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Evil Men Have No Songs: The Terrorist and Literatuer Boris Savinkov, 1879-1925

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EVIL MEN HAVE NO SONGS: THE TERRORIST AND LITTÉRATUER
BORIS SAVINKOV, 1879-1925

by

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Back in the ninth grade I took an interest in a new book on the family bookshelf, because I recognized the author's name from my Russian history class. The book was called *Vospominaniia terrorista* (The Memoirs of a Terrorist) by Boris Savinkov. Nobody knew how it turned up in my family's collection, but I can assume that, ironically, it perhaps came as the so-called *nagruzka* ("extra load") that one had to buy in order to get one of the books written by the Russian classics, that were in bigger demand and therefore, in deficit in the early 1990s. Little did I know that I would hold the same book in my hands 18 years later, having devoted my dissertation project to this notorious terrorist and writer.

With great pleasure, I would like to convey my gratitude to my wonderful dissertation committee: Drs. Alexander Ogden, Alexander Beecroft, John Muckelbauer, Elena Osokina, and especially Dr. Judith Kalb, my dissertation chair, who not only encouraged me to take on the study of Savinkov despite all the controversies surrounding his persona, but who also patiently guided me through every step of this project. I am forever grateful for her unyielding support and invaluable feedback.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is devoted to the works of the legendary terrorist mastermind Boris Savinkov (1879-1925), who planned notorious political assassinations at the turn of the twentieth century even as he took part in the leading literary circles of his day. This work situates Savinkov in what Mikhail Bakhtin defines as a “chronotope,” a time-space module that I label “Revolutionary Apocalypse.” I compare the development of revolutionary myths of martyrdom in Revolutionary Russia for both Savinkov and his contemporary Maria Spiridonova to analyze the redefined notions of love, truth, and sacrifice among the Russian intelligentsia that turned these Russian revolutionary terrorists into cult heroes. This work posits Russian terrorism at the intersections of multiple discourses and examines it from the angle of conceptual self-representation, as both a social product and a performative act of violence. I argue that through his literary works, Savinkov tried to negotiate his personal paradoxical double identity of cold-blooded terrorist and suffering Christian martyr. He used his artistic vision and linguistic capabilities to turn himself from a “monster” into “an aesthetic phenomenon” by creating separate literary manifestations of himself. Through literary analysis of Savinkov’s texts and examination of philosophical doctrines developed by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Zinaida Gippius, and Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, I demonstrate that the product of Savinkov’s interaction with these philosophies was his own visions of Russia that took shape in his female images, reflecting his searches for Russia’s paths to immortality and salvation. This study contributes to contemporary debates on political legitimacy and

ethical issues of terrorism, while illuminating the case of Boris Savinkov as a cultural figure of Revolutionary Russia.

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INTRODUCTION

*Where there is singing, you can always settle down –
because evil men don't have songs.
Johann Gottfried Seume "Die Gesänge"¹*

Terrorism presents one of the major menacing threats for the global world. It is generally defined as a systematic use of violence in pursuit of political, ideological, or religious goals. The scope of terrorism constantly expands, including not only new international clusters, but also new domestic forms, such as “green terrorism” (radical environmentalists) and terrorism committed by radical animal activists. The word ‘terrorism’ came into use in the 18th century to describe the radical dictatorship of Maximilien Robespierre, the Reign of Terror after the French Revolution, whereas assassins date back to the 11-13th century in Iran and Syria. Terrorism is not, in any way, a natural phenomenon in the politicized world, but it is a sign of despair, a social choice that exposes dysfunctional social structures. Terrorism is never a means of creation but always a means of destruction; thus it is never the origin of political power but always a reaction to it. The nineteenth-century Irish nationalist William O’Brien claimed that sometimes “violence is the only way of ensuring a hearing for moderation,” while British writer Edward Hyams believed that terrorism plays the same role that fever does in a sick body, calling it “a manifestation of social war” (as qtd. in Robin Morgan 40-41).

Interest in studying terrorism continues to grow because existing historical and political studies of a more linear nature have proven to be insufficient for encompassing

¹ Citation in the original: “Wo man singt, da lass dich ruhig nieder/Böse Menschen haben keine Lieder”

the full scope of intellectual and cultural contexts in which a modern terrorist originates and evolves. One of the most unsettling and mesmerizing aspects of the terrorist as a social and political subject has been the ontological and hermeneutical dichotomies that accompany the terrorist's image, regardless of the relevant time period or location on the globe. From the perspective of the majority, terrorists are killers, outlaws, and radicals, while for others, they are guerilla fighters, warriors, heroes, and martyrs. What for some is terrorism, for others is struggle for freedom or self-defense. Where does the difference between revolutionary warfare and terrorism lie? What reasoning is used to justify murder? Does the word 'terrorist' define a political and moral stance or social legitimacy and status?

The rational foundation for terrorism often lies in principles of utilitarianism, allowing violence to serve a better end goal, whether it might be a change in political regime or greater autonomy for a state, region, or ethnic or religious group. Any terrorist act carries not only a pragmatic meaning but also, and primarily, symbolic significance. Thus, it gains rhetorical weight for both victims and spectators and acquires sacralized status among its supporters.

Russian terrorism at the turn of the twentieth century transgresses the definition of merely a series of political assassinations. The Russian revolutionary movement originated around the idea of emancipating the Russian people (*narod*) from centuries of oppressive tsarism, and Russian terrorism came into being as a desperate response to the inability of the Russian intelligentsia to inspire the Russian masses to revolutionary uprising. Russian society rejected the longstanding humiliating historical disparity that existed between social classes. The intelligentsia's outrage at the historical union between

the Orthodox Church and the Tsar resulted in attempts to redefine concepts of love, truth, and faith. At the same time, philosophical and intellectual socialist idealism became a new, popular ideology among the Russian intelligentsia. All these factors, along with the development of an apocalyptic literary tradition, merged to form a unique historical and intellectual space-time in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, where revolutionary violence took on not only a sacred, but also a foreordained value. Using Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope,² we can symbolically label this space-time module as the "Revolutionary Apocalypse." Even though the Russian revolutionary period had a very active and dynamic nature in itself, as a chronotope within a larger metaphysical framework, it remained synchronic, confined, and metaphysically stagnant. Explaining the character of chronotope, Bakhtin argues that "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history" (84). Within the frame of the Revolutionary Apocalypse, Russia, geographically situated between the two cultural hemispheres of Europe and Asia and embracing the identities of both, was viewed as an exceptional space. Time was experienced as a countdown to an ultimate revolutionary eruption, when Russia would cleanse itself of its sins and emerge as a beacon of renewed spirituality and dignifying social structures for the rest of the world.

The terrorist and *littérateur* Boris Savinkov was simultaneously both a product and a creator of this unique historical and intellectual space-time. By viewing Savinkov as a symbolic figure of his era, we gain insight into the distinguishing traits of the revolutionary period in Russian history: political and social frustration, both

² Bakhtin defines chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84).

“conscientious” and senseless violence, the deprecation of human life, the reevaluation of moral dogmas and the price of a human life, alienation between the social layers of Russian society, a struggle for new truths tainted with blood, and more.

Zinaida Gippius, one of the leading Symbolists and Savinkov’s close friend, recalls in her diaries that they “belonged to the wide circle of the Russian ‘intelligentsia’ who, fairly or not, were called ‘the conscience and mind’ of Russia. It was – this time completely fairly, the only ‘word’ and ‘voice’ of the unwashed Russia, of the secretly silent and autocratic Russia” (*Dnevnik*, Vol. 2 179).³ Savinkov’s life path led from being one of these voices, full of aspirations and dreams about a better Russia, to becoming a no-voice, “a werewolf” (as Gippius called him in 1922), someone with nothing left inside, except disillusionment and disappointment with his own place in Russian society (*Dnevnik*, Vol. 2 353).

Since the 1990s, when the Russian KGB archives were partially opened and researchers gained access to the files of the legendary terrorist Boris Savinkov, he has become an object of interest for both Russian and international historians. Richard Spence saw him as a villain who was equally obsessed with violence and adventure. Anna Geifman described him as "the true taskmaster and architect behind all central terrorist ventures from mid-1903," the opposite of the former leader of the Combat Organization and notorious traitor Evno Azef (*Entangled in Terror* 55). My research draws on the interdisciplinary approach of Anthony Anemone, who explores the intellectual roots of Russian terrorism, and the literary perspective of Lynn Ellen Patyk,

³ Citation in the original: «мы принадлежали к тому широкому кругу русской «интеллигенции», которую, справедливо или нет, называли «совестью и разумом» России. Она же – и это уж конечно справедливо – была единственным «словом» и «голосом» России немойтой, притайно-молчащей - самодержавной».

who characterizes Savinkov as “the Byronic terrorist.” It also draws on the historico-cultural methods of Marina Mogil’ner, who refers to Savinkov as an example of an “underground man” from the “underground” of revolutionary Russia (as opposed to “legal” Russia). Thus, unlike the majority of previous researchers who have analyzed Boris Savinkov predominantly as either a historico-political or literary figure, in this study I situate him at the juxtaposition of multiple historical, political, cultural, and literary forces. My methodology includes not only literary analysis of Savinkov’s texts, but also examination of philosophical doctrines developed by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Zinaida Gippius, and Dmitrii Merezhkovsky that reflect fundamental shifts in social and intellectual paradigms in Revolutionary Russia. My approach is wide-ranging: as I examine the Russian revolutionary period as a unique temporal space, I take into consideration Savinkov’s novels, poetry, and political pamphlets, his personal letters and diaries, as well as official secret police reports, memoirs, newspapers, and magazine articles of the Russian and émigré press preserved by the Russian state archives. I prove the continuing relevance of Savinkov’s story, albeit in a very different time and space, with the commonalities I posit between his image and that of contemporary terrorists.

