaks the truth" demonstrates how flexible and expedient the portrait format became for Chukovskii – a critic who outlived most of his peers, who had to keep up with politics and his own shifting place in Soviet culture, who had to distinguish his works from an ever-increasing corpus of competing Blokiana. A protean, contradictory Blok allows for a multidimensional Chukovskii.

"I Hate Old Russian Men": Chukovskii's Gor'kii

What, then, of Maksim Gor'kii, someone who was not an "outsider" as Blok (or Chukovskii) was, someone who played a foundational role in the mythmaking inherent to Soviet culture? Can such a figure be made the subject of an irony? And how, within the context of Soviet life-writing, can that irony be permissible, or even useful?

Such questions are only partially answered by *The Two Souls of Maksim Gor'kii*, Chukovskii's first attempt to render Gor'kii in portrait form. Again employing the binary format that structures *Aleksandr Blok as Person and Poet*, Chukovskii seeks to explicate the difference between Gor'kii the philosopher and Gor'kii the artist. Chukovskii tackles the former subject in the first section of the work, which cites liberally from the author's semi-autobiographical texts, particularly *Childhood (Detstvo, 1913-14)*. He then explores Gor'kii's artistry in the second section, where he quotes Gor'kii's literary and publicistic works and, significantly, his memoir-

portrait of Lev Tolstoi. Chukovskii maintains that Gor'kii's artistic lyricism work against the prophetic *intelligent* whom Gor'kii philosophically, politically, feels compelled to be. Chukovskii states that in Gor'kii's memoir-portrait of his mentor Tolstoi, we see Tolstoi's "two souls: one secret, another for everyone" (*SS*, v. 8, 218). The former belongs to his rich, authentic, literary self, the latter to an awkward and untenable product of Tolstoyanism. Chukovskii sees the same dichotomy between the humanist artist and harsh *intelligent* in Gor'kii, and bemoans the victory of the latter – whom he labels Gor'kii's "false double" (238) – in the artist's mythology.

However, in subsequent portraits of the author, Chukovskii doesn't dwell as much on Gor'kii's art; rather, he focuses more on Gor'kii's status as a mentor and financial sponsor of other artists. The sense of Gor'kii as a multidimensional, contradictory figure in whom art and life might be opposed gets mapped onto the public and private sides of his life. For Chukovskii (as for many of Gor'kii's hagiographizing memoirists of the time period),³⁶¹ these two sides of Gor'kii become locked in an odd dialectic: although it is Chukovskii's knowledge of Gor'kii's private life that gives him license to write the memoirs in the first place, it is Gor'kii's public reputation that endows him with the political capital to aid the impoverished and politically beleaguered Chukovskii. Blok's biographical legend was one of self-destruction, and his personality thus readily lends itself to ironizing; Gor'kii's, however, was one of earnest self-creation, and would seem to resist irony. Yet it was precisely for that reason that others' treatments of his character had to tread all the more carefully for it (as Khodasevich's "You'll spoil your biography!" quote makes clear). Chukovskii must multidimensionalize Gor'kii just enough to satisfy his Strachean convictions, but without "spoiling" Gor'kii's heroic image as it exists within the conventions of Soviet life-writing.

The portrait of Gor'kii that appeared in Chukovskii's later memoirs has its origins in the 1928 volume *Gor'kii: A Collection of Articles and Recollections about M. Gor'kii*. Il'ia Gruzdev (1892-1960), member of the Serapion Brothers and author of several biographies of Gor'kii, served as the book's editor, and he commissioned short memoirs of the author from a variety of cultural figures – Aleksei Tol'stoi, Konstantin Stanislavskii, Vsevolod Ivanov, Viktor Shklovskii, and Chukovskii among them. The content of Chukovskii's portrait is not fundamentally different from that of the other contributors' pieces: references to Gor'kii's imposing stature and image, his inexhaustible energy, and his mastery of the epistolary genre are ubiquitous in the collection. However, while many of these pieces lapse into hagiography, Chukovskii is one of the few authors to foreground Gor'kii's participation in and complex responses to this very cult of personality.

As in his portrait of Blok, Chukovskii begins this 1928 portrait – "Gor'kii at 'Global'"³⁶² – with his account of a public, post-Revolutionary celebration of his subject. Again, as in the Blok portrait, the episode highlights an observant Chukovskii, his sympathetic subject, and an anonymous third party who crudely assesses him. However, the triangular dynamic of Blok's "He speaks the truth" moment is inverted here. The occasion is Gor'kii's fiftieth birthday, which members of the World Literature publishing house modestly celebrate by drinking plain tea out of champagne glasses. An "inveterate orator of the jubilee" praises Gor'kii's "tender and mild" portrayal of the titular old man in Gor'kii's 1915 play (*Starik*). Gor'kii, who has sat idly by the

361 Again, see Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs," esp. 343-5.

362 Kornei Chukovskii, "Gor'kii vo 'Vsemirnoi,'" in *Gor'kii: sbornik statei i vospominanii o M. Gor'kom*, ed. I. A. Gruzdev (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1928), 335-65.

entire evening, impatiently drumming his fingers against the table, suddenly proclaims, “No, that's wrong. I hate old Russian men in general. And that old man whom you praise was a rotten fellow.” He then turns to a nearby child, gives him his food, and advises him to never celebrate jubilees (337-8).

Note the inverted echoes with Blok's portrait: Blok humbly accepts his public excoriation, while Gor'kii rejects cloying praise that is heaped upon him. In both cases, the silent, observant Chukovskii seems a more reliable custodian of literary history than the brash orator. Furthermore, his subject's modest reaction to that orator ironizes the conventions of Soviet hagiography (or anti-hagiography, in Blok's case). Unlike Samuil Marshak, who in the same volume suggests that the “modest” surname Peshkov acts like a “curtain that hides the renowned name 'Maksim Gor'kii'” (183), Chukovskii thus suggests that the glorious autobiographical legend of Gor'kii hides the more authentic, radical modesty of the author's personality – the way that a champagne glass can also contain bitter tea.

In a similar vein, Chukovskii's 1928 portrait ignores Gor'kii's art itself, and instead focuses on how Gor'kii facilitates others' art. The portrait leans heavily on Gor'kii's leadership at the World Literature publishing house, where he writes supplicatory letters, edits others' works, and alters lists of potential publications. More vitally, however, he facilitates artists' *lives*, using his connections and privileged position to acquire food, milk, and other necessities during the lean 1920s. As discussed in Ch. 3.2, Khodasevich, writing in the late 1930s, sees such actions as both Gor'kii's “theater for himself” and an “ennobling falsehood” for his supplicants. Chukovskii's portrait likewise suggests (albeit in a milder tone)³⁶³ that Gor'kii's altruism risks self-contradiction. For example: Chukovskii recounts an episode in which Blok laments the antihumanistic tendencies of the modern world. Gor'kii energetically rebukes him, stating that such problems mean nothing before the very real problem of poverty. Chukovskii hastily curtails Gor'kii's rant, saying that he does not wish to speak about “what Gor'kii thought at that time, but only about his temperament” (351). This gesture towards characterological economy sutures over a more dangerous truth: that Gor'kii, figured as an individual in whom art and life are at once heroically and modestly intertwined, always invites paradox. Just as Gor'kii's rant would disrupt the aesthetic whole of Chukovskii's portrait, the content of that rant would show how the World Literature group's publication projects pale before the material scarcities of early Soviet Russia. And yet it is Gor'kii's status as godfather of Soviet culture that affords him the ability to materially aid his impoverished and politically precarious colleagues. Thus, Gor'kii remains a vital instrument (albeit one perpetually on the verge of self-contradiction) in contemporary Soviet authors' survival.

For Gor'kii to be such an instrument, however, he requires modesty of those who use him as such. Where Chukovskii's Gor'kii is vociferously self-effacing, Chukovskii himself is quietly so, agreeing with Gor'kii's proclamations and critiques of his work. Admittedly, as this 1928 work was conceived as one entry in a gallery of dedicated reminiscences about Gor'kii, Chukovskii has little more to do than provide one small stone in the mosaic. However, that modesty also has its origins in contemporary politics. Near the end of the portrait (361), he briefly states that Gor'kii asked him to participate in the compilation and publication of children's

363 In a May 22, 1921 diary entry, Chukovskii actually does label Gor'kii's “playful coquetry” with his supplicants as “theater for theater's sake”; see *Diary, 1901-1969*, 90. This distinction between the humble Gor'kii of Chukovskii's diary and the more solipsistic Gor'kii of Chukovskii's portrait only underscores the differences between public and private selves alluded to earlier in this chapter.

literature before the Revolution. The inclusion of this anecdote was in itself probably a brave act, given Krupskaja's recently published critique of Chukovskii's poem, the nominally "bourgeois" piece "The Crocodile." Nevertheless, throughout the rest of the portrait, Chukovskii occludes this facet of his oeuvre, presenting himself unidimensionally, that is, merely as one translator among many others in the World Literature group.

Chukovskii's political circumstances and his Gor'kii portrait (in both its omissions and its assertions) are thus intimately connected. Indeed, the December 9, 1928 entry in Chukovskii's diary states that he wrote his memoirs of Gor'kii "to forget the shock Krupskaya caused [him]." Taking the text to the Gosizdat publishing house, he is pleased to see his portrait reviewed by a particularly "stupid" censor, who is, for Chukovskii, "a representative of the contemporary reading public. If he accepts it, everything will be fine."³⁶⁴ Such circumstances recall the opening section of Chukovskii's portrait: obtuse Soviet ideologues – simultaneously possessed of too much political capital and ideological baggage, and too little artistic sense – make their proclamations while Chukovskii sits quietly by. Gor'kii then comes to the rescue, defending Chukovskii against Krupskaja's objections with a public letter.³⁶⁵ Thus, we see in Chukovskii's 1928 portrait of Gor'kii a microcosm of his own world: compelled for political reasons to craft a unidimensional version of himself, he quietly waits for Gor'kii to speak truth to the Soviet institutions that accord him his power – that is, to act as only a multidimensional personality can.

Two important factors frame the changes to the next, 1940 version of this portrait³⁶⁶: Gor'kii dies in 1936; and Chukovskii edits the work for inclusion in the first variant of his own book of memoirs. The latter factor is an obvious blessing, inasmuch as it allows Gor'kii (and Chukovskii by proxy) to exist in a fuller context, outside of the World Literature context; the former, however, is a mixed one. As is frequently the case with materials that are saved for posterity, Gor'kii's death gave others license to publish his private correspondence. Indeed, several such personal letters from Gor'kii are excerpted in Chukovskii's portrait, fleshing out the private side of the author so otherwise obscured by the cult of his personality. This is a bittersweet boon, however: Gor'kii will never again pen a dedicated public letter defending Chukovskii from whatever attacks his detractors have most recently prepared. All told, by 1940, Chukovskii has gained more flexibility to represent his benefactor at the cost of that benefactor's immediate influence on his behalf.

Chukovskii addresses these complex circumstances by adding a wealth of new content to the portrait – content that is, more often than not, focused on Gor'kii's connections to children's literature, and, by proxy, the most routinely beleaguered sphere of Chukovskii's professional activity. The portrait now begins with the first time Chukovskii sees Gor'kii in person. He is a frowning, frozen resident of 1915 Petrograd whose sour demeanor melts upon seeing a group of rambunctious children being called home for a nap. Gorky sends them off with a jaunty couplet: "*Dazhe kit / Noch'iu spit!*" (a line from his 1913 children's story "The Samovar"). This episode permits Chukovskii to remark upon Gor'kii's "two [facial] expressions [...] one sullen and dreary [...] the other always abrupt, always unexpected: festively, shyly, tenderly enamored" (1940 88). Thus, Chukovskii not only gives this emotional paradox of the multidimensional personality primary position in the portrait; he also places it in close proximity to the theme of children and

364 Ibid., 222-23

365 Ibid., 224

366 This work is located in Kornei Chukovskii, *Repin, Gor'kii, Maiakovskii, Briusov: vospominaiia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1940).

creativity.³⁶⁷ Children give even the severest of individuals a license for levity. The deceased Gor'kii might no longer be able to advocate Chukovskii's free-spirited poetry in a public letter, but he can certainly perform a similar free-spiritedness in Chukovskii's own memoirs.

Indeed, the multidimensionality required for dealing with children is indexed in the final section of the 1940 portrait. Here, Chukovskii writes about the first time he actually talks to Gor'kii, on a train to Finland in 1916. A gloomy Gor'kii sits at the window, ignoring Chukovskii, whom he had invited in moments ago. Then, “suddenly, in a single moment, he shed his moroseness, drew his warming blue eyes closer to me [...] and said in a weighty voice with his Nizhnyi Novgorodian accent, 'Let's chat about children.'”³⁶⁸ (129). The resultant conversation, in which Gor'kii's gloom “miraculously melts away,” provides the portrait with a symmetrical bookend (again, children reveal the range of Gor'kii's “expressions”) and thus aesthetically strengthens the work. However, this echo of the earlier moment also provides Chukovskii with an origin story that is more politically compelling: Gor'kii has drafted this *enfant terrible* critic into the fight for worthy children's literature. Although their relationship becomes more complex over the course of the next twenty years, Gor'kii and Chukovskii are here defined by the former's blessing of the latter's work – a blessing that the now-deceased Gor'kii can no longer perform on Chukovskii's behalf. This portrait's conclusion ensures that the Gor'kii of Chukovskii's memoirs will continue to do just that.