In Chapter 1, I compare the development of revolutionary myths of martyrdom in Revolutionary Russia for both Savinkov and his contemporary Maria Spiridonova. I argue that their revolutionary narratives directly result from the redefined notions of love, truth, and sacrifice among the Russian intelligentsia that turned these Russian revolutionary terrorists into cult heroes. In Chapter 2, I argue that, through his literary works, Savinkov tried to negotiate his personal paradoxical double identity of cold-blooded terrorist and suffering Christian martyr. By creating separate literary

manifestations of himself in his prose and poetry, Savinkov strived to deter his monstrosity through an aesthetic component. He chose the discourse of death as a liminal space in which his two hypostases could intersect and find balance. In Chapter 3, I explore the intellectual contexts out of which Savinkov emerged as a terrorist and a writer. I argue that philosophies developed by Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Gippius, and Merezhkovsky, and particularly their ideas on violence, religion, and Russia, found new life in Savinkov's literary images of women, which provide insight into his own perspectives of Russia. In Conclusion, I explain the significance of studying Savinkov as a cultural figure of Revolutionary Russia for better understanding of the contemporary intellectual and cultural contexts in which global terrorism exists today.

Boris Savinkov, a son of Viktor Mikhailovich Savinkov, a judge, and the journalist Sophia Aleksandrovna Yaroshenko, was born on January 19, 1879. He spent his early years studying at the First Warsaw gymnasium where he met his friend and future partner in terrorism, Ivan Kalyaev. Savinkov called Kalyaev "Yanek" because of his Polish accent. His admiration for Kalyaev materializes on the pages of *Kon' Blednyi* (The Pale Horse, 1909) and *Vospominaniia Terrorista* (The Memoirs of a Terrorist, 1917). As Richard Spence mentions, during his years in the gymnasium, Savinkov was greatly influenced by the Russian philosopher Konstantin Leont'ev. Leont'ev's ideas of "Pan-Slavism, religious mysticism, and crude Social-Darwinism" planted the seeds for Savinkov's future philosophical inclinations (10).

As a young adult, Savinkov was expelled from the St. Petersburg University for participating in student protests. He also attended the University of Berlin and the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Sophia Aleksandrovna Savinkova describes her

son's first arrest in Warsaw in her essay "Gody Skorbi" (Years of Sorrow, 1906). In 1897, students at the University of Warsaw protested their professors' approval of the building of a monument to a "hangman," Count M. N. Murav'ev, who had violently suppressed the 1863 Polish rebellion. The St. Petersburg students, including the Savinkov brothers, Boris and Aleksandr, signed a petition supporting the Warsaw students' protest. As a result, while at home for the winter break, both of them were arrested (Savinkova 216-218).

Savinkov started as a social-democrat, a Plekhanov follower.⁴ He belonged to such political groups as "Sotsialist" (Socialist) and later – "Rabochee znamia" (Workers' Banner). In 1900 he returned to Russia and wrote "Peterburgskoe rabochee dvizhenie i prakticheskie zadachi sotsial-demokratii" (The Petersburg Workers' Movement and the Practical Tasks of Social Democracy), signed B.V., an article in which he expressed his distrust of the masses (interestingly, Vladimir Lenin found the article to be interesting and honest). During this time, Savinkov married Vera Uspenskaya, the daughter of a famous writer, who gave birth to two of his children: Tatiana and Viktor.

In 1902 Savinkov was arrested and exiled to Vologda, where he met Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaya, known as *Babushka* ("grandmother") of the Russian Revolution. According to Richard Spence, she was "on a roving recruiting drive" for the Social-Revolutionary Party that was forming a special terrorist group within the party to carry political assassinations (24). Kalyaev recommended Savinkov to Breshko-Breshkovskaya and Savinkov decided to escape from Vologda to reach the SR headquarters in Geneva. He boarded a train to Arkhangel'sk and from there, with the help

⁴ Georgii Plekhanov was one of the first Russian Marxists.

of Breshko-Breshkovskaya's contacts, took a ship to Norway. From there, with a new Danish passport, he got to Antwerp (25).

At the end of July, 1903, once Savinkov arrived in Geneva, he met with Mikhail Gots, the founder of the SR Combat Organization. Gots gave him the nickname "our Benjamin," one among many other party aliases that Savinkov used later during his terrorist work. Soon after that, Savinkov was also interviewed by Evno Azef, aka Valentin Kuzmich, who was the acting leader of the Combat Organization. After their meeting, Azef showed up at Savinkov's hotel room uninvited to inquire about Savinkov's reasons to join the terrorist group. Savinkov answered that "he felt 'psychologically disposed' to terror over other revolutionary work" (29). Eventually, Azef became one of Savinkov's friends and inspirations. It is interesting to mention that the two people closest to Savinkov during the Combat Organization years, Kalyaev and Azef, actually disliked each other: Azef found Kalyaev's excessive enthusiasm strange and Kalyaev did not understand Azef's coldness (Savinkov *The Memoirs of a Terrorist* 13).

Savinkov's first major assignment was the assassination of Vyacheslav von Plehve, the conservative Minister of Interior Affairs, which Savinkov described almost in documentary details in his novel *Memoirs of a Terrorist*. The first attempt on Plehve's life was made on March 18, 1904, but failed because Abram Borishansky, one of the bombers, could not find the courage to go through with it. In order to set up surveillance for the Plehve mission, Savinkov played a rich British businessman, while Dora Brilliant played his mistress and Egor Sozonov – their servant. They all moved into a luxurious apartment on Zhukovskii St. in St. Petersburg. Savinkov planned the details of the assassination, but Azef was behind every important decision. Sozonov eventually

managed to kill Plehve with his bomb and got arrested. The poets Alexander Blok and Andrei Bely later referred to Plehve's assassination as a transformative, "watershed moment" (*rubezh*) (Bely 102). At this time, as Anthony Anemone notes, "an epidemic of revolutionary terrorism plagued Russian society" (14). Attempts to assassinate political ministers were commonplace. People spoke about bombs as mundane objects, often replacing the word "bomb" with the word "orange," or playing with the Russian homonym *granata* that has two meanings – a pomegranate and a grenade:

People have started getting weary,
They consider fruit quite scary.
A friend of mine as tough as granite
Is frightened of the pomegranate,
Policeman, ready to bark and grumble,
At the sight of an orange now tremble. (translation from Geifman *Thou
Shalt Kill* 16)⁵

A year later, in 1905, Savinkov's next project became the murder of Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich; this event constituted the historical setting behind his work *The Pale Horse*. Savinkov's team included Kalyaev, Dora Brilliant, Moiseenko, and Kulikovsky. On February 2, 1905, Kalyaev got close enough to the carriage of the Grand Duke to throw his bomb, but changed his mind when he saw Sergey Alexandrovich's wife and two children next to him. Kalyaev felt remorse and despair that he had failed the revolutionary cause and wanted to kill everyone in the carriage, even the children, on the Duke's way back, but Savinkov approved his decision to hold back. On February 4, 1905,

⁵ Citation in the original: «Боязливы люди стали -/ Вкусный плод у них в опале./ Повстречаюсь с нашим братом -/ Он питает страх к гранатам./ С полицейским встречаюсь чином -/ Он дрожит пред апельсином».

Kalyaev got another chance. He threw a bomb into the carriage that blew up into pieces. Kalyaev was arrested and sentenced to death.

Savinkov's commitment to the terrorist campaign rather than to the Social-Revolutionary Party was revealed in 1905, after the October Manifesto. The October Manifesto promising the formation of a State Duma marked an official point of separation between the liberals, who saw the possibility of parliamentary negotiations, and the radicals, who treated the reform with great skepticism. The Manifesto led to the split between the SR's Central Committee, which wanted to cease terrorist operations, and the Combat Organization, whose members believed that terror should instead be intensified. The Combat Organization and the Central Committee of the Social-Revolutionary Party became estranged. The members of the Combat Organization believed in their own exceptional work and value for the revolution too strongly to follow the directives of the Central Committee.

In 1906, while preparing another political assassination in Sevastopol', Savinkov got arrested, but escaped abroad. In 1906-1907 in Paris Savinkov met the Russian philosopher and writer Dmitri Merezhkovsky and his wife Zinaida Gippius, who greatly influenced his literary career and philosophical views. Gippius highly encouraged the birth of Savinkov-the-writer. She even proposed the title for his novel *The Pale Horse* and shared her own pseudonym, Ropshin, that Savinkov subsequently used for his works, even though the majority knew that the legendary terrorist was hiding behind the pseudonym. Gippius had previously used the pseudonym N. Ropshin for the publication of a 1906 article called "Toska po smerti" ("Yearning for Death"), in which she argued that during exceptional periods of human history, an individual life merges with the

collective human soul (gippius.com). It is quite possible that Gippius saw Savinkov's *Pale Horse* as a further development of her ideas about the importance of an individual as "the driving force," "the point of origin" for any social reform.