There are other moments in the portrait where Gor'kii acts as Chukovskii's benefactor: in 1920, he encourages him to compile and republish his pre-Revolutionary criticism, specifically *From Chekhov to Our Days* (121); in 1930, Gor'kii tells him to submit his scholarship on Nekrasov (when Krupskaiia's critique thereof was still fresh) for publication (123). In these moments, Gor'kii permits Chukovskii to exhibit the fuller, more multidimensional version of his professional self that was truncated in the modest 1928 portrait. Yet at the same time, Chukovskii's newfound multidimensionality permits him, or even compels him, to critique Gor'kii as well. Indeed, at certain points within the 1940 portrait, a mild if productive Oedipal dynamic between the two figures bubbles to the surface, and enhances the happy harmony of their mutual interest in children's literature.

This combination of appreciation and critique, shot through with metaphors about family, is a tactic that Chukovskii actually learned from Gor'kii, whose noted portrait “Lev Tolstoi” employs much the same combination in the representation subject of its titular subject. Throughout that work, Gor'kii underscores Tolstoi's status as his mentor and surrogate father. Such practices substantiate Gor'kii's self-mythologization, a fact of which Chukovskii – who was quite knowledgeable of Gor'kii's portraiture – is well aware.³⁶⁹ He references Gor'kii's famous statement “I am not an orphan so long as this man [i.e. Tolstoi] is alive”³⁷⁰ by noting how Gor'kii, when reading aloud his memoirs of the author, must leave the stage and cry, “orphan-like” (*sirotlivo*), in the hallway (88). Although Gor'kii creates a monument of Tolstoi, he recognizes the dangers of making him into an infallible god, as he claims many of Tolstoi's contemporaries (and at times, Tolstoi himself) did. The way to best honor him is to be honest: to challenge him,

367 A similar remark about Gor'kii's “two expressions” appears among the final sections of the 1928 portrait. There it is used as an awkward pretense to talk about Gor'kii's relationship with the Serapion Brotherhood (361).

368 Literally: “*s sil'nym udareniem na o: – Po-go-vo-rim o detiakh.*”

369 Chukovskii, “M. Gor'kii i ‘Zhizn’ zamechatel'nykh liudei.” 6-7.

370 Maksim Gorky, *Gorky's Tolstoy & Other Reminiscences: Key Writings by and About Maxim Gorky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 59.

to catalog his human shortcomings, to treat him as multidimensional entity. In so challenging him, Gor'kii must make an orphan of himself.

Chukovskii learns all of this from “Lev Tolstoi,” and then applies it to his own portrait of Gor'kii. Gor'kii's status as mentor, benefactor, and head of a metaphorical family – one who likes telling stories before his rapt audience – are never in doubt; indeed, Chukovskii often foregrounds these roles in the 1928 portrait.³⁷¹ However, later versions of the portrait stress – in ways the original does not – the conflict between Chukovskii and his own surrogate father. In the 1940 work, the two debate the Anglo-American titles to be included in the World Literature rolls. Chukovskii states that, “at the time, I didn't notice how he loved for people to take objection to (*vozzhal*) him” (106-7). A more extended argument occurs apropos of Chukovskii's article on Nekrasov, in which he claims that the poet acquired his mature voice after imitating and parodying his forebears. Gor'kii does not disagree with the statement as such; he simply argues that simple imitation of the classics produces mere “cognitive dissonance” (*smiatenie umov*), that “a good three-quarters of our young literature consists of imitations,” and that he is “against imitation (*podrazhaniia*), especially in its dogmatic and not at all pragmatic form.” Chukovskii states that he later realized that Gor'kii did not object to his ideas about Nekrasov, but simply “didn't want similar observations to become recipes for novice authors” (124-5). Gor'kii paradoxically demands that sons challenges the fathers; Chukovskii does so, albeit in a way that preserves his surrogate father's useful political capital.

Thus, even when such disagreements play out in private correspondence rather than public jubilees, Chukovskii's Gor'kii consistently bemoans sycophants and imitators. If he chastises them, he does so not out of personal enmity, but concern for future writers. Gor'kii wants them to be aesthetically diverse, to question the doctrines handed down to them, to object rather than to uncritically reflect. Are these empty clichés about artistic uniqueness? Do they contradict the Socialist Realist canonicity with which Gor'kii became indelibly associated in 1934? A father figure encouraging his charges towards some form of Oedipal rebellion is undoubtedly ironic – doubly so, given Gor'kii's premier place in Soviet culture. In either case, we are led back towards that paradox which Chukovskii explores in the 1928 portrait: Gor'kii perpetually, and self-consciously, skirts the abyss of self-deconstruction, inviting others to dance on the edge with him.

Gor'kii expects from others the same iconoclastic critique that he marshaled against the eponymous subject of his “Lev Tolstoi,” but Chukovskii and other memoirists of Gor'kii are better off associating with him than writing against him. Chukovskii's rebellion (if one can call prescribed objection “rebellious”) consists in but one thing: foregrounding the irony of how difficult it is for anyone but Gor'kii to speak out against Gor'kii. It is Gor'kii who must initiate the process, and Chukovskii can but follow his lead: he mocks not Gor'kii himself, but *others* who unwittingly or incorrectly reinforce the cult of Gor'kii's personality. One can see this dynamic at work in the 1959 version of the portrait,³⁷² which witnessed few other meaningful changes. Unlike the Blok portrait, which witnesses comparatively more edits, Chukovskii's account of

371 Chukovskii states that Gor'kii often listed associates and even near-strangers as wives, sisters, and relatives on official documents such that they could receive special treatment and acquire access to food and other resources from the state. He states explicitly: “It must be said that if we survived those breadless, typhoid-ridden years, then we owe this in large part to our 'kinship' (*nashemy 'rodstvu'*) with Maksim Gor'kii, for whom we all, big and small, then became like a real family (*rodnaia sem'ia*)” (1940 340).

372 This portrait can be found in Chukovskii, *Iz vospominanii*.

Gor'kii remains largely unchanged. However, Chukovskii's rendering of Gor'kii's jubilee is made to contain another, theretofore absent individual, a typesetter from World Literature who finds Gor'kii's "I hate old Russian men" comment to be uproarious. He interprets Gor'kii's outburst as a snide insult to the event's orator: "He said it right to his face: 'My dear friend, I hate you!'" (1959 230). Chukovskii counters this comment with an aside to the reader: he states that Gor'kii's animus towards old Russian men was directed not at the orator but at his "liberal humanism," which was manifested in his cloying praise of Gor'kii's outmoded character. Chukovskii's implication is that Gor'kii is now himself just such an old man, subject to the same inoffensive deference as that which he once critiqued.

Chukovskii's portrait thus provides the multidimensional Gor'kii with a forum in which he can express disgust at the unidimensional institution that he has become. Within the portrait, Gor'kii *himself* "makes space for readers to encounter him in new ways," to use Hutch's words about Strachey's ironizing biographical portraits. Chukovskii passively (yet somehow purposefully) falls into the orbit of that new space, for it is Gor'kii's approval – of Chukovskii's criticism, of his scholarship, and above all his children's poetry – that allows Chukovskii to achieve the multidimensionality denied to him by Soviet cultural power brokers. Edits to the portrait thus not only reflect changes in the way Gor'kii can be represented; they humbly effect the ways in which Chukovskii can become his full self.

Conclusion

More than anyone else in this dissertation, Chukovskii demonstrates the variety of purposes to which literary portraiture's synthetic poetics might be put to use. His early, pre-Revolutionary work in the genre sought to collapse complex literary personalities – by, as I have argued, treating "life *as* works" – so that a novice Russian reader might more easily navigate the complex literary field of the time. His post-Revolutionary portraiture, which treats life and works as more distinct phenomena, would seem to do just the opposite: that is, it renders in a more complex, richly contradictory way those lives that have been all too simplified. More importantly, however, his memoir-portraits from this period finds him constructing not only a literary field, but a vision of his own self – a composite image of the experiences and people that shaped him. In this sense, Chukovskii's work is not much different from that of other Soviet authors who turned to the literary portrait when contributing to the "contemporaries" genre of memoir. However, the fact that Chukovskii outlived so many of his peers – and, as a consequence, had to continually revise his memoirs – makes his portraiture unique. If a portrait gallery is defined primarily as a spatializing intervention into a historical moment, then examining Chukovskii's various portrait galleries bear witness to something else: his historically expedient strategies of self-fashioning. The articulation of these fuller, more complete versions of himself is achieved by the way that he treats his subjects, whom Soviet culture would have had him read unidimensionally. By deconstructing the myths of Aleksandr Blok and Maksim Gor'kii, Chukovskii constructs himself.

Ch. 3.4: Iurii Annenkov's Verbal & Visual Portraits: (De)facing the Russian Writer

In many ways, Iurii Annenkov (1889-1974) resembles other figures profiled in this dissertation. Like Voloshin and Chukovskii, his career and sense of his craft was shaped by a professionalizing trip to Western Europe in his youth; like Khodasevich, he wrote his memoirs as a post-Revolutionary émigré who would never return to his homeland, which he left in 1924. Those memoirs, collected in the two-volume set *Diary of My Meetings: A Cycle of Tragedies* (*Dnevnik moikh vstrech: tsikl tragedii*, 1966) likewise recall Khodasevich and Chukovskii's works in the genre. *Diary* consists of twenty-odd literary portraits of Russian cultural luminaries from the periods that immediately precede and follow the 1917 Revolution. However, these literary portraits of authors, directors, and political figures are interwoven with Annenkov's *visual* portraits of the same. The presence of these images is no coincidence, as Annenkov's primary legacy is an artistic rather than literary one. While living in Russia, Annenkov achieved fame as a graphic artist, illustrator, and theatrical set designer. He achieved renown thanks to his illustrations to Blok's *The Twelve* (1918) and his work as artistic director of the mass spectacle *The Storming of the Winter Palace* (1920). However, portraiture, in the media of paint and pen-and-ink, were arguably his true forte, as his 1922 collection *Portrety* (*Portraits*) demonstrates. It is from this earlier collection that *Diary* draws many of its constituent images.

Annenkov's joint status as a memoir-portraitist and a visual portraitist is a felicitous one for the purposes of this dissertation. The written works I have profiled are typically called *literaturnye portrety* (or merely *portrety*), along with a variety of other appellations – *siluety*, *etiudy*, *ocherki* – that variously index non-literary and specifically visual art forms.³⁷³ Annenkov's work in both media permits a more direct comparison between visual and verbal portraiture, offering a stimulating interart perspective on how best to represent *lichnost'*. Annenkov likewise focuses on many of the same figures – Blok and Gor'kii among them – who occupy pivotal positions in other portraitists' collections. Moreover, by presenting us with a genuine portrait gallery, Annenkov's *Portraits* and *Diary* literalize the privileged metaphor of my dissertation.

At the same time, these interart volumes make holistic interpretations slightly more difficult: even though the sequence of portraits remains vital, the potential primacy of the book's visual materials *over* its verbal materials, or vice versa, presents us with another conceptual variable. Consequently, to explain the full import of Annenkov's oeuvre and evolution as an artist, I will conduct brief, distinct, but ultimately mutually reinforced analyses of both kinds of portraiture. I will speak to Annenkov's aesthetic as a visual and literary portraitist; compare the poetics of *Portraits* and *Diary* to each other; note important changes made to the representative authors' portraits between those two texts; and, finally, discuss how the synthesis of verbal and visual portraiture complicates the “timelessness” that nominally undergirds portraiture as such.

³⁷³ *Ocherk* comes from *fiziologicheskii ocherk*, or “physiological sketch.” The word *ocherk* is almost exclusively a literary genre in modern parlance, but its connections to drawing are more evident when we trace the genre backwards to its origin. The *fiziologicheskii ocherk* was introduced into Russian literary culture in the early 1840s, and is best exemplified by the almanac *Our People, Described from Nature by Russians* (*Nashi, spisannyi s natury russkimi*, 1841) and the Nikolai Nekrasov-edited collection *The Physiology of Petersburg* (*Fiziologiiia Peterburga*, 1845). Both inspiration from the popular French almanac *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840), the title of which (via the participle *peints* – “painted” or “depicted”) demonstrates more clearly than the analogous Russian title the written genre's connected to visual media.

Russian Portraiture from the *Fin-de-siècle* to Early Stalinism

What was the cultural function of Russian portraiture in the first quarter of the twentieth century? In late imperial Russia, portraiture flourished as a social institution, even as it foretold its own looming decline. On the one hand, we have the portraitist Valentin Serov, whose aggregated portraits (alongside those of Il'ia Repin and Konstantin Somov) provide a supremely telling mosaic of the period's cultural, socioeconomic, and political ferment. Serov profiled everyone from the leading lights of the performing arts, to the *nouveaux riches* and industrialists of Russia's ascendant bourgeoisie, to Nicholas II and the royal family. These portraits index their subjects' various kinds of capital (cultural, economic, political – and often combinations thereof), and garnered Serov pride of place in the pre-avant-garde arts scene.³⁷⁴ On the other hand, Sergei Diaghilev's Historical Art Exhibit of Russian Portraits from early 1905 conveyed a sense of social and artistic decline. Ostensibly seeking to draw points of continuity between the current historical moment and the time of Catherine the Great, Diaghilev, Dobuzhinskii, and other *Miriskusniki* assembled a collection eighteenth-century portraits from countryside gentry homes. For certain attendees of the exhibit, however, Diaghilev's project had the opposite effect: it suggested the obsolescence of the nobility, as a class and unified social body, in modern Russian society.³⁷⁵ With the benefit of hindsight, one could conclude that such circumstances likewise foretold the looming obsolescence of portraiture itself, even in the face of Serov's popularity. The genre survived such social upheavals, of course, but the various systems of patronage (royal, aristocratic, bourgeois, etc.) that sustained it in the imperial period were undoubtedly transformed by the 1917 Revolution.