In exile in 1908-1909, Savinkov also wrote *The Memoirs of a Terrorist*, but published them much later, after the February Revolution (in "Byloe" (Bygones), №1-3, 1917 and № 1-3, 12, 1918). *The Memoirs* provide readers with an insight into a terrorist organization, its preparation for assassinations, the psychology of its members and their reasons for joining a terrorist organization, ethical questions of terrorism, and more. It is a matter-of-fact narrative, where Savinkov is a historiographer, a reporter even to a greater degree than in his later journalistic articles written from the French Army front during World War I. *The Memoirs* embrace Savinkov's five-year career in the Combat Organization, from the assassinations of Plehve and Sergey Alexandrovich to the exposure of Azef as a double agent. Savinkov uses the real names of his fellow revolutionaries, even though the book still has to be viewed as a semi-autobiographical work of fiction rather than an accurate historical record.

In 1909, Savinkov published his most famous and controversial work, *The Pale Horse* (in *Russkaia mysl'* (Russian Thought), №1, 1909). Unlike *The Memoirs*, in *The Pale Horse*, Savinkov exposed the inner moral struggles of the revolutionary world, the world of terrorist comradery, personal loss and personal doubt that he had left out of *The Memoirs*. *The Pale Horse*, like the other two parts of his trilogy, *The Black Horse* and the unnamed manuscript, is written in the form of a journal narrated by the main character, George. It is a literary account of the 1905 assassination of Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich. The names are changed but those who were familiar with the activity of

the Social-Revolutionary Party easily recognized Ivan Kalyaev behind the deeply religious Vanya, Dora Brilliant behind the unit chemist Erna, and Azef behind the Central Committee's Andrei Petrovich, along with other members of the Combat organization. George is the leader of the unit, who likes to think of himself as a Nietzschean type of man – amoral, clever, and cynical. The only member of the terrorist organization who penetrates George's coldness is Vanya, because the idealist Vanya manages to voice George's deepest thoughts, aspirations, and fears about the "morality" of murder. George exploits Erna's love for him, while obsessing over Elena, a married woman who is far from the revolutionary chaos and underground life. Driven by his jealousy, George kills her husband, thus stepping over the line of "noble," revolutionary murder toward murder for personal gain. He realizes that the murder has killed not only Elena's husband, but also George's love for her. The novel ends with him pondering a suicide.

While in Nice, presumably in 1913, Savinkov wrote the second part of the trilogy "Utrom ia podkhozhu k oknu..." (In the morning I come to the window...) that was found and published only in 1994. In this short work, George lives among the Russian émigrés who are tired, defeated and out of touch with life "back home" in Russia. George meets with several party members and inspired revolutionaries who try to pull him back into party work but George considers this pointless, since the revolution is defeated. He has a new woman, Mod, in his life, but he despises her pretentiousness and decadent attempts at revolutionary thought.

In 1914, in his next novel *To, chego ne bylo* (What Never Happened), Savinkov stepped away from the decadent spirit of *The Pale Horse* but continued to describe a morally tormented terrorist, absorbed by the elemental nature of the Russian revolution.

Many contemporaries saw Tolstoy's influences in the passive and fatalistic mood of this work. In *What Never Happened*, Savinkov also pondered the reasons for failures in revolutionary work: weak party leaders and constant provocations. Similarly to the controversial *Pale Horse*, this novel caused an even bigger wave of protests among social-revolutionaries who demanded Savinkov be expelled from the party.

The novel is about three brothers from a noble family who die for the revolutionary cause. At the moment when the first Russian revolution of 1905 starts, the oldest brother, Andrei Bolotov, is a member of the Central Committee in St. Petersburg. However, he believes that real revolution happens on the barricades, in Moscow, which is why he joins Vladimir Glebov, the leader of a fighting group, on his trip to Moscow. On the barricades, Andrei realizes that the idea of revolutionaries leading the people is ridiculous and meaningless. After the revolution is suppressed, Andrei returns to continue the party work which now appears to him just idle and empty talk. He decides to join a terrorist unit. Eventually, Andrei realizes that "blood is always blood," and that revolutionary murder is no less sinful than any other murder (85). He kills a public prosecutor, gets arrested, and is sentenced to death by a court martial. Andrei is given the option of a pardon because of his father's services as a general, but he refuses to accept it, because he wants to take responsibility for the murder. The middle brother, Alexander, is a navy officer who participates in the infamous Tsushima battle and gets captured by the Japanese. After returning to Russia, he follows in his brother's footsteps and joins the party, but soon gets disillusioned by the amount of moles and traitors within it. He kills one of them and shoots himself, as police officers bang on his hotel room door. The youngest brother, Mikhail, also joins the revolutionaries, naively and idealistically

believing that he can bring land and freedom to the people. A random bullet cuts his life short.

In 1908 Azef was exposed as a double agent, which was a hard blow to Savinkov, who tried his best to revive the Combat Organization afterwards but was not successful. Savinkov got married for the second time, to Evgeniya Zil'berberg, who gave birth to his son Lev. During World War I, Savinkov lived in France, where he joined the French Army as a war correspondent, writing for a number of Russian newspapers, such as "Birzhevye vedomosti" (Exchange news), "Den" (The Day), and "Rech'" (Speech). Despite his strong oppositional views, during this time period, he patriotically called for uniting all possible forces to defeat the common enemy – Germany and its allies. Savinkov believed that the place of a true patriot was on the barricades. As a journalist, Savinkov described his admiration for army life: he wrote that unlike Petrograd, where it took courage to keep faith strong, in the army "it [was] easier to breathe" because "in the army, where people sacrifice their lives, die and kill, a word has another, heavy, I would even say, leaden weight" (RGALI f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 3, p. 3). His war articles were turned into a book called *Vo Frantsii vo vremia voiny* (In France During Wartime) (1916-1917).

After the 1917 February revolution, Savinkov received another chance at a political career, this time as Deputy War Minister of the new Provisional Government, headed by Alexander Kerensky. Savinkov served as a negotiator between Kerensky and General Lavr Kornilov. Considering Kerensky too weak to hold power, Kornilov attempted a military coup in August, 1917. Deciding he was unable to solve the situation, Savinkov resigned and was expelled from the Party. Savinkov's pamphlet "K delu

Kornilova” (About the Kornilov Affair) explains his role in 1917, claiming “miscommunication” as the main reason for the conflict.

Savinkov did not accept the October revolution, considering it a coup performed by a handful of people and, along with other right-leaning social-revolutionaries, called it a crime against Russia and the true Revolution. He immediately joined the oppositional forces against the Bolsheviks during Russia’s Civil War, which lasted from 1918 to 1921. In February and March of 1918 he created the so-called Union for the Defense of the Motherland and Freedom and organized a number of uprisings in Yaroslavl, Rybinsk, and Murom. He tried to find powerful allies among several important political leaders, including the leader of the White movement, Alexander Kolchak, as well as British prime-minister Winston Churchill, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, and, during the 1920 Soviet-Polish war, the Polish state leader Josef Pilsudski. In 1920, Savinkov wrote a socio-political pamphlet titled “Na puti k Tret’ei Rossii” (On the Way to the Third Russia), where he created a vision of his ideal Russia, based on peasant democratic principles.

After the opposition’s failure in the Civil War became obvious, Savinkov started working on the final part of his trilogy, *Kon’ Voronoi* (The Black Horse, 1923). The novel takes place during the Civil War. George, who is now Colonel Yuri Nikolaevich, leads a White movement against the Bolsheviks. After his regiment is crashed, George and his fellows hide in the woods to continue fighting from there. George notes the barbaric cruelty of the Russian people when dealing with an enemy. While in the countryside he becomes infatuated with Grusha, a peasant girl. But George does not love her and continues to think of Olga, whom he left back in Moscow. Grusha is taken by the

Reds and probably killed. When George returns to Moscow, he finds out that Olga has become a communist, and even though she still loves him, she considers him a bandit and a murderer. Disappointed and lost, George leaves the city. He is frightened by the chaos and wild, blood-thirsty spirit that the revolution nourished. But he maintains hope that one day Russia will be reborn.

In his letter from the Lubyanka Prison written in 1924 as a prologue to the Russian publication of *The Black Horse*, Savinkov mentioned that he wanted to call his novel “Fedya” because it is the peasant Fedya who comes to the most truthful and terrifying realization that nobody knows what they are fighting for. But, Savinkov continued, he decided to call it *The Black Horse* because the scale in the hands of a black horseman, one of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, does not tip to one or another side depending on George’s or Fedya’s self-awareness. The scale firmly inclines to the side where the final fight for a human life lies.

In 1924, Savinkov illegally crossed the Soviet border and got arrested. Some contemporaries argued that he was lured back by the Soviet police with the help of his lover Lyubov’ Dikgof and her husband. Others maintain that Savinkov knew about the upcoming arrest but believed nonetheless that the Soviet government might find him useful and provide him with a job. A Soviet court sentenced him to death but later replaced the sentence with a 10-year imprisonment. While in jail, Savinkov had the luxury of reading, writing, going for walks, and accepting visitors. He officially accepted the Soviets, justifying this change of heart as accepting the choice of the Russian people. Unsuccessful at his pleas for a job, Savinkov jumped out of the window on May 7, 1925 (at least according to the official version). According to some writers such as Varlam

Shalamov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who claimed to have received information from other prisoners while in the gulag system, Savinkov was actually killed by the secret police agents.