In a wider, art historical sense, portraiture was far from obsolete, and the early twentieth-century Russian and European avant-gardes did not lack for it. Pablo Picasso created many of the Modernist era's best-known contributions to the genre. He repeatedly turned to it in order to work out some of his most pressing aesthetic innovations, from the Primitivism of Gertrude Stein's portrait (1906) to the more aggressive Analytic Cubism of his portrait of Ambrose Vollard (1910). The aesthetic orientation of such works, however, bears few similarities to Serov's light, post-Impressionist touch. Picasso's works – especially those of the Cubist period – reduce the sitter's individual face to a series of generic geometric forms, and generally eschew a verisimilar or otherwise obvious figural resemblance between representation and subject. Nevertheless, such portraits do not abandon the genre's task of *characterizing* the subject³⁷⁶ and registering “the immediacy of the subject's presence.”³⁷⁷ Many portraits of the Russian avant-garde, however, tend more towards the spirit of Picasso's later, Synthetic Cubist phase, in which figural resemblance becomes entirely overwhelmed by the artist's pure play with geometric forms, making immediate recognition of the sitter difficult or even impossible. *Portrait of Matiushin*

374 Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*. See also Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), v. 2, esp. 481-502, for ways in which portraits of the imperial family (which appeared on coins, stamps, trinkets, etc.) interacted with the contemporary market and assertions of political authority. See also Voloshin's comments on Serov and other portraitists from the late imperial period in *Faces of Creativity*, discussed in Ch. 2.4 of this dissertation.

375 Luba Golburt, *The First Epoch: The Eighteenth Century and the Russian Cultural Imagination*, 2014, 5-19.

376 Pierre Daix, “Portraiture in Picasso's Primitivism and Cubism,” in *Picasso and Portraiture*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 254–95, 278.

377 Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Abrams, 1961), 44.

(1913), one of Kazimir Malevich's quintessential pre-Suprematist works, is wholly representative of this trend: formally speaking, it resembles a collage rather than a portrait, and one must actively seek out the features of the subjects face, buried as they are in the composition. One sees why Nikolai Berdiaev believed that the Russian avant-garde project would seem to exclude the human as such from its new, utopian world.³⁷⁸

Much of the Russian avant-garde's interests soon turned to the non-objective, non-figural art whose foundation was laid by, for example, the Rayonist works of Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova and the Suprematist works of Kazimir Malevich. By the early 1920s, the de-personalized, industrial aesthetic of Constructivism had most captured the avant-garde's attention. That said, Serov-style portraiture certainly did not disappear as such: painters such as Mikhail Nesterov and Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin kept it alive. However, as post-Revolutionary portraiture continued to develop, the genre began to focus less on representations of specific people and the individual psychologization or characterization thereof. Generally, many now-famous portraits of the mid-to-late 1920s and early 1930s traded in democratic horizontality, profiling types (workers, peasants, athletes, etc.) whose occupation, rather than the individual sitter's name, came to serve as the painting's implied subject and actual title.³⁷⁹ Representations of identifiable individuals remained alive in portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and well-known political figures. The endlessly imitated work of painter Isaak Brodskii frequently strove for a photographic realism and historical specificity that was reserved for genuine Soviet icons.³⁸⁰

Painted portraiture was further challenged by more avant-garde uses of photography. We see as much in the statements of Aleksandr Rodchenko, an innovator of photomontage and one of the premier photographers of the period. For him, “with the appearance of photographs there [was] no question of a single, immutable portrait” of Lenin. In its pursuit of a more authentic representation of him, there can be no uniquely synthetic image, but only “a representation based on photographs, books and notes...photographs taken of him at work and at rest, archives of his books, writing pads, notebooks, shorthand reports, films, phonograph records.”³⁸¹ The principle Rodchenko advocates here is montage, that quintessential artistic technique of the 1920s, which, at the level of content, further alters the compositional elements of a more Serovian brand of portraiture: the physical accouterments that, in traditional portraiture, designate an identifiable *mise en scène* and help characterize the painting's subject, now take on slightly unreal qualities. They blend with the human form itself and become mechanical prostheses that reduce the human form to mere flesh, as in El Lissitzky's famous self-portrait, which superimposes a hand and

378 See Berdiaev's 1918 essay “The Crisis of Art” (“Krizis iskusstva”), in Nikolai Berdiaev, *Filosofia tvorchestva, kul'tury, i iskusstva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), 409.

379 See E. V Karpova and Anna Laks, eds., *Portret v Rossii: XX vek : iz sobraniia Gosudarstvennogo russkogo muzeia* (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2001) for representative examples of Russian portraiture from the 1920s and early 1930s (and other periods). See also L. S Zinger, *Ocherki teorii i istorii portreta* (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1986). While this source seems ideologically compromised now, Zinger confirms this general trend towards “wide generalization” and away from individual psychologization in artists' representation of workers, a tendency she attributes to the fact that “artists still knew few concrete heroes of physical labor, but were already seeing them, and trying to present their typical appearance (*oblik*)” (241).

380 See Brandon Taylor, “Photo-Painting and the Avant-Garde in Soviet Russia,” *History of Photography* 24, no. 4 (2000): 283–91, esp. 286-8.

381 qtd. in *Ibid.*, 288. Rodchenko makes this statement in his 1928 *LEF* article “Against the Synthetic Portrait, For the Snapshot,” but I would contend that its assertions bears relevance to Annenkov's circumstances in the early 1920s.

compass over the artist's eye.³⁸²

Thus, in the period immediately preceding the appearance of Annenkov's 1922 volume, portraiture – at least as in its pre-Revolutionary manifestation – arguably lost its pride of place in Russian art for historical, commercial, cultural, and formal reasons. The leading artistic and cultural tendencies of the period become de-individualization, de-humanization (in Berdiaev's less charitable idiom), and the supplanting of easel painting by other media. That being said, we should not view the decline of portraiture in such absolute terms. The portrait never disappeared, and many artists (including the aforementioned Nesterov and Petrov-Vodkin, as well as Natan Al'tman, Lev [Leon] Bakst, Boris Grigor'ev, and others) continued to create portraits, both in Soviet Russia and abroad, that exhibited a post-Impressionist, Primitivist, or early Cubist aesthetic, resisting the more aggressively non-figural tendencies adopted by their avant-garde contemporaries. I would argue that Annenkov's portraits clearly engage with – and were widely perceived as engaging with – these avant-garde transformations of portrait genre, and should be interpreted against their backdrop.

Portraits presents itself as a celebration of Annenkov's decade-long work in multiple visual media. It compiles dozens of reproductions of his paintings (in both oil and pen & ink), illustrations, and stray doodles. These various images are accompanied by three pieces written by Evgenii Zamiatin, Mikhail Kuzmin, and the art historian Iurii Babenchikov – the former an artistic manifesto, the latter two appreciative essays. Zamiatin's essay “On Synthetism” is the most pivotal of these, as it labels Annenkov the most pivotal artist of the moment, someone whose style cleverly combines various avant-garde aesthetics into something genuinely new. (We will discuss his essay more explicitly below.) On the whole, the volume specifically privileges Annenkov's portraits of his literary and artistic contemporaries, the luminaries of early twentieth-century Russian culture. Nevertheless, *Portraits* privileges a genre of painting that is increasingly besieged, and profiles numerous individuals who, in aggregate, seem to represent Russian culture of the immediate past. Many poets, writers, and playwrights who made their name in pre-Revolutionary Russian culture populate these pages: Aleksandr Benois and Fedor Sologub peer out behind their glasses, aging and balding; Aleksandr Blok's deathbed portrait concludes the volume.

Yet the aesthetic that Annenkov uses to render many of these individuals is far from decrepit. If anything, *Portraits* presents a lively index of every major development in the visual arts from the previous thirty years, with the aesthetics of French Symbolist graphic design, avant-garde collage, and Russian Cubo-Futurist painting featuring most prominently. Some cultural commentators perceived this visual melange to be a sign of Annenkov's stalled artistic progress, an aesthetic signifier of obsolescence entirely appropriate for a fading genre.³⁸³ On the other hand, as Zamiatin's manifesto asserts, such syncretism makes Annenkov *the* most contemporary and pathbreaking artist of his moment. Whether one evaluates *Portraits'* conflict – between old

382 On the meat-machine distinction (and its application to El Lissitzky's self-portrait) in director Sergei Eisenstein's thought, see Anne Nesbet, *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 44-46.

383 Ivanov-Razumnik, for example, characterized Il'ia Erenburg as a “scribbler” who could “publish several scores (or hundreds?) of novels, short stories, and tales every year or two” because “every work is written in a new manner, but following some ready model.” He described him as an epigone of the Silver Age, and said that someone who enjoys Annenkov's paintings would be likely to enjoy Erenburg's works as well. qtd. in Ronen, *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, 72.

and new, between conflicting artistic styles and genres – positively or negatively, this dialectical feature remains a vital and salient feature of the collection.

Within the framework of this dissertation, such issues bear mentioning vis-a-vis portraiture's orientation towards individual *lichnost'* and collective identity. Consequently, two modifications of Zamiatin's laudatory perspective on Annenkov's aesthetic bear mentioning here: first, that Annenkov quite consciously indexes various avant-garde aesthetic tendencies (Cubism, Futurism, montage) in order to make a point about the resilience of the individual in the post-Revolutionary age; and second, that the larger structure of Annenkov's volume pits the visual material against its accompanying essays, particularly Zamiatin's. This conflict, in many ways, emerges from the problematic interaction between the static/synthetic image and the syntagmatic word – or, rather, the way that portraiture (of either the visual or verbal variety) contends with the problem of time. In the following section, I will elaborate the peculiar aesthetic exhibited in Annenkov's volume, showing how his portraits index and thus telescope some thirty years of artistic developments, while – thanks to the “timeless” essence of portraiture – permitting his subjects to overcome the anti-humanist tendencies at the heart of the avant-garde aesthetic. Nevertheless, Annenkov's method of figural representation privileges a particular kind of defacement that restores the violence of time to this timeless genre, a dynamic that is systematically reinforced by the wider structure of *Portraits*. The relationship of art history to time, and the survival of the portrait – whether verbal or visual – in the aftermath of the avant-garde thus becomes represent the primary topics of this chapter.

“Marked by One and the Same Sign – Revolution”: Annenkov's Visual Aesthetic

In previous chapters, I have described the literary portrait as a synthetic genre: it seeks to represent individual *lichnost'* by juxtaposing prudently selected episodes from various periods of a subject's life; once compiled into a “gallery,” the individual portrait tends to acquire a larger conceptual unity amidst its often diverse subjects. Such terminology is particularly pertinent in regard to contemporary discussions of Iurii Annenkov's portraits: his commentators consistently labeled the very form of his art as “synthetic.” Evgenii Zamiatin's Neo-Realist manifesto “On Synthetism” (which was first published in Annenkov's *Portraits*) labels Annenkov as the premier visual artist of the moment, since his style dialectically combines Realism (the thesis), Symbolism (its antithesis), and Futurism (a provocative but merely exploratory synthesis). This peculiar combination of aesthetic tendencies, as other commentators on Annenkov's works have pointed out, stems from his unique blend of influences. He emerged during the height of the Russian avant-garde and worked with many of its leading figures, and his works routinely reference (albeit in a less radical form) Cubism's splitting of the human face into distinct, flattened planes. However, Annenkov also studied with the late post-Impressionist French artists Maurice Denis and Félix Vallotton (the latter, significantly, providing the woodblock print portraits for Remy de Gourmont's *Livres des masques*). Indeed, one might define Annenkov's general style as lying somewhere between Futurist severity (with its preference for sharp geometric planes), and an older, more Symbolist warmth (with its preference for fluid, organic forms).

Even as it synthesizes these two seemingly antithetical aesthetics, Annenkov's portraiture remains staunchly beholden to figuration as such, just as his subjects remain staunchly

individuated and identifiable. Beyond the mere fact of figural resemblance, however, it is his subjects' force of personality that permits them to overcome the avant-garde trappings that would otherwise squeeze them out of the composition. That being said, Annenkov does not counter the buzzing energy of avant-garde portraiture by simply retreating to the comparatively sparse aesthetic exhibited in Vallotton's woodblock prints. While Annenkov's portraits do indeed reference Vallotton's stark fields of white and black, his compositions are far busier, far more crowded; some contain nods to the compositional dynamics of Cubist collages. Ultimately, Annenkov's style lies somewhere between art nouveau and the avant-garde. He achieves this synthesis through his subtle treatment of contours, which permits him (as per Zamiatin) to index and overcome both of these aesthetics. As Aleksis Rannit notes in the introduction to the second volume of Annenkov's memoirs, his portraits' "interlacing cubist patterns" and "Vallottonian masses" are overshadowed by the line, which becomes "the servant of human expressiveness."³⁸⁴ In other words, the line is both the truest instrument of Annenkov's synthesis and the foremost means of preserving his subject's *lichnost'*.

The lines in his portrait of Akhmatova (Fig. 5 below; 25)³⁸⁵ both manifest the dialectical conflict between these opposing movements and (as per Rannit) overcome them. The bangs and the hair that cover Akhmatova's left ear swoop in a curvilinear fashion, half-suggesting the arabesques of Art Nouveau and perhaps Aubrey Beardsley, another *fin-de-siècle* savant of the pen-and-ink medium. These contours compete with a series of severe, rectilinear lines that recall avant-garde aesthetics: a ninety-degree angle suggests Akhmatova's collarbone; the ends of her bangs end sharply and uniformly, as if marked by an invisible ruler; a straight line bisects the swooping curls of hair adjacent to her ear, and even disrupts their continuity, as a characteristically Cubist distortion of the human face might. Against this dialectical conflict, Annenkov includes subtle yet vital lines that do not conform to either the rectilinear or curvilinear types. The stray, disorganized, wavy hairs on the back of Akhmatova's head and the base of her neck peek out from an otherwise precise and consistent field of black, much as Anna Karenina's tiny yet irrepressible curls disrupt her otherwise managed coiffure. Lines that quietly deviate from their surrounding patterns are a staple of Annenkov's technique: they thwart obvious art historical encodings, disrupt conventions, just as Annenkov's individual subjects peek out from behind forms that might overwhelm or erase them.

Lines likewise represent a characterological battleground in Annenkov's portrait of Zamiatin (Fig. 6 below; 17), and make for a playful exploration of avant-garde figural technique. The left side of the author's face indexes a more geometric, avant-garde aesthetic: his brow seems too regular, as if it had been made with a ruler and compass, while the wrinkles on his cheek become increasingly rectilinear. At their extreme, they begin to suggest geometric Suprematist forms, although their overall place within the composition remains elusive: the wrinkles on his cheeks extend *beyond* the confines of his face, bisecting (and, as in Akhmatova's portrait, disrupting the continuity of) other lines, such as those that describe his neck and shirt collar. The child who hovers over Zamiatin's left shoulder, and whose face is similarly bisected

384 Aleksis Rannit, "A Note on Annenkov's Drawings," in *Dnevnik moikh vstrech: tsikl tragedii*, by Iurii Annenkov (New York: Mezhdunarodnoe literaturnoe sodruzhestvo, 1966), 5–11, 9–10.

385 All portraits are copied from Iurii Annenkov, *Portrety* (Royal Oak, MI: Strathcona, 1971). In-text numbers indicate the page on which the respective image can be found in *Portraits*.



Fig. 5 – A. A. Akhmatova (1921) by Iurii Annenkov



Fig. 6 – E. I. Zamiatin (1921) by Iurii Annenkov

by these cheek lines, draws a contrast with Zamiatin himself. This boy's face is defined by competing planes: it is split into four incompatible sections by a series of surgical dotted lines that become all the more macabre beside the boy's blankly cheerful demeanor. The child's pointed two-dimensionality magnifies the incongruity of the sections that make up his visage: he lacks the organic wholeness and depth of character that subjects of conventional Cubist portraiture still manage to achieve. Zamiatin's roguish essence becomes all the more vital alongside this child's flattened face, and asserts the primacy of individual personality over the potentially anti-human results of avant-garde figuration.

A final repurposing of quintessential avant-garde devices is worth commenting on here: the words that hover above Zamiatin's right shoulder. Russian avant-garde paintings used such floating lettering for various purposes;³⁸⁶ here, Annenkov uses these pointedly English words to index not only Zamiatin's famous Anglophilia, but also newsprint, an essential material in avant-garde collage whose usage Annenkov lightly ironizes here. Unlike Cubist collages, Annenkov's pen-and-ink *representation* of a newspaper cannot effect Cubist collages' material-driven "dialectic between art and reality."³⁸⁷ Furthermore, as this is not *actual* newsprint glued to a canvas, the work possesses no *physical* sedimentation of distinct surfaces. This permits the newspaper and rhomboid-patterned wallpaper to mingle seamlessly in Annenkov's composition.

Such references to newspaper and wallpaper seem comparatively banal within the avant-garde tradition, which, to cite just the Russian example, provocatively used such everyday objects as the material basis for artists' books.³⁸⁸ However, this banality is precisely the point. Neither a floating signifier, nor an irreverent denial of a realist *mise en scène*, nor a shocking absorption of non-art into art, Annenkov's gesture towards such materials instead recalls the practice of using newsprint as a base for wallpaper (preserved to this day, for example, in Akhmatova House Museum in Petersburg). Annenkov demonstrates a different, more pragmatic repurposing of *byt*, one that characterizes the Civil War-era scarcity in which most of *Portraits'* constituent works were produced: newspaper can become wallpaper, or – in the case of the self-portrait that initiates Annenkov's volume (Fig. 7 below; 5) – the rolling papers for a cigarette(!). In other words, avant-garde efforts to transform everyday life take place against a more immediate and deeply human struggle to maintain the basic material substrate of life itself.³⁸⁹

As Kuzmin and Babenchikov's essays in *Portraits* point out, this orientation towards *byt*

386 Primitivist-era Mikhail Larionov used such lettering for shock value, upsetting painterly conventions and inserting folk language into his works, and Cubo-Futurist-era Malevich treats such lettering as pure visual device that liberates language from its communicative shackles. See Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863-1922* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

387 Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art*, 69-70.

388 *A Trap for Judges (Sadok sudei)*, 1910), one of the first manifestos of Russian Futurism, was famously printed on cheap wallpaper. *Gaust chaba* (1919), Varvara Stepanova's fusion of watercolors and Zaumist poetry, was made with newsprint bound into codex form.

389 This banal repurposing of the newspaper might likewise be juxtaposed to its more pronounced (anti-)commercial function in Cubist collage. Picasso selected particular newspaper clippings for his collages not only so that they might produce visual puns, but so that they might "retain their identity as cultural commodities" and thereby serve as critique or ironic appreciation of the socioeconomic milieu that produced them. Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 158. Annenkov's use of the newspaper, on the other hand, does not permit Zamiatin's portrait to retain any actual content (most of its words are illegible and unidentifiable), and gestures towards material scarcity rather than a surfeit of commodification – putting him at odds not only with the European avant-garde in general, but with the artistic anxieties of early Soviet Russia as well.



Fig. 7 – *Self-Portrait (Avtoportret, 1920)* by Iurii Annenkov

(and its relationships with art on the one hand, and the human on the other) represents the ultimate synthesis at work in Annenkov's oeuvre. Contra Zamiatin, who sees Annenkov's fusion of styles as the culmination of a dialectic, these authors suggest that Annenkov's aesthetic is merely a fluid and pragmatic one. Babenchikov in particular underscores this fact by comparing Annenkov with Vallotton. He notes that the latter's lines always return to the “central, foundational spot (*piatno*) of the composition, thereby concentrating the drawing” and “ignoring its details”; Annenkov, on the other hand, lets his lines “slide along the profile of a face, the zigzags of a landscape, or the corners of an *intérieur*, to capture every detail, every deviation from the axis.”³⁹⁰ In “an era torn to pieces by wars, global catastrophes, and revolution,” Annenkov's line is a *recuperative* one, straying from its (Symbolist) center and reassembling the shards of humanity shattered by (Futurist) bombs; it is *redemptive*, in a meta-artistic sense, “offering a decisive exit from Russian painting's dead end into which abstract art guided it.”³⁹¹ Thus, in both form and content, Annenkov's portraits redeem the human, the individual, that is threatened by contemporary history and aesthetics alike.

And yet, Annenkov's mediation of avant-garde technique and humanist subject matter might not represent the redemptive triumph that Babenchikov thinks. This struggle for the human remains incomplete, as suggested by of the most significant motifs of the volume: the absent, distorted, or obscured eye. Annenkov ostentatiously marks the non-inclusion of his own eye in the self-portrait that begins the collection (see Fig. 7 above): the blank space stares back at us from almost the very center of the composition. Such absences continue to emerge throughout the collection: Gor'kii's right eye (nearly pierced by a corner of Malevich's *Red Square*) recedes into blank white space, a kind of inverse shadow (Fig. 8 below; 33); Sologub and Khodasevich's left eyes are obscured by the blankly reflective surface of a glasses lens (Figs. 9 and 10 below; 105 and 109); Arthur Lourie's right eye is replaced by a series of sharp geometric shapes (Fig. 11 below; 107). This motif even recurs in the minor, cartoon-like images that simply populate otherwise empty spaces throughout the volume.

The trope of the missing eye does not belong solely to Annenkov's portraiture, of course: it dominated Russian and European Modernism, becoming at once a metaphor for art's capacity to forge new, shocking modes of perception, à la Buñuel and Eisenstein, and an all-too-real trace of violence and war, as in Isaak Babel's oeuvre. As Anne Nesbet suggests, the destruction of the eye represents the most potent, and most Modernist, kind of defacement: it renders as mere flesh that part of the body which, on the one hand, is most closely associated with individual identity, and which, on the other, “should be” the most machine-like.³⁹²

Annenkov's particular brand of defacement is not as violent as his contemporaries', as it operates on the principle of elision rather than destruction: his wandering, nominally all-embracing line simply fails to render the totality of his subjects' features. One could argue, however, that such an elision is all the more grotesque within the conventions of the portrait genre, which achieves a kind of totality through timelessness. A typical painted portrait indexes various character traits and separate moments into an aesthetically unified whole that strikes one (nearly) instantaneously, providing a characterological assessment “in which the subject is

390 M. V Babenchikov, “Iurii Annenkov,” in *Portrety*, by Iurii Annenkov (Royal Oak, MI: Strathcona, 1971), 59–112, 108.

391 *Ibid.*, 111–12.

392 Nesbet, *Savage Junctures*, 25–8.

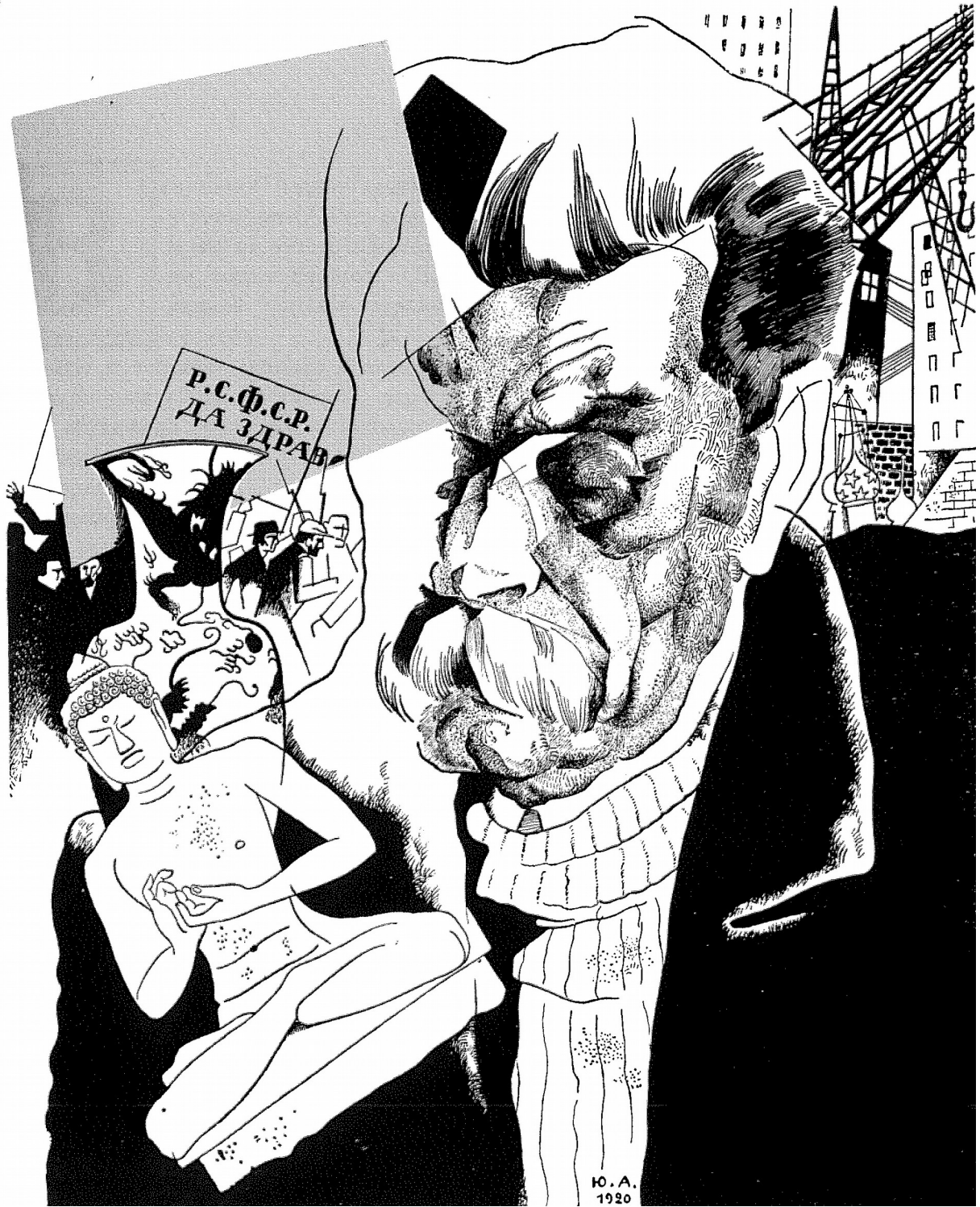


Fig. 8 – *Maksim Gor'kii* (1920) by Iurii Annenkov



Fig. 9 – *F. K. Sologub* (1921) by Iurii Annenkov



Fig. 10 – *V. F. Khodasevich* (1921) by Iurii Annenkov



Fig. 11 – *A. S. Lur'e* (1917) by Iurii Annenkov

released from temporal contingencies.”³⁹³ One could argue that portraitists enact and erase (and ask the audience to ignore) a certain kind of violence done to *time itself*: they privilege a pregnant moment in their subjects' biographical development to the exclusion of other moments, fixing them in a pose beyond which they never change or age – an impression which is undone only by direct comparison of an individual's portraits from different periods. Annenkov's incomplete yet otherwise verisimilar reproductions of his contemporaries' visages could be said to reverse this trend, for defacement is the work of time itself, as perhaps suggested by the preface to *Portraits*:

Но, собранные вместе, портреты неожиданно приобрели для меня значение итога моих личных переживаний за последние годы. И если иные изображенные мною люди запечатлели себя в истории наших дней, а иные обречены на безвестность, то все они без изъятия отмечены одним и тем-же знаком – революцией, – и все они служат мне живым напоминанием о тех трагедиях и надеждах, падениях и подъемах, путем которых нам суждено было пройти вместе, бок-о-бок, – друзьям и врагам одинаково. (11)

But gathered together, I felt that the portraits acquired meaning as the sum of my personal experiences in recent years. And if some of the people drawn by me imprinted themselves upon the history of our days, and others were condemned to obscurity, then they all, without exception, were marked by one and the same sign – revolution; and they all serve for me as a living reminder about those tragedies and hopes, the collapses and ascents, the path of which we were fated to pass through together, shoulder to shoulder – friends and enemies alike.

The meaning of each individual portrait, and the meaning that accrues between portraits, pivots around a single historical event: the 1917 Revolution. Annenkov's figural expression (*otmecheny odnim i tem-zhe znakom – revoliutsiei*) is not syntactically or stylistically atypical, but given his volume's repeated defacing of his subjects, one could read these words in Biblical light: each of his subjects is in some way *marked*, à la Cain, by a historical event that impresses itself on the most vital feature of their physiognomy. If portraiture strives for timeless representation, then Annenkov's use of partial defacement, coupled with the subtly allusive content of *Portraits'* preface, suggests the violent return of time, or, more precisely, history. Thus, I would argue that Annenkov's portraiture does not merely catalog the recent artistic developments that threaten to make portraiture obsolete; it does so by marking that violence on the most human part of the human face, and rhetorically tying that act of marking to a historical event. Ironically, this makes portraiture the most essential, characteristic art of its time period: where better to record the traumatic passage of time than a genre that inherently seeks to efface it?

“One Can No Longer Look at Another Living Face”: The Architecture of *Portraits*

As I have stated in previous chapters, literary portrait galleries often refrain from a conventional

393 Wendorf, *The Elements of Life*, 16; see 13-18 for a useful summation of twentieth-century, interart-oriented discussions of temporality in visual and verbal media.

literary historical narrative, and instead strive for a more spatial or topographical poetics. Given the fact that Annenkov's visual portraiture purposely includes the (particularly violent) traces of historical time in a genre that typically eschews them, we might reasonably ask whether his *Portraits* likewise goes against the grain and produces a kind of narrative via the sequence of its constituent entries. Such a question is worth asking, but must be asked in a different way, for the volume is defined by two different media – the word and the image – whose dialectic confrontation scrambles the time-space binary that I have been heretofore employing. In other words, the volume's architecture is not defined merely by the sequence of its constituent visual works, or the volume's three essays; rather, it is determined by the interaction between the two media. To explore this topic, we must make recourse to interpretative devices from art history and the history of the book.

Annenkov's *Portraits* might be defined as a more conservative entry in the history of artists' books, a peculiar genre whose poetics and history has been memorably traced by Johanna Drucker in *The Century of Artists' Books*. In this work, she establishes a now-codified division between genuine artist's books on the one hand, and simple illustrated books or so-called *livres d'artistes* on the other. The former category generally implies “a book created as an original work of art, rather than a preexisting work,” that typically has a limited audience and print run; the latter is generally a “publishing enterprise” that can *contain* original works of art but does not generally “[interrogate] the conceptual or material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interest, or production activities,” and consequently appeals to a wider audience.³⁹⁴

On the surface, *Portraits* would seem better suited to the latter category (especially when considered alongside the contemporary, foundational formal innovations made in Mayakovsky, Rodchenko, and others' artists' books, which largely sought to overcome the Symbolist *livre d'artise* tradition).³⁹⁵ However, Drucker does discuss the possibility of the book as a conceptual exhibition space for visual works (or ephemeral performances) that had no formal exhibition as such. The difference here seems to be some degree of self-consciousness about the book format, such as concern for the conceptual implications of the book's sequence, which would distinguish it from earlier *livres d'artistes* that reflect, stoke, and extend market interests in visual media, which makes them “products, rather than visions,” in Drucker's words.³⁹⁶ The vision that drives Annenkov's *Portraits* and provides the work with its structure is a simple one, but it reinforces the same principle as his avant-garde-indexing and defacement-oriented portraiture: the persistence (often a violent persistence) of time in an otherwise static representation. This becomes apparent when we examine the sequence of *Portraits*' constituent images alongside its accompanying essays, and the various conceptions of time, space, and sequence that they prescribe.

The point where *Portraits*' visual and verbal component come into the most direct

394 Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 2004), 2-4.

395 Nina Gurianova, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Russian Avant-Garde* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 149. For other useful accounts of developments in Russian artists' books, see Gerald Janecek, *The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-Garde Visual Experiments, 1900-1930* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Susan P. Compton, ed., *The World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books, 1912-16* (London: British Museum Publications, 1978); and Margit Rowell, ed., *The Russian Avant-Garde Book, 1910-1934* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

396 Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, 5. On the artist's books as conceptual exhibition space, see 320-332, and for the book's interaction; on the interaction of word and image in the book's production of sequence, see 257-285.

conflict is the case of Aleksandr Blok's deathbed portrait (Fig. 12 below; 163) and Zamiatin's "On Synthetism." Both are exceptional pieces in the volume. "On Synthetism," the first essay in *Portraits*, reads like an aesthetic manifesto, one that takes Annenkov's works as an exemplary artistic trend, which distinguishes it from Kuzmin and Babenchikov's more appreciative and detailed pieces. Blok's portrait – significantly, the very last in the volume – distinguishes itself from the work's other pieces not only by virtue of its death mask-like status; it is formally and compositionally distinct from the other pieces as well. Unlike the majority of the volume's lively, three-quarter profile portraits that often seem to be staring back at the viewer, Blok's face is in a stark profile, his eyes closed. This feature of the work is highly symbolic, as the estimable art historian Meyer Schapiro's semiotic analysis of frontal/three-quarter faces vs. profiles makes clear:

The profile face is detached from the viewer and belongs with the body in action (or in an intransitive state) in a space shared with other profiles on the surface of the image. It is, broadly speaking, like the grammatical form of the third person, the impersonal 'he' or 'she' with its concordantly inflected verb; while the face turned outwards is credited with intentness, a latent or potential glance directed to the observer, and corresponds to the role of 'I' in speech, with its complementary 'you'. It seems to exist both for us and for itself in a space virtually continuous with our own, and is therefore appropriate to the figure as a symbol or as a carrier of a message.³⁹⁷

This distinction is important, but must be tweaked somewhat for the context of *Portraits*. Schapiro is speaking largely about medieval illustrations of Biblical events. In these, certain figures, endowed with greater divine providence and symbolic meaning (Jesus, Moses, etc.) face the viewer, standing out against a crowd of less important individuals in profile. Such circumstances have been reversed in Annenkov's *Portraits*, where the majority of the figures are rendered in a three-quarter-profile, "I-you" dialog with the reader, while the exceptionally in-profile Blok is already, and merely, a "he." Blok occupies a different, possibly more sacred and tragic space, that of the absolute past, which is defined precisely by a *lack* of action. Moreover, the page axis has changed: as in previous portraits, the Russian and French titles are located underneath the image, and their bottom-to-top (rather than right-to-left) orientation signal to us that we should rotate the book to see Blok's face in its original, horizontal orientation. The absolute distinction of this image from those that precede it violates a pattern, a subdued kind of sequence which *Portraits'* readers likely did not notice when flipping through its pages. In a book of lively images, this deathbed portrait evinces a blunt temporal violence – the unmistakable, irrevocable event-ness of death – akin to, but more fatal than, that found in Annenkov's other defaced compositions.

The ultimate position of Blok's portrait in the volume is significant, not least because of the way that Zamiatin's verbal text interacts with, and attempts to shape our response to, it. Many (though certainly not all) of *Portraits'* constituent images are conditioned by or paired with a written reference to them in one of the three essays. The nominal *raison d'être* of the volume's

397 Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures. On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 38-9. See also Wendorf, *The Elements of Life*, 80 for a discussion of conceptual space vis-a-vis frontal and profile portraits.



Le poète Alexandre Blok sur son lit de mort

А. Блок в гробу

Fig. 12 – *A. Blok on his Deathbed (A. Blok v grobu, 1921)* by Iurii Annenkov;
reproduced in vertical orientation as it appears in *Portraits*

existence, these portraits assume a banally illustrative, secondary, and supporting function when interspersed among others' statements about Annenkov's aesthetic. In this sense, Zamiatin, Kuzmin, and Babenchikov's portraits are the most typical ones in the volume: the visage of each appears on the page prior to that on which the essay actually begins. That visage, created by Annenkov's hand, designates both the author of the given essay and ratifies the content and aesthetic judgments within that essay. Similarly, many works in *Portraits* appear in close proximity (e.g. on the opposite or subsequent page) to the place where they are mentioned or discussed by those authors, or even. Within the book format, they appear to be called into existence *by* language, even if they are in fact the original *raison d'être* for that language. Structurally speaking, the verbal tends to dominate the visual in *Portraits*.

Blok's portrait violates this pattern, however. It appears 123 pages after the place where it is first mentioned, in "On Synthetism," a fact of which Zamiatin takes note. He states that this is "not a portrait of the dead Blok, but of death in general – his, her, your death" and further suggests that Blok's visage is placed last in the volume because "after this face, smelling of decay, one can no longer look at another living face."³⁹⁸ These are the very last words of Zamiatin's "On Synthetism," an odd state of affairs for an essay that celebrates the forward march of aesthetic progress. Just as Blok's morbid image would truncate the sequence of portraits, it truncates Zamiatin's language production as well. It is one of the few works in *Portraits* that refuses the hail of the essayists' language, that is banished to the end of the volume to stunt its power. Its ultimate place testifies to this visual work's potential power to overcome the otherwise structurally dominant force of the verbal.

Zamiatin's account of this image's place in *Portraits*' structure seems contradictory: it reads Blok's portrait paradigmatically (in that Zamiatin suggests that Blok's death represents *something more* than an individual death, and should hence be the volume's climax) and pragmatically (in that Zamiatin suggests its morbidity would disturb the volume's integrity elsewhere, and the reader should hence encounter it last). It perhaps even confounds the larger argument of Zamiatin's manifesto "On Synthetism." As per Zamiatin's dialectical reading of Annenkov's style, any individual image in *Portraits* nominally contains within itself synthesized trace elements of every recent development in Russian culture. In other words, it indexes a variety of historically distinct phenomena within a single frozen moment, spatializing time in precisely the same way that portraiture telescopes biography. However, any individual image within Annenkov's volume is still one among many, and its placement among other images cannot but produce an implicit sequence – one that might prompt us to reassess our response to any discrete portrait. Thus, time and space compete for dominance within the volume's poetics.

Blok's image thus represents a kind of quandary not only for Zamiatin, but for *Portraits* as a whole. Zamiatin must simultaneously downplay and exaggerate the importance of Blok in the volume: Blok's image is comparatively sparse and free of the synthetic energy that accompanies most of the other portraits, making for a dry coda to what is otherwise a celebration of Annenkov's stylistic innovations. Similarly, Blok himself is listed by Zamiatin among the exemplary adherents of this new trend, Synthetism – and is yet presented in *Portraits* as a corpse, an end rather than a beginning. Zamiatin would have any of *Portraits*' individual images represent the most recent, the most novel synthesis of a dialectical progression that might produce a new mode of artistic production; however, by virtue of its placement in the volume,

398 Evgenii Zamiatin, "O sintetizme," in *Portrety*, by Iurii Annenkov (Royal Oak, MI: Strathcona, 1971), 15–40, 40.

the ultimate position of Blok – who is wholly defined by his gaunt deathbed features – suggests a chilling finality. Any interpretation of Blok's portrait cannot but simultaneously account for its exceptional qualities and ultimate position in the volume. To accommodate these variables is to arrive at a far more conservative conclusion than Zamiatin's, one that is by no means original: that Blok represents the end of a historical era and cultural epoch. It cannot but throw a pall over the images and statements that precede it: *Portraits* initially presents itself as a timeless space, but Blok's visage transforms it into a preemptive memorial for individuals who have weathered the crucible of 1917 more or less intact, but who will one day meet the same fate. Thus, while his individual portraits might telescope and index time, signifying progress, the sequence of those portraits achieve the opposite effect, signifying finality.