In “The Terrorists’ Dilemmas,” Jeanne N. Knutson writes that for terrorists “behind the violent rhetoric, lies the pain of powerlessness, a pain which only activity perceived as strength will assuage” (217). Savinkov’s desire for power and his pain of powerlessness could not have been satisfied solely by the terrorist activity that he found necessary but also morally torturous. Influenced by the ideas of contemporary philosophers, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gippius, and Merezhkovsky, Savinkov tried to dissolve the pain of killing in his writing by searching for redemption and also immortality by creating his own narrative. Like his contemporary and fellow social-revolutionary Maria Spiridonova, Savinkov was both the creator and the created of his terrorist myth of martyrdom. Robert Smith argues that any literature or rhetoric “exposes itself to the possibility of its own destruction, its own coming to an end... it cannot always legislate against or discern that which might destroy it; yet it reserves the right to cut itself, cut itself off, cut itself short, at any point” (xxi). Savinkov saw no other way but to cut himself off, to cut his legend short, because, like many members of the Russian intelligentsia of that time, he realized his own social alienation, historical dislocation, and ideological inappropriateness. The Russian intelligentsia was fighting for the people but not with the people. The Russian intelligentsia succeeded in being *a* voice of Russia, as Gippius defined it, a strong and multivocal voice, but it failed as *the* voice of Russia. Prioritizing utilitarian principles above the philosophical truths

and building spiritual models based on social needs led to revolutionary nihilism and moral ambiguity.

Citing Nietzsche, “‘Evil men have no songs.’ – How is it that the Russians have songs?” (*Twilight of the Idols* 7). Russian terrorists killed others and died themselves for the Russian people, “out of love,” convinced of the noble nature of their murderous deeds, thus committing the most abominable act out of the purity of their hearts. In a way, this act was their song: a revolutionary cry, the growl of an apocalyptic beast. But their song was violent and short-lived, whereas the song of agrarian, peasant Russia continued to sound through the centuries. The Russia that sang was very far from the ideas of religious renewal and justifiable murder that were voiced in its name. Russians have songs because they sing about perseverance through both historical injustices and revolutionary blood, both the Whites and the Reds, both the internal and external enemies that have been their lot.

CHAPTER 1
TRUTH, MARTYRDOM, AND MYTHMAKING IN THE
REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA: THE CASES OF MARIA SPIRIDONOVA
AND BORIS SAVINKOV

Without the propaganda of the hero myth, murder is a solid business. With the hero myth, any act of violence is made not only possible but inevitable. (Robin Morgan, The Demon Lover, 56)

The carriage was flying toward Nevsky Prospect <...> The aged senator ... was thinking: about the stars. Rocking on the black cushions, he was calculating the power of the light perceived from Saturn.

Suddenly...among the bowlers on the corner, he caught sight of a pair of eyes. And the eyes expressed the inadmissible. They recognized the senator, and, having recognized him, they grew rabid, dilated, lit up, and flashed <...> His heart pounded and expanded, while in his breast arose the sensation of a crimson sphere about to burst into pieces... (Bely 10, 13-14)

In this scene from his novel *Petersburg*, Andrei Bely describes the encounter of the senator Apollon Apollonovich with the revolutionary terrorist Alexander Dudkin,

modeled after the terrorist and writer Boris Savinkov.⁶ That day, Dudkin never threw a bomb at the senator; and Apollon Apollonovich managed to avoid death throughout the novel. However, the senator's feelings of sheer terror in meeting the terrorist face-to-face were likely familiar to the Minister of the Interior Affairs Vyacheslav von Plehve in the last seconds of his life on July 28, 1904. His killer, social-revolutionary Egor Sozonov⁷ experienced similar agitation in approaching his victim. Quite likely, these feelings were also familiar to the Governor-General of Moscow Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich a second before his killer, social-revolutionary Ivan Kalyaev⁸ threw a nitroglycerin bomb into his lap on February 17, 1905. In his *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, Savinkov, the mastermind behind the murder, describes the aftermath picture of a terrorist act in gruesome detail: "The Grand Duke's body was mutilated. The head, neck, and upper part of the torso, with the left arm and shoulder, were torn away and completely shattered; the left foot was broken in half, with the lower part and instep torn away. The tonneau of the carriage was shattered to bits..." (108). Even though he never threw a bomb himself and never took anyone's life (at least according to the records), as the third and last organizational leader of the Combat Organization and artistic director of the terrorist acts, Savinkov was directly responsible for these deaths. Savinkov went down in history as a legendary revolutionary terrorist and a writer who not only documented the ideological portraits of Russian terrorists, but also raised the ethical questions of justifiable violence. His life exposed the moral deficiency of terrorism, despite the fact that he himself never denounced it.

⁶ According to Lynn Ellen Patyk, Savinkov strongly disliked Bely's famous novel because of the satiric depiction of Savinkov's relationship with the Combat Organization leader and his friend Evno Azef on the example of the Dudkin/Lippanchenko pair.

⁷ Appears as Sazonov in some sources. Also known as Abel.

⁸ Spelled as Kaliayev in the 1931 translation of Savinkov's *Memoirs of a Terrorist*

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented surge of revolutionary terrorist activity in Russia. Radical circles consisted predominantly of members from the privileged classes, including young women who, after being historically confined to the household for centuries, saw terrorism as an opportunity to realize their personal intellectual ambitions. Russian liberals, including the literary elite, came not only to oppose autocracy but also to actively support political extremism against tsarism. Due to the lack of material gain combined with the element of personal sacrifice, terrorism was considered a noble revolutionary work. As Anna Geifman mentions, ““there was never a shortage of people’ willing to participate in SR⁹-sponsored terror” (15). Further, Norman Naimark points out that, compared to approximately 100 radicals in the early 1860s and nearly 500 of them in 1879, by 1907, the pro-terrorist Social-Revolutionary Party had 45,000 members (with an addition of 300,000 sympathizers) (as qtd. in Geifman 262). Both members of the Social-Revolutionary Party, Boris Savinkov and his contemporary Maria Spiridonova ascribed primary significance to revolutionary terrorism. For both Spiridonova and Savinkov, terror was more than a means to emancipate the people (*narod*). Even though they both claimed to place *narod* and its interests in the core of their whole life activity, terror for them also became a channel for achieving individual goals through the process of their mythologization as revolutionary legends.

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY. THE ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIAN TERRORIST MOVEMENT.

The Crimean War of 1853-56, in which Russia was defeated by a coalition composed of Great Britain, France, Sardinia, and the Ottoman Empire, exposed the decay

⁹ Social-Revolutionary

and inefficiency of Tsar Nicholas I's regime and brought to light the acute necessity of economic reforms in the Russian state. The Emancipation Manifesto abolishing serfdom that Alexander II signed into law in 1861 provided the foundation for a newly emerging middle class in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. However, it did little to relieve the pernicious social disparity and concomitant alienation between peasants and the upper classes in Russia. With the rise of industrialism, some former landowners became city factory owners or trained to be lawyers and doctors. Household serfs without land started moving from the countryside to the cities, thus creating a cheap labor force overnight. Even though those with enough land turned into independent farmers, the majority of peasants received their personal freedom but not the land that they needed to survive and feed their families. With the Manifesto, peasants received a small plot from their *mir*, the local village community that now officially owned the acreage and rented it to peasants. As a small plot was not enough, they also had to rent more land from the nobles while still paying off excessive, long-term loans. The loans were paid to the government, but later distributed among the landowners. Those payments were eventually canceled in 1907, but they prolonged the conditions of both social and geographical immobility for the majority of the population for another half a century.

Meanwhile, Alexander II's education reforms granted autonomy to universities, which opened their doors to *raznochintsy*, people of non-noble origin and from different social ranks, who grew increasingly concerned about historical injustices between social classes in Russia. A significant number of the Russian intelligentsia came from *raznochintsy*, who got inspired by the liberal atmosphere of the universities and started the peasant emancipation movements against tsarist autocracy and oppression. During the

first phase of the liberation movement (1850s-60s), members of Russian intelligentsia turned to nihilism, a new political and philosophical doctrine that rejected all authorities and fathers' values. Nihilists considered all the aesthetic and spiritual manifestations, such as literature or art, to be the remains of the past and instead, they glorified natural sciences for their practical purpose. Above all, they valued positivist thinking and highest individual freedom. Russian nihilism came about as a revolutionary instinct of protest against an immutable autocratic oppression fossilized in social and cultural patterns. The seeds for Russian terrorism were planted then and there, in nihilists' attempts to reexamine, deconstruct, and negate the existing value-system.

Unlike the first generation, the second wave of Russian nihilists (1870s-1910s), *narodniki* (Populists), offered a positive program. Following the founder of Russian populism, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, they viewed Russian peasantry as a revolutionary class to overthrow the monarchy and believed in the idea of peasant communes as ideal socialist organizations based on equality. In 1874, thousands of members of the Russian intelligentsia partook in a spontaneous massive movement "going to people." They moved to the countryside to experience the simple living and come closer to the folk truth and wisdom as well as to awaken peasantry for revolutionary ideas. The two goals were equally aspiring and quixotic. Removed from the intellectual swirl of urban life, peasants were very suspicious of the newcomers and even called the police to have the propagandists arrested. At the same time, the populists learned the material elements of the peasant culture, such as clothing, dancing, singing, a folk manner of speaking, while staying completely oblivious to the *narod's* core needs and worldviews.