“The Weight of Memories”: Visual and Verbal Portraiture in *Diary of My Meetings*

Such is the poetics of the 1922 *Portraits*, which, unlike collections of purely literary portraiture, is governed by the interaction of word and image. This interaction obtains easily in the cases of Kuzmin and Babenchikov's appreciative treatments of the artist's works, but becomes tense when Zamiatin's dialectical, forward-looking essay clashes with Blok's deathly, backward-facing (quite literally, compositionally so!) image. Annenkov's portraits of his contemporaries reappeared in his 1966 *Diary of My Meetings* under different circumstances that engendered a different kind of interaction between the visual and the verbal – not least because the verbal texts in question are not manifestos or appreciations but memoir-portraits. As discussed in Ch. 3.3, someone like Chukovskii, who repeatedly returns to and re-edits previously published portraiture, produces works that are seemingly integral but, upon closer, comparative scrutiny, reveal themselves to be palimpsests: inclusions and elisions impress themselves upon the works, reflecting the pragmatics of cultural adaptation – for author and subject alike – in different periods of Russian and Soviet history. Annenkov's literary portraiture, conceived and published as an integral volume, does not present us with the opportunity to dig through the metaphorical sedimentation of literary works. However, examining the way that the 1966 *Diary's* memoir-portraits integrate Annenkov's visual portraiture (that is, works previously compiled in the 1922 *Portraits*) not only gives us license to further consider the verbal-visual variables of the portrait genre; it also permits us to reflect on Annenkov's peculiar custodianship of Russian literary culture, effected by his twofold outsideness thereto – as an émigré memoirist and visual artist.

As a work, *Diary* is entirely Annenkov's own, unlike *Portraits*, whose internal dialectic between image and word, artist and essayists, gives it a looser, more meandering feel. Nevertheless, the structure of *Diary* is not often structurally meaningful, or consistent. It is divided into two volumes, the first of which generally (though not exclusively) contains memoir-based profiles of Russian writers who rose to prominence, at home or abroad, in the first third of the twentieth century. The second volume generally (though, again, not exclusively) examines a motley pantheon of participants in early twentieth-century Russian theater, visual arts, and politics. Inexplicably, Boris Pasternak is in the second rather than the first, more literary-focused text. Interspersed throughout *Diary's* memoir-portraits are the visual portraits that Annenkov had published forty-four years prior. However, Annenkov added many new portraits to the 1922 gallery, many of which he created after emigrating from the Soviet Union. Curiously, prominent works from *Portraits* – the images of Akhmatova and Gor'kii, for example – have been replaced

by exploratory sketches or rougher variants thereof. (More on these substitutions in a moment.) Gone, however, are the stray doodles that periodically interrupt (or even ironically undercut) the essays, for this is a more sober and serious work, as befits a solemn collection of reminiscences. *Diary* thus presents itself as a fuller, more complete, and more serious version of *Portraits*; it simply trades out others' appreciative essays for Annenkov's own memoirs.

Annenkov's preface to *Diary* confirms that the book had a different function than his earlier gallery. In this preface, Annenkov describes “the weight of memories” that “oppress us” and must consequently be dealt with: our “cranium opens to new perceptions,” so that current “sights and sounds become clearer.” One could argue that this statement tweaks the formula espoused in *Portraits*' preface: bodily destruction is here presented not as a trace of historical trauma, but as a recurrent process enacted in the name of self-preservation and estrangement. However, to the types of “recollections (*vospominaniia*) that are deposited in the surface of our memory (*pamiat'*), encumbering it,” Annenkov juxtaposes those that “organically complete and enrich our individual life (*lichnaia zhizn'*).” This second category of memory includes those that we “do not relinquish or throw away; we only *share* them” (21; Annenkov's emphasis). *Diary*'s focus is thus a more modest one: the text pivots around the individual who voluntarily shares historical experience, rather than – as per the preface to *Portraits* – the historical event of the Revolution that imprints itself upon a passive populace, marking them forever.

Annenkov's literary portraiture is frequently sparser and more lapidary than that of Khodasevich and Chukovskii, with whom Annenkov shares many of the same biographical subjects and concerns.³⁹⁹ Unlike many of their synthetic memoir-portraits that suture together various themes and moments, Annenkov's pieces treat his subjects' biographies in a more traditional, chronological way: most of his portraits begin by recounting Annenkov's first encounter with someone, and end with him learning of their death. At the same time, as the preface says, these portraits do not strive “to be an objective examination of [the authors'] oeuvres, or biographical sketches”; linear as they might be, their discrete segments seem to bear little relationship or obvious connection to one another, unlike Chukovskii and Khodasevich's portraits, which consist of nonsequential but thematically contiguous episodes that build towards a particular theme. The segments of Annenkov's individual portraits can often be briefer as well, sometimes as short as four or five lines of text, and they often pivot around an anecdote or particularly representative quote. In other words, the lapidary technique that Khodasevich employs as a climax to his Gor'kii portrait (in which a brief but rich exchange between the two figures acts as a coda to the work; see the end of Ch. 3.2) becomes an omnipresent feature of Annenkov's portraiture: he quotes his subjects' epithets and personal aphorisms with far greater frequency. Thus, even if Annenkov's portraits treat biographical time more linearly and thus remain conservative entries within the tradition of literary portraiture, they nevertheless take to a formal extreme the genre's synthetic ethos: the reader is asked to calibrate many short, minor episodes into a coherent whole.

Although many of the sections of Annenkov's portraits are half a page or shorter, they often provide space for longer anecdotes as well, highlighting “behind-the-scenes” aspects of their subjects' lives that might otherwise be lost to the oblivion of history. Apropos of this fact,

399 There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. His twelve-page portrait of Mikhail Zoshchenko consists primarily of citation from others' works about him, from a Zamiatin article to the published transcript of Andrei Zhdanov's denunciation of Zoshchenko at a 1946 meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Annenkov, on the whole, is more inclined to directly cite other people's texts than the other portraitists of this dissertation.

we should note *Diary's* 1966 publication date, which places it in a historical moment when interest in Silver Age culture was common both to the American academy and to the Russian émigré readership. In the 1950s and 60s, writers' and poets' collected works were published by a variety of American presses, as were numerous memoirs about them, particularly under the aegis of the New York-based Chekhov Press. *Diary*, which was put out by the New York-based Interlanguage Associates, numbers amongst such works. This alignment was fortuitous: émigré authors who left Russia after 1917 were of the appropriate age to write their memoirs, and scholars' high premium on biographical context led them to consult such works, and even create translations thereof – including, again, Annenkov's *Diary*.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, this confluence of familiarity and novelty, spread across readerships and national boundaries, presents an important factor in the way that Annenkov chooses to present his subjects.

The portrait of Gor'kii, which initiates the first book of *Diary*, is representative in this regard. Annenkov dwells on quieter, more pensive and even disenchanting moments in the writer's life. As in Chukovskii's portrait of the author, such moments make for an ironic contrast with the sloganeering, public Gor'kii cultivated by the Socialist Realist imperatives of Soviet culture. Annenkov, in fact, pointedly disabuses his reader of the notion that Gor'kii subscribes to Socialist Realism as an aesthetic or philosophical system. In keeping with Annenkov's preference for small, quiet moments rather than encyclopedic biography, many of the portrait's segments are no more than half a page, and often end with an illustrative quip uttered by their subject. The work memorably concludes with Gor'kii's two-word response to how he would label his time in Soviet Russia: “Maximally bitter” (*Maksimal'no gor'kim*) (55). At the same time, such lapidary moments can give way to digressions and longer stories that demonstrate, apropos of both *Portraits* and *Diary's* prefaces' concern for shared experience, some of the curious connections that emerged between writers that might disappear if we think of them too much as individuals. In such moments, Gor'kii is not the portrait's subject, but rather its pretense for the recording and sharing of history.

Such is the case where Gor'kii's remarks about the human need for basic necessities gives way to an exploration of War Communism-era scarcity, and to a fascinating account of H.G. Wells' 1920 tempestuous visit to Russia (34-9). At a House of Arts meeting over which Gor'kii nominally presides (he here seems a taciturn figure, and his name hardly appears in the passage), Wells is besieged by Viktor Shklovskii and Aleksandr Amfiteatrov. They angrily berate him over his belief that the suffering of Soviet Russia stems from the flaws of Marxism, rather than from the English blockade that was then in effect.⁴⁰¹ This episode, and others like it in *Diary*, are important not only for their committed recording of isolated moments that might otherwise be lost to history, but for the license they give Annenkov to group together *visual* portraits (of Shklovskii and Wells, in this case) that were otherwise sequentially and conceptually distant from one another in the 1922 *Portraits*. Their visages do not merely bear the mark of history; they represent a particular constellation of personae whom one cannot view in isolation from one another. Perhaps in the darkest, most dour moments of his life, a “bitter” Gor'kii is a more

400 Translated excerpts from certain chapters of *Diary* were published (under the name George Annenkov) George Annenkov, “The Poets and the Revolution -- Blok, Mayakovsky, Esenin,” trans. William Todd, *Russian Review* 26, no. 2 (1967): 129–43.

401 The contrast to Wells' account of this The House of Arts is striking, given how complimentary he was of its projects, and how frequently he mentions the writers' lack of complaint regarding their material privations; see H.G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 51.

authentic unifier of people than the mythical version of himself he is required to be in public. Such a figure is easier to present abroad in 1966 than he is in Soviet Russia of 1922.

Such a conclusion is further enhanced by Annenkov's treatment of Gor'kii's visual portrait in *Diary*. As in most of the volume's entries, the literary portrait is immediately preceded, on the opposite page, by Annenkov's representation of that individual. Significantly, though, *Diary* uses an alternative to the original, far more baroque image of Gor'kii that appeared in *Portraits*. There Gor'kii's visage (see Fig. 8 above) is distinguished by some of the most intricate three-dimensional modeling in the entire volume, even if the right side of his face is represented only by an outline of empty white space. This figural blank spot competes with (and is physically eclipsed by) several other phenomena: the curiously tilted statue of a Buddha; a vase, another curious instance of *chinoiserie*; a marching crowd; a cacophonous cityscape; and even a not-quite-rectilinear geometrical form that, in the full-color version of the work, clearly references Malevich's *Red Square* (1915). This melange of modern and ancient, of physical and spiritual, is united by the composition's almost uniformly diagonal orientation: these images' lines (the Buddha's platform, the workers' banner, the red shape's base, the city's cranes) generally point from the bottom left to the top right of the canvas. Perhaps these otherwise incompatible images gesture towards humanity's evolution from eternal return (the Buddha), to a historical break (the Revolution), towards the future construction of a glorious, utopian city. They all wrap around Gor'kii, the most emblematic revolutionary writer of the period, the only person capable of envisioning this progress. It is a fitting image for an early 1920s publication – one that seems to celebrate Gor'kii's politics and looks forward to a better, more prosperous future.

The portrait of Gor'kii chosen to complement Annenkov's memoir thereof (see Fig. 13 below) was created in the same year as the work that appears in *Portraits*, and bears many compositional similarities to it. However, much of the piece's buzzing energy has been eliminated: gone are the crowds, the *chinoiserie*, the future city, all with their optimistic diagonals. In their place are a series of vertical lines, almost like etchings in a woodblock print, that suggest a blank background and an absence of activity: Gor'kii as just a man. Gone too is the blank whiteness that defined the right side of Gor'kii face in the fuller version of the portrait: he is now cloaked in shadow, allowing for a starker, more binary contrast between white and black (a contrast likewise assisted by the elision of the red square). The reigning metaphor of this image is not progression from then to now, but a more static balance of opposing values, the known and unknown (an interpretation of the author more in line with Chukovskii's *Two Souls of Maksim Gor'kii*, perhaps). It maps quite well onto the dour Gor'kii of Annenkov's literary portrait – far more so than *Portraits*' treatment of the writer would.

At the same time, Annenkov's literary portraits in *Diary* complicate images that remain otherwise untouched from their initial appearance in *Portraits*. So it is with Blok, whose memoir-portrait immediately follows that of Gor'kii. The typical conclusion to Annenkov's literary portraits – a series of facts about his subject's death – is enhanced here: we learn not only about his death, but Annenkov's representation of the dead Blok, *Portraits*' superlatively morbid image. We learn that this piece was created in the presence of the deceased poet's body. "I spent no fewer than two hours alone with Blok's corpse, in his apartment on Ofiterskaia Street. I first cried, then I drew his portrait. The change was extreme. His curly halo of hair had lost its spring, and it stuck to his head, his brow, in thin wisps. His always shaven face was veiled in a ten-day beard and mustache. Before being placed in the ground, Blok was shaved. Two red letters were



Fig. 13 – Maksim Gor'kii (1920) by Iurii Annenkov

sewn onto his pillow: A. B.” (95). The image's stark simplicity, and its relative absence of precise, severe, rectilinear lines, reflects Annenkov's grief, the enforced brevity of the drawing process, and the chilling distinction between Blok's deathbed appearance and the living Blok's canonical visage. Its absolute aesthetic distinction from the rest of *Portraits'* entries is explained by biographical context.

In the 1966 *Diary*, Annenkov's written account of the portrait's origin is no less solemn than the 1921 portrait itself, but it does trade in a slight ironic distance, one that allows Blok to serve as more than the conceptual climax of the earlier *Portraits*. Annenkov suggests as much by directly quoting Zamiatin's 1922 statement from “On Synthetism” about not being “able to look at another living face” after seeing Blok's profile. Even if this deathbed image is appended to the *end* of Annenkov's memoir-portrait, rather than the beginning (as is the case with the other memoir-portraits), one *must* nevertheless look at other living faces when proceeding through the rest of *Diary*. One need not read it (as one must in its original *Portraits* incarnation) as a dour coda. Indeed, Annenkov ends his memoir-portrait not with this account of the deathbed image's origins, nor with the two brief citations from Akhmatova and Nina Berberova's poems about Blok's death that follow, but with a discussion of music. He speaks of having witnessed

performances of *The Twelve* in multiple contexts: set to a composition performed by a chamber orchestra, translated into other languages, and performed abroad, even as late as 1960. In such performances, “the poem found its auditory expression, its musical basis, its musical depth” (95-6). *Diary's* point is simple, but meaningfully different from that which Annenkov made in *Portraits*: Blok might be dead, but his work lives on, and that work restores the music that (as per the poet's famous and oft-cited statement) had “stopped” following the 1917 Revolution. The cumulative (i.e. visual and verbal) portrait of Blok in the 1966 *Diary* thus permits Blok, Blok's art, and Annenkov's portrait a fuller, richer existence than in the 1922 *Portraits*.

In *Diary*, word and image generally operate in concert to offer provocative reassessments of the *lichnosti* whose meanings were narrowed by the more combative verbal-visual dialectic of *Portraits*. However, if Gor'kii's representative portrait changes⁴⁰² to suit the different, more reflective figure who appears in Annenkov's literary portrait, and Blok's deathly visage acquires new context via Annenkov's written statements, then a third interaction between visual and verbal is worth mentioning: that which occurs in the memoir-portrait of Nikolai Gumilev, the third in the volume following Gor'kii and Blok. Annenkov actually appends *no* portrait of Gumilev anywhere in the piece, which makes it nearly unique in *Diary*. The antepenultimate section of the literary portrait explains this lacuna. Annenkov and Gumilev had scheduled a meeting at which Annenkov was to compose a sketch of the poet for inclusion in an upcoming publication of his poetry. Gumilev, “who was extremely precise and always fulfilled his promises,” did not show up, and the next day, Annenkov learned that Gumilev had in fact been arrested. We might interpret the tragic serendipity of these events⁴⁰³ as the ultimate expression of time's violent return in Annenkov's portraiture: if elsewhere, the Revolution defaces Russian authors, then it effaces Gumilev entirely.

Structurally speaking, then, this is Annenkov's opening trio. First we have Gor'kii, whose composite verbal-visual portrait is inflected by Annenkov's émigré retrospection; then we have Blok, whose famous deathbed portrait is contextualized and exceeded by Annenkov's literary portrait; and then we have Gumilev, whose poignantly absent visual representation must be – can only be – compensated by a verbal one. While these pieces demonstrate the potential range of visual-verbal interaction in Annenkov's oeuvre, they also prompt questions about *Diary's*

402 As in the case of Gor'kii, *Diary* likewise swaps out the portrait of Akhmatova that was in *Portraits* for a different, perhaps more preparatory version of the same. Compositionally, they have much in common: a single contour describes her entire face, from her right brow to her left ear, and her bangs and the circular dots of her hairpiece remain the same. However, the aggressive combination of fin-de-siècle aestheticism and Cubism is absent, and she – again, like Gor'kii – is defined more by stark color fields of black and white, light and shadow. Annenkov notes that the original drawing belongs to someone else, and that this version, “first reproduced in France in 1962 in the journal *Renaissance* [...] to this day hangs in my office, in Paris” (123). Furthermore, he states that, in the signed copy of Akhmatova's poetry collection (recently published during Khrushchev's thaw) which he received in 1961, the frontispiece “turned out to resemble, quite strangely, my gouache portrait” of her (133). The inclusion of this alternative image, then, links the Akhmatova of the early Soviet period and the Akhmatova of the mid-twentieth century – which Akhmatova herself confirms when, seeing the various portraits hanging Annenkov's Paris apartment in June 1965, remarks that she “seems to have returned to [her] youth” (136).

403 Annenkov is perhaps misremembering or massaging some of these details for the sake of this ironically unconsummated portraiture session. He states that his intended meeting with Gumilev was to occur on “one of the July evenings of 1921” (109), while most sources state that Gumilev was arrested on the night of August 5. Several sentences later, Annenkov correctly indicates the dates of Aleksandr Blok's death (August 7) and Gumilev's execution (August 24).

structure. (See Fig. 14 below.) The sequence of works does not manifest as pointed a critical position as the opening Petrovskaiia-Briusov-Belyi triad of Khodasevich's *Necropolis*, but a

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

	<i>Стр.</i>
Юрий Анненков	7
Waldemar George. Hommage à George Annenkov	12
Юрий Анненков	
От автора	21
Максим Горький	25
Александр Блок	56
Николай Гумилев	97
Анна Ахматова	114
Велимир Хлебников	138
Сергей Есенин	154
Владимир Маяковский	178
Алексей Ремизов и Сергей Прокофьев	211
Евгений Замятин	246
Борис Пильняк	288
Исаак Бабель	299
Михаил Зощенко	310
Илья Репин	322
Георгий Иванов	330
Перечень иллюстраций (портреты)	345

Fig. 14 – table of contents for Annenkov's *Diary* (1966)

contingent logic does seem to motivate it. Blok is followed by Gumilev, another author whose death marked the end of the Silver Age. Gumilev is then followed by Anna Akhmatova, his first wife – a biographical chain of affiliation. However, the long-lived Akhmatova is followed by three poets who suffered early deaths, which are (perhaps coincidentally) presented in chronological order: Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922), Sergei Esenin (1895-1925), and Vladimir Maiakovskii (1893-1930). Following this exploration of poets, we have a quintet of prose authors: Aleksei Remizov (who is paired with the composer Sergei Prokofev), Zamiatin, Boris Pil'niak, Isaak Babel', Mikhail Zoshchenko. In theory, these authors might be united by the fact that they emigrated or were politically persecuted and killed in the Soviet Union, but other possible connections remain murky. Annenkov then rounds out the volume with a brief portrait of the painter Il'ia Repin and a brief appreciation of Georgii Ivanov's poetry.

Diary's sequence thus maintains a shaggy kind of rhythm, one that suggests conceptual consistency but does not produce larger interpretative meanings for the volume or its constituent pieces. There are genre-based clusters (prose vs. poetry), clusters that seem to pivot around their subjects' non-/emigration. Occasionally, references to content from the preceding literary portrait (Akhmatova's portrait refers back to events in Gumilev's, whose portrait itself refers back to

events discussed in Blok's) suggest a kind of documentary consistency. These are clusters of convenience, it seems, but even within this loose architecture, one portrait seems to buck all trends – that of Gor'kii. Born in 1868, Gor'kii was certainly the oldest of the people profiled in Annenkov's book (Repin excepted), and seems to be the first of *Portraits'* personages whom Annenkov met (at the age of 11). For chronology's sake, Gor'kii could thus reasonably be expected to go first in the volume. However, he seems rather out of place, rubbing shoulders with the string of poets who found fame in the final years of tsarist Russia and tragedy in the early years of the Soviet Union. Placing Gor'kii first in *Diary* may not be as obvious or provocative a move as placing Blok's deathbed visage last in *Portraits*. Indeed, such pride of place reflects Gor'kii's hagiographized status as a mentor, benefactor, and friend in the fawning “contemporaries” genre surrounding him,⁴⁰⁴ examples of which Annenkov was no doubt cognizant. The gesture is thus, at once, typical but awkward in the context of *Diary*. But we might further reflect not on Gor'kii as a kind of keystone to *Diary's* architecture, but rather as someone who (like Briusov in Voloshin's *Faces*; see Ch. 2.4) mandates a particular kind of reading that Annenkov wishes us to sustain throughout the entire volume.

Near the end of the portrait, after his personal anecdotes about Gor'kii have been exhausted, Annenkov turns to the larger, inevitable questions of Gor'kii's complicity in the development and endorsement of Socialist Realism, and, by extension, of his participation in a repressive Stalinist culture. He grudgingly acknowledges this turn in Gor'kii's biography, but attempts to temper it by focusing on the author's earlier statements condemning “commercial realism” (which Annenkov considers equivalent to the Socialist variant). He also cites minor statements of Gor'kii's that, even in 1936, seem to rub awkwardly against his “official” consideration of the Socialist Realist doctrine (48-50). Annenkov ultimately concludes that Gor'kii's life was “uneven, intense, and complex” (51).

To us, such comments might seem banal at best or ring of apologia at worst, but we should remember Annenkov's context. Living abroad, un beholden to the Soviet state⁴⁰⁵ yet beholden to memories of his friends, Annenkov discusses Gor'kii in ways that would have been impossible for someone like Chukovskii (even if his revelation of Gor'kii's “two souls” is similar in spirit) or Khodasevich (who was inclined to read Gor'kii's shortcomings in a different, more moralizing way; see Chs. 3.3 and 3.2, respectively.) Annenkov's Gor'kii is one who follows and embraces novel aesthetic trends, even those that remain alien to him; someone who has penned works which remain outside the canonical Soviet vision of their author and hence have fallen into “officially sanctioned oblivion” (45). As Annenkov notes in his portrait of Maiakovskii, Gor'kii too attended the Stray Dog Cabaret “among the Symbolists, Acmeists, Futurists, Zaumists, the *Budetliane*” (182), championing new talent that would not be absorbed into the Soviet canon. Perhaps this assertion would not have been unthinkable only to the Soviets: this

404 Again, see Walker, “On Reading Soviet Memoirs.”

405 One should obviously note that, in spite of his emigration, Annenkov seemed to lack the particular, politically-motivated disgust that many first-wave émigrés maintained for the Soviet Union. In the first place, he was an active and eager orchestrator of the celebratory *Storming of the Winter Palace* performance, as mentioned. Furthermore, while living abroad in Paris in 1926, he published in the Soviet Union *Seventeen Portraits (Semnadsat' portretov)* another collection of his artworks – this time, a series of portraits dedicated primarily to the leaders of the Communist Party, for which Anatolii Lunacharskii published a glowing forward. Thus, while critical of some of the cultural excesses of the Soviet regime – such as the hagiographization of a morally complex Gor'kii – he was neither obligated nor inclined to unequivocally reject (or, for that matter, embrace) the Soviet Union as such.

version of Gor'kii may well have been alien to émigré visions of Silver Age culture, with its Modernist purity. As he does in Chukovskii and Khodasevich's portraiture, the Gor'kii of Annenkov's *Diary* resides somewhere between prescribed categories – not an easily classifiable personality, but one who remains all the more representative a Russian writer for it. He, the most contradictory figure in *Diary*, should encourage us to seek out the rough edges, the anti-canonical moments in the lives of such individuals, so that we might remember them more authentically than inherited literary historical narratives might otherwise allow. In this way, Annenkov's portraiture stages a productive conflict between the visions of timeless authorial *lichnosti* on which literary canons rest and the portraits – visual and verbal – that reintroduce time into such visions, enabling us to see them more clearly.

Conclusion

Relatively unique as its combination of visual and verbal portraiture might be, Annenkov's *Diary* strikes me as wholly representative of the relationship between the literary canon, portraiture, and time. Portraiture frequently strives for a kind of timeless vision of its subject, one that takes a specific moment for a synthetic vision of that individual's whole. Such flattening of biography into *lichnost'* is amenable to literary canon formation and to holistic structurings of that canon (as discussed in Part II of this dissertation). More than most, Annenkov's work would invite such a reading, given how visual representations of individual authors can easily become fixed and frozen in time, included as they are in frontispieces of collected works (as many of Annenkov's images were and continue to be). The 1922 *Portraits* participates in just such ossification of its subjects, much as one would expect in an early post-Revolutionary moment when cultural values are being reassessed and individuals are being placed on exclusive sides of a historical divide, fixing them in time. As has persistently been the case in Part III, Gor'kii and Blok (or Gor'kii and the Symbolists more broadly) demonstrate such processes in action. In *Portraits*, Gor'kii's visage – surrounded by bustling activity and a series of dynamic compositional elements – serves as an allegory of the more radiant future to come. Blok's deathbed portrait, however, places him in the absolute past, one with a different set of attitudes towards human life. He is the apotheosis of the Revolution's power to deface, the inevitable violence of time that portraiture, by its very nature, typically refuses. Placing Blok – rather than, say, the future-oriented Gor'kii – at the end of the book thus advances a quiet critique – not only of the canonization formation with which *Portraits* obliquely engages, but of the very cultural circumstances that would seek to make portraiture obsolete. Yet the constituent entries in *Portraits*, broadly defined by their defacement, register even this meta art historical shift: Annenkov, the tragic humanist, must permit his wandering line to capture all it sees, lest that material fall into complete oblivion.