The Populists' programs turned out to be too utopian in their beliefs. By then, capitalism had already been developing in Russia through the class system of *kulaks* ("wealthy farmers") vs. paupers. Moreover, inspiring peasants for a revolution was an ambitious but hardly feasible idea because they would never give up their small but indispensable property for a dream of socialist future. Blind to these gaps in perspectives, different branches of the populists continued their attempts to spark a peasant revolutionary spirit in the ways they found most effective: through personal heroic deeds (like Mikhail Bakunin's followers) or systemic propaganda (like Petr Lavrov's supporters). Among the multiple organized populist movements were also radical groups that chose terror as a means to incite the countryside to revolutionary uprising, such as Sergei Nechaev's *Narodnaia Rasprava* ("The People's Reprisal," 1869-1871); *Narodnaia Volia* ("The People's Will," 1879-1883), which assassinated Alexander II in 1881; and later *Boevaia Organizatsiia* ("The Combat Organization," 1902-1908), a group within the Social-Revolutionary Party that was founded by Grigorii Gershuni, then led by Evno Azef after Gershuni's arrest in 1904, and, finally, headed by Boris Savinkov after Azef's exposure as a double agent in 1908.

Unlike modern terrorists, Russian revolutionary terrorists did not have a clearly marginalized position in Russian society. Moreover, some of the brightest minds of the Russian intelligentsia, including the leading Symbolists Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Gippius, and Aleksandr Blok, supported revolutionary violence and truly believed that it could accelerate the much needed reforms. Almost every writer in Imperial Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries was engaged in participatory citizenship. By choosing an ideological stance in his or her writings, Russian writers received not only a literary niche

for their works, but also a specific place within the revolutionary movement (or its opposite) (Mogil'ner 34). Words were powerful, and their lack also constituted a civic stance. Marina Mogil'ner argues that in the dichotomy of the two subcultures of that time - "Legal Russia" and "Underground Russia" - the social function of writers supporting the revolutionaries consisted in bringing the "Underground Russia" to the surface and developing the language for radical revolutionaries to express themselves (34).

The important role of the Russian intelligentsia in the revolutionary struggle was not only in creating practical linguistic forms for and about the revolutionary movement, but also in establishing the language of values. For those involved either peripherally or directly in the terrorist struggle that swept Russia during that period, murder was justified as purifying and redemptive. Ivan Turgenev's "Porog" (The Threshold, 1878) describes a young woman standing in a doorway, about to step out. A sinister voice asks her about her readiness: is she prepared for loneliness and hatred not only from enemies but from friends as well, is she prepared for anonymous sacrifice, is she prepared for murder, and finally, is she prepared for disappointment? The woman answers yes to all the questions and steps out, after which the door immediately shuts. "Fool!" someone says. "Saint!" another voice replies.

Turgenev's poem was inspired by the case of Vera Zasulich, a terrorist who belonged first to the Nechaev circle and later to the Bakunin group. She was one of the first women involved in individual acts of terrorism. Turgenev emphasizes that the decision to join the revolutionary movement and to kill for its goals was a conscious and well-considered choice. Both foolishness and sanctity of this choice was in the desperate revolutionary idealist belief that the fact of sacrificing one's own life in pursuit of noble

goals could dignify the loathsomeness of murder. In his book on the forces of death-drive in literature and art, Robert Smith disbands the concept of self-sacrifice as a purely metaphorical idea of dying for another because “the sacrificial victim will still die his or her own death” (30). Thus, when terrorists claimed to die for the Russian people, they died their own death for themselves.

Literature and life coexisted in a mutually inspirational relationship, each imitating the other. Literature created revolutionary heroes, even as revolutionaries modeled themselves on these heroes. In the oppositional space of Underground Russia, where all legal social conditions and relationships had been eliminated, a terrorist came to be defined through tragedy and sacrifice, while the element of actual murder, of taking away another life, was shadowed and undermined. The image of the terrorist-martyr became fashionable in literature and developed its own literary and philosophical discourses.

Public sympathy toward terrorists might seem strange to our contemporaries who live in the world of growing fear of terror but one of the peculiarities of the Russian terrorist movement at the beginning of the 20th century was its manner of targeting individuals in specific governmental positions. Social Revolutionaries followed “the revolutionary ‘code of honor’” (Walzer as qtd. in Boniece 127). As they claimed, their assassinations were “limited in scope and moral in purpose” (Boniece 127). Unlike modern-day terrorism, they did not directly instill everyday fear in the whole population by targeting only what they saw as “evil” supporters of the tsarist rule. However, the fact that the general population was not the target did not prevent people from becoming street casualties from a bomb thrown into a carriage of yet another minister. Between

1905 and 1907, in addition to 4,500 state officials who fell as victims of the revolutionary terrorism, 2,180 private individuals were killed and 2,530 were wounded. In 1907, up to eighteen people on average died every day. Between January 1908 and May 1910, terrorist acts carried 7,634 casualties (Geifman *Thou Shalt Not Kill* 21).

1.2 THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE *NAROD*: SYMBIOTIC

DISSONANCE AND THE DASEIN OF SOCIAL GUILT. REDIFINITIONS:

TRUTH AND LOVE.

The Russian intelligentsia made it the primary goal of their activity to emancipate the people. Members of the intelligentsia believed that they themselves had found freedom through education. They felt guilty about the privileged lifestyle at the cost of peasants' sweat and blood – and it was the time to pay back the debt. For years, beginning from the Decembrists,¹⁰ the Russian intelligentsia had been defined through a sense of constant social guilt, or speaking in Nietzschean terms, *ressentiment* (bad consciousness, self-resentment). Nietzsche uses this concept to explain the master-slave relationship, where a slave experiences hostility as a reaction to his own feeling of inferiority and weakness toward his master (472-475). The Russian intelligentsia had a case of self-resentment because it defined its position in the world as being inferior to Russian peasantry in terms of spiritual authenticity. Through “heroic deeds” (*podvigi*), it tried to redeem itself and solve the problem of their alienation, which often resulted in violence as a desperate measure.

Savinkov as a member of the Russian intelligentsia channeled his *ressentiment* through violence, but at the same time, he negotiated his own identity as a terrorist, the

¹⁰ Members of the opposition movement who organized a revolt against the Tsar on December 14, 1825 on the Senate Square in St. Petersburg

narrated, and as a writer, the narrator, through the rhetoric of terrorism, both practically and linguistically. Inspired by the Symbolists' decadent visions of the revolutionary apocalypse, Savinkov established his own discourse of terror and placed himself in the center of it as a self-proclaimed revolutionary prophet. Enchanted by the modern spirit of Russian decadence and apocalyptic worldviews, he deeply felt the hands of both fate and destiny on his whole life. In *What Never Happened*, Bolotov experiences this feeling before the murder of the policeman chief Slezkin, the morality of which Bolotov questions until the end of his life: "He felt that he had lost control over himself and that he was an obedient servant to Volodia, that somebody's higher immutable will, taking alike Volodia, and David, and Serezha, and himself, was pushing him to something terrible and fateful, and that it was not in his power to refuse to comply with that will. The understanding of not belonging to himself, but of being a toy in somebody's hands, was pleasing for him" (Savinkov *To, chego ne bylo* 271).¹¹ During the revolutionary period, this sense of fatalism was clearly present in minds of the Russian intellectual elite, producing a sophisticated juxtaposition of historical class alienation, acute awareness of individual social responsibility, and prophetic visions of the reborn Russia as a beacon of the new spiritual world.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger identified human beings as "Dasein," or "being-in-the world," where "Dasein is an entity, which, in its very being, comports itself understandingly towards that being" (Heidegger 78). According to Heidegger, people and things are "thrown in the world" of the already established relationships, a

¹¹ Here and for all other quoted sources in Russian – my translation. Citation in the original: «Он чувствовал, что потерял власть над собою, что он послушный слуга Володи, что чья-то высшая непреложная воля, одинаково владеющая и Володей, и Давидом, и Серёжей, и им, толкает его к чему-то страшному и решительному, и что он не в силах не подчиниться ей. И сознание, что он не принадлежит себе, что он – игрушка в чьих-то руках, было приятно ему».

“referential context of significance” (167). In other words, the Russian intelligentsia perceived its social and intellectual being in the world with the heightened sense of Dasein, the symbolic and social connectedness with peasants. The Russian intelligentsia worshipped the spirituality of the people and worked toward their emancipation with true passion and dedication. However, they also assumed a patronizing attitude toward peasants for their apolitical worldviews, excessive meekness, and inability to believe in the dreams of a greater socialist future out of the fear to lose their last nickel. Savinkov shared this sense of historical indebtedness from the position of intellectual elitism. Despite his love for the *narod*, the people’s political indifference and humility annoyed him: “Well, Germans will take Paris... Well, we’ll have a revolution, a republic... The most terrible thing is that always, no matter what happens, people will sit by the window and stare at a rooster fighting a chicken. This is the most frightening fact!” (*Erenburg, Savinkov, Voloshin v gody smuty* 197).¹²

In the light of apolitical nature of the *narod*, the Russian intelligentsia understood its social role as active, be it guiding, inspiring, or fighting, and in the realm of their Desein, the revolutionary world appeared as, in Heideggerian terms, “projecting onto possibilities” (as qtd. in Dreyfus and Wrathall 5). Thus, even though the Russian intelligentsia indeed had honorable intentions of bringing relief to Russian peasants who had been oppressed and impoverished for centuries, members of the intelligentsia also employed this “possibility” to define their own value in Russian society and make this “possibility” matter for their own self-identity and self-worth. From this confluence originates the controversial relationships between the Russian intelligentsia and *narod*:

¹² Citation in the original: «Ну, немцы возьмут Париж... Ну, у нас будет революция, республика... Самое ужасное, что всегда, что бы ни случилось, будет человек сидеть у окошка и глядеть, как петух дерётся с курицей. Это страшнее всего...»

the numerous attempts of Russian intelligentsia to educate, inspire, and civilize peasants went hand in hand with their admiration of simple life and closeness to God and land they associated with the *narod*. In *Vekhi* (Landmarks, 1909), Sergei Bulgakov points to this struggle between “worship of the people and spiritual elitism,” which in his opinion led to unnecessary bursts of heroism and “an arrogant attitude toward the people as a minor, unenlightened (in the intelligentsia’s sense of the word) object of its crusade dependent on a nursemaid to be nurtured to ‘consciousness’” (54-55).