By comparison, the 1966 *Diary*, espouses a different goal and set of poetics. It seeks to rescue and reassess people, events, memories, that would otherwise be, as the preface says, indifferently cast aside. Annenkov achieves as much by transforming the inimical verbal-visual dialectic of *Portraits* into a more harmonized one. The juxtaposition of the dynamic word and the static image draws the reader's attention to the process of oblivion rather than its petrified product. Indeed, *Diary* suggests that, counter to the biased visions of Russian literary history advanced by Socialist Realist doctrine and Silver Age nostalgia, there are many roads to oblivion – the simple fact of death (Blok), politics and terror (Gumilev), and even official endorsement,

which resigns the non-canonical features of canonical writers to non-existence (Gor'kii). All are defined by their subject's absent or fractured *lichnost'*, which verbal portraiture – operating in concert with, rather than opposed to visual portraiture – might better restore. Similarly, *Diary* should be read not as a corrective to *Portraits*, but as its complement, for each captures an essential facet of portraiture's complex engagement with (and frequently, erasure of) history. Indeed, timelessness is portraiture's greatest fiction, and in his use of visual and verbal media, as well as the space between the two, Annenkov restores time to the genre.

Ch. 3.5: Conclusion

The memoir-portraits penned by Khodasevich, Chukovskii, and Annenkov not only indicate the wider trajectory of the literary portrait genre in post-Revolutionary Russian culture; they also demonstrate the continued interpretative battles that were waged over pre-Revolutionary culture – battles in which the literary portrait was a vital tool. Debates over the literature of the late tsarist period proceeded differently in Soviet and émigré communities, and the portraiture I have discussed in Part III explores various aspects of that interpretative fissure. Khodasevich's *Necropolis*, written in emigration, criticized the destructive life-creative practices of Symbolist writers and their non-Symbolist contemporaries. Chukovskii's portraiture, beholden to the conventions of Soviet life-writing, maintained a delicate balance of critique and adoration, and found common ground between two figures – Blok and Gor'kii – who represented nominally antithetical icons of the Revolution. Annenkov seems to operate from a position between those of Khodasevich and Gor'kii, and quite fittingly so: his visual collection *Portraits*, published in the Soviet Union, grappled with the function of the writer (and portraiture as such) in the early post-Revolutionary period; the memoir-portraits that constituted *Diary of My Meetings* were written in emigration, and reflected his desire to memorialize the victims of Soviet power while redeeming some of the individuals who were mistakenly conflated with it.

Even as these texts demonstrate a certain émigré/Soviet bifurcation, they refuse easy binarisms – just like the pre-Revolutionary literary critical portraiture, profiled in Part II, with which Khodasevich, the mature Chukovskii, and Annenkov's memoir-portraits are generically linked. If the figure of Leonid Andreev helped Aikhenval'd, the young Chukovskii, and Voloshin tease out profound similarities between nominally opposed aesthetic tendencies of the late imperial literary field, then it is Maksim Gor'kii who performs a similar function for these memoirists. To a certain extent, we can expect as much from an author whose patronage of writers from all aesthetic camps in the immediate post-Revolutionary years is already an acknowledged facet of his biography (disputed as it may have been by some of his émigré contemporaries).⁴⁰⁶ However, this is merely a reflection of Gor'kii's institutional position in the Civil War-era cultural scene, and Khodasevich, Chukovskii, and Annenkov use him for a variety of other culturological functions, including each portraitist's own self-fashioning. In Khodasevich's *Necropolis*, Gor'kii's flawed mentorship of others is treated as yet another variation of the Symbolists' collective life-creative projects. He throws Petrovskaiia, Briusov, and Belyi's “broken lives” into relief and bestows upon Khodasevich the “right to write” – and criticize – writers' lives. In Chukovskii's portraiture, Gor'kii's mentorship is shown to be a contradictory phenomenon: this Gor'kii courts self-destruction, demands that his charges

406 For example, see the discussion of Gor'kii's stewardship of the Petrograd House of Arts in Martha Weitzel Hickey, *The Writer in Petrograd and the House of Arts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009). However, as mentioned in Ch. 3.2, Gor'kii's benevolence is not universally acknowledged. Zinaida Gippius suggested in her memoirs *Living Persons* (1925) that Gor'kii refused to help Fedor Sologub and Vasiliï Rozanov, a perspective which Khodasevich challenged in his review of those memoirs and, subsequently, in the content of his own *Necropolis*. In private correspondence, Gippius challenged many of the “corrections” that Khodasevich offered in his review of *Living Persons*, and took particular objection to his view of truth and lies in memoirs. She suggested that Khodasevich simply “love[s] Gor'kii more, and [she] – Rozanov,” and that one must distinguish between “formal truth” (*formal'naia pravda*) and a “higher truth” (*istina*) when writing and reading such texts. For this letter to Khodasevich, see Zinaida Gippius, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 2001), v. 6, 605-7.

challenge him, and genuinely questions whether originality is possible in Soviet culture. Gor'kii's active self-abnegation makes for a fitting comparison with Aleksandr Blok's passive acquiescence: both writers demonstrate the futility and limits of the culture of the 1917 Revolution, yet they also remain the richest vein of cultural capital that Chukovskii can mine at various points in his protean career. In Annenkov's 1922 *Portraits*, Gor'kii is presented as a Promethean figure, a dynamic dreamer whose visions of a utopian future unite him with the populace and make him a central figure in Soviet culture; in Annenkov's 1966 *Diary of My Meetings*, published some forty years later, Gor'kii is rendered mysteriously, a man of two sides, a lonely statue unable to reconcile the multiple sides of himself – particularly his public and private selves. Nevertheless, Blok and Gor'kii, represented so differently and placed so distantly from one another in *Portraits*, are now neighbors in *Diary*: a bitter, divided Gor'kii is more united with his compatriots than the monolithic, optimistic Gor'kii of the Soviet canon.

Gor'kii thus permits these portraitists to calibrate their positions on other late imperial figures, with whom Gor'kii actually turns out to be quite at home: he too makes the failures of the Revolution just as apparent as the various Modernist writers who could not withstand it (or, in Gumilev's case, fell victim to it). He is also an exemplary member of these galleries in yet another way: the complexity of his *lichnost'*. Gor'kii is shown to be full of contradictions, someone whose composite personality is composed of heterogeneous, irreconcilable fragments. He is not alone in this, of course, for this complexity is as much a reflection of Gor'kii's place in Soviet culture as it is a formal development within the literary portrait genre itself. The literary critical collections profiled in Part II tended to flatten Gor'kii (and most everyone else) in order to assign him a particular place within a holistic vision of the late imperial literary field. As Part III demonstrates, the act of retrospection and criticism demanded that such “art as life” methods of literary interpretation be abandoned. As in the case of literary portraiture's genesis in the late nineteenth century, it was Symbolism that triggered this particular development: its insistence on the depth of its adherents' *lichnosti* opened up space for ironic contrast between surface and depth (Voloshin), between the performance of static character and the repression of authentic life (Khodasevich), between inner turmoil and an exterior that can be blank or ecstatic (the mature Chukovskii on Blok in particular). Nevertheless, as Part III demonstrates, such insights could be – had to be – extended to *non*-Symbolist authors as well. Once again, Symbolism and Realism throw each other into relief, and remain inextricably, dialectically linked with one another.

Chukovskii's work is particularly symptomatic in this regard. He was certainly less integrated into the Symbolist life and worldview than Voloshin and Khodasevich, for whom such ironic insights into life-creation came earlier and easier. Nevertheless, it was Chukovskii's early 1920s work on the Symbolist Blok – virtually the very first person whom Chukovskii attempted to profile in a memoir-portrait – that permitted him to see the depth and contradictions of his subject's *lichnost'*. However, Chukovskii did not stop there: his memoir-portraits of Gor'kii apply much the same line of analysis in the mid 1920s. Indeed, Chukovskii's lifelong engagement with the portrait genre bears a profound resemblance to the genre's overall evolution in the twentieth century. His literary critical portraiture from the pre-Revolutionary period trades in static, unidimensional *lichnosti*, allowing him to pigeonhole Gor'kii as someone whose highly schematic works undermine his nominal status as Russia's “singer of personality” (*SS*, v. 6, 88). However, his post-Revolutionary memoir portraiture presents its subjects more multidimensionally: Chukovskii ironizes the divide between his figures' public and private

personae, demonstrating that their composite *lichnosti* cannot be reduced to a single discriminating feature, and cannot be imbued with a stable historical meaning. Like Khodasevich and Annenkov, Chukovskii delves beyond Gor'kii's texts into Gor'kii's *context*, exploring the writer's complex, often objectionable engagement with his biographical legend⁴⁰⁷ – while still imbuing Gor'kii with a measure of grace and self-awareness.

For this reason, we might regard Chukovskii as the most representative literary portraitist of the period covered by this dissertation. His work in literary portraiture mimics most of the genre's overall development, and the protean features of the literary portrait (its ability to accommodate re-editing, different publication circumstances, and the persistent reshuffling of its constituent material, etc.) likewise echo Chukovskii's remarkable ability to continually refashion himself for the sake of political and cultural expedience. However, as literary portrait galleries have taught us, this does not necessarily become apparent without a more holistic survey of the many other figures who surround Chukovskii. Woven into the DNA of his work in the genre is his rejection of Aikhenval'd's characteristically Impressionist brand of portraiture and his oedipal relationship with Gor'kii's renowned and officially sanctioned brand of portraiture. Implicit in Chukovskii's portraiture is his complex relationship with his audience (“Hottentot” or otherwise), as well as his clashes with competing approaches to literary criticism (Formalism, Marxist aesthetics) and the cultural institutions (canards about the depth of Symbolist personality, the restrictive conventions of Soviet life-writing) that would seek to diminish or mute its power. However unheralded the genre might be in histories of twentieth-century Russian culture, Chukovskii's case shows that literary portraiture – a genre that puts *lichnost'* front and center – organically indexes many of the most vital features of that culture.

What ultimate changes to the historiography of twentieth-century Russian literature might literary portraiture, with its wealth of heterogeneous, contradictory *lichnosti*, offer us? The literary portrait collections profiled in this dissertation habitually present holistic visions of the turn-of-the-century Russian literary field; they routinely posit common ground between figures whom many literary histories treat as unconnected fellow travelers at best and antagonists who displace one another at worst. In this, they are recuperative and, for twenty-first century scholarship, potentially disruptive artifacts. That being said, in suggesting that these portrait collections might enhance our inherited literary historical narratives, it is not my intention to depose the cultural construct of the Silver Age, nor to squeeze literary Modernism out of the modernity that gives it its name. These terms, and the strategies of periodization that undergird them, represent productive, useful methods of conceptualizing literary history. But so do these portrait collections, which repeatedly demonstrate the interpretative value of relational thinking (as opposed to the sequential-chronological thinking that defines the concepts of the Silver Age and Modernism). Symbolism – the impetus of the philosophical and aesthetic rebirth that defines the Silver Age – is not merely a response to a moribund Realist past, but to a Realist present, and

407 Boris Tomashevskii defines as a “biographical legend” as that feature of the author by which the reader's “juxtaposition of the texts and the author's biography plays a structural role. The literary work plays on the potential reality of the author's subjective outpourings and confessions. [...] Only such a legend is a literary fact.” Boris Tomaševskij, “Literature and Biography,” in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), 47–55. Gor'kii's biographical legend – as Tomashevskii points out long before Khodasevich will – was meticulously managed; Khodasevich, Chukovskii, and Annenkov peek behind that curtain and show that the maintenance of that legend was actually a source of anxiety and aggravation for him.

to the mass culture with which it competes and shares interests. Its features stand in even greater relief when compared to contemporaneous modern – if not necessarily *Modernist* – phenomena. Retrospective portrait-memoirs about late imperial Russian writers privilege similar relational frameworks, even during historical moments that lend themselves to a narrative (tragic or triumphant, depending on one's perspective) of displacement: that is, the usurpation of Silver Age culture by an ascendant post-Revolutionary Soviet culture. The memoirists profiled in Part III repeatedly define Blok's Symbolism and Gor'kii's Realism not as mutually exclusive, sequential phenomena, but as two sides of the same coin. Sequential thinking dictates that Blok and Gor'kii be laden with distinct cultural functions; relational thinking demonstrates that *both* figures can be *simultaneously* tragic and triumphant, and that *both* can stand for the Revolution's promises and shortcomings alike.

We scholars of Russian literature know all of this, of course, but the cultural actors of early twentieth-century Russia knew it far better than we do now. Tapping into their perspective – one centered on holistic fields rather than historical sequences, on constellations of individuals rather than exclusive movements – provides us with cultural insights that might otherwise remain beyond our ken. Exploring their portrait collections – which operated across divergent readerships, between various publication formats, and across cultural and political borders – resurrects the particular form of cultural modernity that Russia experienced in the twentieth century. Literary portraits are not marginal documents; in their malleable form, their heterogeneous content, and their holistic format, they are some of the most pivotal and revelatory cultural artifacts of their age.

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