The image of the guilty and repentant aristocrat had been developing in Russian literature and culture for decades, so the relationships between the Russian intelligentsia and the *narod* can be viewed as dialectic and diachronic. And yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, tension and disparity between the two groups had reached the ultimate level, bringing about a sense of metaphysical stagnation that demanded resolution. In his concept of Dasein as time, Heidegger recognizes the functionality of an object first and only later identifies it as an object (116). Since I work within the theoretical framework of “Revolutionary Apocalypse” as a time-space module, a metaphysical moment of stagnation, my understanding of the Russian intelligentsia in Heidegger’s terms will not be limited by a theoretical understanding of the Russian intelligentsia merely as a social layer, as an object, but will include the expression of its members’ participatory citizenship, their function in this unique temporal space, and their relativity both in the intelligentsia-peasants equation and in the synthesis of ontological and historical axioms established in Russian society by the end of the nineteenth century.

Heidegger’s concept of hermeneutic circles offers a theoretical explanation for the process of redefining the fundamental concepts of truth, reason, love, and sacrifice during

the Russian revolutionary period. Being “thrown into the world” as representatives of the privileged classes, the Russian intelligentsia inherited a set of given notions: religious, social, political, economic, and philosophical, thus, receiving a system of meaningful relations that determined their understanding of their own place within this system. One such presupposition was that the Russian folk had traditionally been considered the foundation of Russian society and the true “God-bearer” (*narod-bogonosets*). The historical tensions of the time period only aggravated the disparity between these concepts of truth secured in the social and epistemological structures (monarchal institutions, the Orthodox church, etc.), and the ontological traditions of truth in the Russian culture (folklore, literary traditions, etc.). Peasants were traditionally perceived as symbols of humility, kindness, good-naturedness, justice, and thus, closeness to God, protected from the moral corruption of higher society. The conflict lay in the appalling level of poverty that most of “God-bearers” had to suffer, which contradicted the ethical and philosophical convictions of Russian intelligentsia. Therefore, Russian intelligentsia felt the need to renegotiate the social and political truths. Heidegger is once again useful here, however, as he argues that “‘there is’ truth only in so far as *Dasein* is and so long as *Dasein* is[...] To say that before Newton his laws were neither true nor false, cannot signify that before him there were no such entities as have been uncovered and pointed out by those laws” (269). In other words, even though the social disparity had existed for centuries, it emerged as a “truth” only at the point when Russian intelligentsia defined their own social function through it. Heidegger disputes the fact that our understanding of the world is based on our perception of physical experience. Instead, it is based on our self-interpretation and, very often, the misinterpretation of self and others. Thus, the

misinterpretation of the peasants' truths, sense of being, and determination by Russian intelligentsia resulted in individualistic and even solipsistic thinking that eventually led to their failure to inspire the countryside for a revolutionary uprising.

The Russian language makes a semantic distinction between the words *pravda* and *istina*. Both words mean "truth," but while the first one can be used to define factual truth as well as a perspective – *U kazhdogo svoia pravda* ("Everyone has their own truth"), the second word describes fundamental, ultimate, undeniable truth. In the Russian Orthodox tradition *istina* has been historically connected to Jesus Christ: "*Ia est' put'*, *istina i zhizn'*" ("I am the way, the truth, and the life")." In Russian people's eyes, on one side, the state as a guardian of law signified truth (*pravda*) and was supported by church and orthodox religious dogmas; on the other side were justice, love, and sacrifice as universal truths (*istina*).

Populist and anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who believed in the federation of communes as the only way of fair social organization, declared a person's mind to be the only criterion of *istina* as opposed to "the cult of God" and "a person's conscience [to be] the foundation of justice" ("Revolutionary Catechism"). The belief in *narod* as the base of the ideal Russian society merged with the belief in exceptionalism of the Russian intelligentsia who meant to help build this ideal society, such as the one expressed by Pyotr Lavrov, the opponent of Bakunin, who believed that peasant culture was stationary and that the "conscious minority" was meant to ensure "the gradual transformation of 'culture' into 'civilization'" (Walicki 27-28). New revolutionary socialist movements placed the concept of utilitarianism in the core of any activity, which later caused a reaction from neo-idealists and a new round of debates about *istina* vs. *pravda*. In his

article “*Filosofskaia istina i intelligentskaia pravda*”(“Philosophic Truth and Moral Truth,” 1909), Nikolai Berdyaev argued that in the search for people’s happiness, the Russian intelligentsia lost its sense of philosophical truth, *istina* (*Landmarks* 4). And truth, in turn, lost its significance if it could not serve as a tool for emancipation and moral good: “its love for an equalizing justice, for the social good, and the popular welfare paralyzed its love of truth; it almost destroyed its interest in truth” (10).¹³ Berdyaev gave truth a Kantian definition, stating that philosophical truth had originated from the divine beginning in each person and should bring together the historical gap between the intelligentsia and the *narod*. However, Hans-Georg Gadamer writes, “interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones; this constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation” (233). Thus, no matter how far the Russian intelligentsia stepped from traditional ideas of philosophical truth, new socialist, utilitarian “projections” modified the whole concept of truth and reason in the society.

As Berdyaev mentions in his notes on revolution, Fyodor Dostoevsky realized that “Russian Socialism was not a political but a religious question, the question of God, of immortality and the radical reconstruction of all human life” (*The Russian Revolution* 8). Since traditional Christian Orthodoxy supported the tsarist regime and therefore, appeared as a symbol of autocracy, oppression, and necessity, along with the ideas of new Christianity circulating in the society, utilitarianism became a new religion. In his *Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky argued famously that the harmony of all of humankind was not worth one tortured child’s tear. According to Berdyaev, the revolutionaries were

¹³ Citation in the original: «любовь к уравнивательной справедливости, к общественному добру, к народному благу парализовала любовь к истине, почти что уничтожила интерес к истине».

seduced by the logic of the Grand Inquisitor.¹⁴ They readily gave up the truth in its highest, metaphysical meaning for the utilitarian truth and the happiness of the relieved consciousness. Berdyaev claims that such revolutionaries' principle is as follows: "Let truth (*istina*) perish if by its destruction the people will lead a better life; if the people will be happier; down with truth if it stands in the way of the sacred cry 'Down with autocracy'" (*Landmarks* 10). Berdyaev here disregards the fact that for revolutionaries the truth that prevents people from leading a better life was someone's *pravda*, but not *istina*. For many of them, *istina* still had an undeniable connection with God and faith but the connection between *istina* and Christian Orthodox church was broken. Thus, the question of God and truth merged with the question of *narod* as the bearer of an uncorrupted word of God.

Similarly, the revolutionary apocalyptic thinking problematized traditional notions of "love," as they became redefined and acquired new meanings. Revolutionary terrorists used these meanings to justify their political assassinations. Unable to inspire the peasantry for a revolution during the "going to people" movement, a number of revolutionaries turned to terror that they saw as a catalyst for the "universal autonomy and redemption" (Verhoeven 7). Political terrorist acts were proclaimed to occur in the name of people and out of love for them, while the fact of murder was "redeemed" through the "self-sacrifice" of the terrorist. Analyzing the "art of dying" tradition in literature, Donald Siebert argues that performance of dying started with Jesus (49). By

¹⁴ The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor written by Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov* tells a story, in which Jesus Christ comes back to the Earth during the times of Inquisition in Seville. Jesus is again arrested and sentenced to death. The Grand Inquisitor visits Jesus in his cell to tell him that the Church does not need him anymore: the freedom that Jesus brought to people deprives them of redemption and therefore, causes all the human suffering, while the Church not only feeds the hungry ones, but also gives them all the answers to relieve their conscience. The Grand Inquisitor claims that people are happy in this ignorance. As a response, Jesus silently kisses him. The Grand Inquisitor releases Christ and tells him to never come back.

connecting their sacrifice with the concept of Christian love and accepting murder as their cross to bear, terrorists created a metaphorical parallel between their performative acts and the ultimate Christian performance of dying. Revolutionary myths of martyrdom, such as the myths of Maria Spiridonova and Boris Savinkov, and their fellows-in-terror, came into being and evolved as new revolutionary “social imaginaries,” to use Charles Taylor’s term. Taylor understands this concept not as “a set of ideas; rather, it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society...” (2). He adds that “[t]he image of order carries a definition not only of what is right, but of the context in which makes sense to strive for and hope to realize the right” (9). In other words, the development of a revolutionary terrorist mythology occurred within a unique temporal space when metaphysical paradigms of social foundations were shifting. In the process of myth creation, the subject of the myth functioned both as a narrator and an object of narration that came into being via linguistic means as much as via a collective imagination.

Unlike terrorist martyrs, Dostoevsky never interpreted love as an intermediate agent to justify killing. He devoted his life and work to explaining the intellectual roots of political violence in Russia and human dialectics between “the law of love” and “the law of personality” and always rejected the idea of terror, even though before his arrest in 1849 he himself was a member of the revolutionary Petrashevsky circle.¹⁵ Using the examples of his characters Rodion Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment*, Ivan

¹⁵ The Petrashevsky literary circle (1827-1866) was organized for progressive intellectuals of St. Petersburg by Mikhail Butashevich-Petrashevsky. The most famous members included Fyodor Dostoevsky, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Aleksei Pleshcheyev, and Taras Shevchenko. The group often gathered to discuss literature banned by the Nicholas I’s censorship. Frightened by the revolutionary uprisings, in 1849, Nicholas I gave the order to arrest the members of the Petrashevsky circle for distributing Vissarion Belinsky’s *Letter to Gogol* and sentenced them to death. At the last minute, the death sentence was replaced by the incarceration time in Siberian labor camps. After his release, Dostoevsky was a new man: a dedicated pacifist who completely rejected violent means of the revolutionary struggle.

Karamazov from *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Petr Verkhovensky from *Demons*, Dostoevsky argued that extraordinary acts of violence or terror are the results of person's enslavement to the earthly part of his being, to his egoism. Indeed, the selfless idea of saving people often transformed for the revolutionaries into the mix of heroic bravado and mannered intellectual self-flagellation in an attempt to relieve the pressure of *ressentiment*.

The most vivid example of a revolutionary who fully absorbed the redefined concepts of love and truth was Ivan Kalyaev, one of Savinkov's closest friends in the Combat Organization. Savinkov's characters inspired by Kalyaev emerge in Savinkov's novels as his other self that finds self-satisfying ethical resolution to the juxtaposition of murder and morality in Russian revolutionary terrorism. Other members of the Combat Organization called Kalyaev the Poet not only for his poetry, but for his overall romantic views of terrorism. He was an "ideal terrorist" for Savinkov because in his heart, he reconciled the idea of death and murder with the ideas of life, love, and sacrifice: "Revenge is necessary and it is allowed. It is shameful and criminal to wait and enjoy life [...] Still, life is good. Stars are good, so is the sky, and flowers, and people, and... death is good [...] I think that one should be able to love and also... to hate. Then everything is allowed. Do you understand? Everything. And murder is allowed. Yes, and murder..." (Savinkov 4, *Iz vospominanii ob Ivane Kaliaeve* [From Memories About Ivan Kalyaev], 1906).¹⁶ Kalyaev believed that everyone could love people and land to such a degree where life, one's own and someone else's, had to surrender to this love, where one could

¹⁶ Citation in the original: «Нужно и можно мстить. Стыдно и преступно ждать и радоваться жизни [...] И всё-таки жизнь хороша. Хороши звёзды, и небо, и цветы, и люди, и ... смерть хороша...[...] Мне кажется, нужно уметь любить и ещё... ненавидеть. Тогда всё можно. Понимаешь, всё. И убить можно. Да, и убить...»

hate in the name of love, and where not to kill meant not to love. There was Nietzschean affirmation of life, and death as life, in his ability to see art and religious sacrifice in terror. Savinkov remembers that “those who knew him very closely perceived that his love of art and the revolution was illumined by the same fire that animated his soul – his furtive, unconscious, but strong and deep religious instinct” (*Memoirs*, 38). Ironically, Azef, who was close to Savinkov before his betrayal was exposed and to whom Savinkov was equally similar in cold-blooded and calculated planning, thirst for action, and obsession with power and risk, was bored with Kalyaev’s excessive passion for terror at their first meeting and called him “strange” (*Memoirs*, 13).

In this idealism and life-affirmation lay Kalyaev’s difference from Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* who grants extraordinary people the right to kill or Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* who kills his father out of spite and self-loathing, and perhaps, mainly, from Savinkov himself who carried the virus of *karamazovschina*. In his novel, Dostoevsky uses this word as a common noun to describe a disease that spread well beyond the Karamazov family (*Brat’ia Karamazovy* 99). Under *karamazovschina*, Dostoevsky understood the highest degree of nihilism, rejection of suprapersonal morality, and the visions of mangedhood that infected the Russian society.¹⁷ Savinkov’s extreme individualism, rejection of moral roots, and the self-assigned right to exist beyond traditional morality were the symptoms of Dostoevsky’s *karamazovshchina*.

¹⁷ For more information about this condition as it functioned within the novel and in the Russian society as a whole, see Joseph Frank’s analysis of *The Brothers Karamazov* (848-911).

1.3 THE ROADS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE: INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CAUSES IN SOCIAL-REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM OF MARIA SPIRIDONOVA AND BORIS SAVINKOV.

Maria Spiridonova was a 21-year old upper-class woman and a daughter of a bank official who belonged to the lower nobility. As a female in Imperial Russia, Spiridonova shared the problem of restrained access to the political debate along with peasants. As Sally Boniece argues, even upper-class women in the revolutionary Russia had limited career and professional opportunities, which forced them into searching for opportunities elsewhere (134). Even though women could study at higher education institutions after the 1870's, it provided women of the privileged class only with the "vocational training to prepare mothers, wives, and housekeepers" (Stites *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia* 3-4). As Richard Stites mentions, "the *institutka* was a standing joke in Russian society, and the word became a veritable synonym for the light-headed and ultra-naïve female" (5). Male terrorists used terrorist acts as performative violence mainly to open a public forum about the oppression of peasantry in Russia and abroad and to serve as a voice for *narod*, whereas women also used terrorist organizations as a liminal political space, where women's status had not been rooted in tradition and norms as much as it was within the legal social structures. As Boniece claims, even within the revolutionary circles, many women revolutionaries were rarely treated equally by their male counterparts and were mostly left with "organizational, secretarial, and housekeeping duties" while men were appointed to the positions of political leadership in the party (134). Most revolutionary women from Savinkov's *Memoirs of a Terrorist* are bomb-makers, while others participate in party activities because of their feelings for one or

another male terrorist in the party: as social-revolutionary and historian Evgenii Kolosov (the literary pseudonym - M. Gorbunov) notices, as soon as female characters from Savinkov's works start talking about terror, they lower their blue or big black eyes that immediately get filled with tears (423). In *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, Savinkov's autobiographical character refuses to allow Dora Brilliant to throw a bomb because he believes that women should commit a terrorist act only when the organization has no other option (57). Thus, the career of Maria Spiridonova is rather exceptional in comparison with other women revolutionaries. It is hard to tell whether her prominent political status as a head of the Peasant Section of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies after the October revolution was a direct result of her myth and national fame rather than her political activity.

Yet as a student, Spiridonova got involved with the Social-Revolutionary Party because she felt compelled to stand up for oppressed peasants in her hometown of Tambov. From prison she described the atrocities of the provincial councilor of Tambov, Luzhenovsky, that forced her to take a gun and shoot him multiple times at the railway station on January 16, 1906: "He would despoil peasants of their grain and their most precious possessions, set fire to their villages, and rape their women. When Luzhenovsky arrived at a village, after calling all the inhabitants together, he would order them to undress. He would make himself comfortable and eat and drink while the peasants knelt in the snow and dirt outside" (Steinberg 5).

After her arrest and throughout the entire life, until her execution by the Soviets on September 11, 1941, Spiridonova narrated her own story through letters that were

frequently published in such newspapers and periodicals as *Rus'* ("Russia"), *Molva* ("Rumor"), *Russkoe Gosudarstvo* ("Russian State") and *Dvadtsatyi vek* ("The Twentieth Century"). Her story was supplemented by letters to Spiridonova, against Spiridonova, and about Spiridonova published in *Novoe Vremia* ("New Time") and *Mysl'* ("Thought"), not to mention a number of books about her such as V.V. Vladimirov's *Maria Spiridonova*, 1905, M.V. Sarychev's *Russkie Zhenshchiny* (Russian Women, 1917), and Aleksandra Izmailovich's *Iz proshlogo* (From the Past, 1923). People wanted to know her story up to the smallest details, such as the change of her regular hair style in an attempt to relieve constant headaches while in jail (from making "the part down the middle and brushing of the two wide waves on both sides" to "braid[ing] her light-chestnut hair into two braids and wrap[ping] it around the head") (Vladimirov as qtd. in Lavrov 37).

Unlike Savinkov, who, despite being inspired by the spirit and collective efforts of the emancipation movement, was apolitical in general, Spiridonova was very passionate about the Social-Revolutionaries' goals and could not imagine herself working for any other party. In her letter to the newspaper "*Rus'* ("Russia")" from February 12, 1906 that became the beginning of her narrative as a revolutionary martyr, Spiridonova stresses the fact that once she regained consciousness after her attempt on Luzhenovsky's life and arrest, she immediately identified herself as a social-revolutionary (Spiridonova's "Letter About Torture" as qtd. Lavrov 12).¹⁸ Spiridonova again presented herself as a party member who strongly believed in social-revolutionary ideals later during her trial: "I am a member of the Social-Revolutionary Party and my act can be explained by the ideas that the party and I, as its member, profess, and by the conditions of Russian life in

¹⁸ Citation in the original: «Придя в сознание, я назвала себя, сказала, что я социалистка-революционерка».

which these ideas must be realized” (Spiridonova’s “Speech During the Trial” published in “*Dvadtsatyi vek* [“The Twentieth Century”]” from March 27, 1906 as qtd. in Lavrov 100).¹⁹ Savinkov had periods of agreement and periods of estrangement with the Social-Revolutionary Party because he never accepted the Central Committee’s decision to give up terrorism for the sake of parliamentary negotiations and his writing created controversy about the party life, whereas Spiridonova considered herself an instrument of the party and believed that every minute of her life had to be devoted to reaching party’s goals: “I understand belonging to the Social-Revolutionary Party not only as unconditional acceptance of its program and tactics but to a much fuller degree. In my opinion, it means to give your whole life, all the thoughts and feelings for realization of party’s ideas; it means to have nothing outside of party’s interests and its ideals; it means to live each minute of your life towards the victory of the cause” (Spiridonova’s “Letter About Belonging to the SR Party” from March 1906 as qtd. in Lavrov 115).²⁰ For Spiridonova, her martyrdom started not after her arrest but when she made the decision to join the cause. She even found it necessary to ask the party for permission to commit suicide if torture became too morally and physically unbearable (Spiridonova’s “Letter about a Possibility of Suicide” from May 1906 as qtd. in Lavrov 143-144).

At the same time, Spiridonova clearly had her need for personal recognition in mind while joining the Social Revolutionary Party. She explains that SRs were a better fit for her ideas than Social Democrats (Marxists) because SDs were lacking “something

¹⁹ Citation in the original: «Я – член п. [артии] с. [оциалистов-] р. [еволюционеров], и мой поступок объясняется теми идеями, которые исповедуют партия и я, как член ее, и теми условиями русской жизни, при которых эти идеи должны реализовываться».

²⁰ Citation in the original: «принадлежность к партии с-р-ов понимается мною не только как безусловное признание ее программы и тактики, а гораздо полнее. По-моему, это значит отдать всю свою жизнь, все помыслы и чувства на осуществление идей партии в жизни; это значит не иметь ничего вне интересов партии и ее идеалов; это значит каждой минутой своей жизни распоряжаться так, чтобы дело от этого выигрывало».

essential to her; a philosophy of life, a sense of personal moral responsibility... There was no place for the individual human personality on which the Social Revolutionaries laid great stress” (Steinberg 15-16). Being able to be recognized for the deed individually was crucial for the young and passionate Spiridonova. She was ready for martyrdom but she wanted it to be the result of her personal choice and an expression of her own self-consciousness as much as it was a tactical move for the sake of party ideology. By working in terror nominally for the sake of others, Spiridonova, like other young women revolutionaries, found her own individual voice both in her practical political activity and in her revolutionary narrative.

Savinkov’s involvement in the revolutionary circles also started during his student years. Before joining the Social-Revolutionary Party, Savinkov and Kalyaev attended Saint-Petersburg University and both got expelled for participation in student riots in 1899. Back then, Savinkov was involved with Social-Democratic groups *Socialist* and *Rabochee znamia* (“Workers’ banner”), got arrested in 1901 and exiled to Vologda. Savinkov writes in his *Memoirs* that by the time of exile he was not satisfied with the social-democratic program anymore as it did not offer specific solutions to the agrarian question. At the same time, as he mentions, he was drawn to the terrorist traditions of “People’s Will” and decided to join the terrorists in 1903 after Gershuni’s arrest (21). At the same time, while identifying with the Social-Revolutionary Party for the majority of his revolutionary life, Savinkov always kept aloof. Because of his pronounced individualism and unmistakable charisma, Savinkov placed himself above organized, herd thinking: in a letter from jail at the end of his life, sarcastically, he recalls his

excommunication from the “SR church” (*Pismo Savinkova B.V. Ivanovu* f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 7a, p. 22).

The publication of Savinkov’s works drastically changed the attitude of those who considered him a brilliant strategist and devoted revolutionary. In 1912, a group of social-revolutionaries even wrote an open letter-protest to *Zavety* (“Testaments”), a monthly social-revolutionary literary and political journal, with a request to stop publishing Savinkov’s novel *What Never Happened* (“V redaktsiu ‘Zavetov’ [To the Editorial Board]” 144). It was followed by literary historian Shegolev’s article in *Sovremennik* (“Contemporary”), a monthly journal of literature, politics, science, history, art, and social life published in Saint-Petersburg, stating that “the novel present[ed] an extremely misleading picture of the movement that Russia [had] lived through, a biased one, from the point of view that [was] completely alien to [their] movement” (Schegolev 381-382).²¹ In the published reply, the editorial board shamed them for Savinkov’s “excommunication from the movement” and declined their request, explaining that Savinkov witnessed “bright and dark, joyful and painful pages of the recent historical past” together with them and that he has an equal right to “discuss the ethics of this experience” (“V redaktsiu ‘Zavetov’ [To the Editorial Board]” 145). Social-Revolutionaries required full dedication to the party program and, as a result, reacted to Savinkov’s ethical doubts and moral dilemmas with contempt and anger, knowing that they were detrimental both for terror as a means of revolutionary struggle and for social-revolutionary ideas as a program.

²¹ Citation in the original: «роман является крайне неверной картиной пережитого Россией движения, тенденциозно освещённой, с совершенно чуждой нашему направлению точки зрения».

Before *What Never Happened*, Savinkov was widely praised and equally widely criticized for *The Pale Horse*²² and later, for *Memoirs of a Terrorist*. In many ways, Savinkov became a prophet not only of the revolutionary Apocalypse as he positioned himself in his literary works, but also of revolutionary failure and, mainly, the failure of revolutionary radical philosophy. A number of his contemporaries such as the writer and historian Alexander Amfiteatrov confessed to Savinkov in 1923 that looking back, *The Pale Horse* had more truth and honesty in it than most revolutionary supporters wanted to admit, because it painfully struck “terrorist revolutionary enthusiasm that was already staggering” (*Pis'ma Amfiteatrova* GARF f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 21).

What Never Happened was published in 1911 abroad. Savinkov could return to Russia only in 1917, after the February revolution, but already in July 1917 Alexander Kerensky, the Minister-Chairman of the Russian Provisional Government, appointed Savinkov as a new Deputy War Minister. Meanwhile, in the country that was exhausted by the years of the World War I, Kerensky's indecisive foreign policy threatened to result in the Bolsheviks' takeover. Savinkov believed that in order to avoid the disintegration of the Russian Army accelerated by the Bolsheviks' propaganda at the battle-fronts, the troops had to be united under General Lavr Kornilov (*Vospominaniia*: “K delu Kornilova” 368). Kerensky appointed Kornilov to be the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Provisional Government. However, the relationship between Kerensky, Savinkov, and Kornilov soon deteriorated. As Savinkov mentions, Kerensky accused him of trying to redistribute the power between the three of them (377). After an unfortunate chain of misunderstandings in power play between Kerensky and Kornilov and Savinkov's failed

²² Even Savinkov's wife, Vera Glebovna Uspenskaia, did not like *The Pale Horse* – a fact Savinkov mentions in one of his letter from exile in France (RGALI f. 1557, op. 1, ed. hr. 11)

attempts to negotiate between the two, Kornilov attempted a failed coup d'état and Savinkov was fired from the Provisional Government.

After the 1917 October revolution that Savinkov openly despised and the following unsuccessful riots in Yaroslavl', Rybinsk, and Murom in 1918, he turned to the West in search of allies for the anti-Bolshevik movement abroad. Savinkov found one of the strongest supporters in Poland during the Soviet-Polish conflict of 1920. Polish socialist and first Savinkov biographer Karol Wędziagolski participated in the affairs of the Don Volunteer Army that Savinkov tried to organize in 1918 and later arranged a meeting between Savinkov and Józef Klemens Piłsudski, Polish Chief of State in 1918-1922. Wędziagolski gives a first-person insight into political and personal sides of Savinkov. He mentions Savinkov's sincere and heartfelt joy at their Paris encounter that contradicted notorious coldness of "this famous actor, simulant, and artist every possible gestures and forgeries" (*Novyi Zhurnal* 137).²³ Savinkov believed that the fight against the Bolsheviks for Russia and for the whole Europe lies in Poland because in case of Polish victory, the Bolsheviks move to Germany and then even further to the West (152). The plan was to gather an army of Russian volunteers on the Polish territory. Under Piłsudski's protection, Savinkov created "Russian Political Committee" in Warsaw, assisted mobilizing Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz's troops and, together with Merezhkovsky and Gippius, started publishing the Warsaw newspaper "Za svobodu!" (For Freedom!). After the Polish truce with the Bolsheviks on October 12, 1920, Savinkov was deported from Poland and wrote a collection of articles called "Nakanune

²³ Citation in the original: «Радость Савинкова искренняя и сердечная меня тронула, как явление для него не совсем обычное, так как я знал до точности все оттенки его сдержанного холода и дипломатических имитаций, имевшихся в распоряжении этого знаменитого артиста, симулятора и художника всяческих жестов и подделок».

novoi revolutsii” (On the Eve of the New Revolution). In this collection that sums up his political and military experience as of 1921 and provides political forecasts for the future, Savinkov describes the “third” path for Russia as a peasant republic (*Vospominaniia: “Nakanune novoi revolutsii”* 455-514).

1.4 REVOLUTIONARY MYTHMAKING. LIVING THE REVOLUTIONARY MYTH.

Even though Savinkov and Spiridonova were equally well-known in Russia, the public sentiment about their narratives was very different. In his article in *Rus’* (“Russia”) from March 14, 1906, Vladimirov describes the peasants’ reaction to Luzhenovsky’s murder. Peasants from Peski sent three people to Borisoglebsk to find out the name of the murderer who had “saved them from a cruel torturer” so that they could pray for the health if that person was alive or for peace if the person died (Lavrov 66). When the name became known, the whole village started praying for Spiridonova, grew very interested to know the amount of bullets that had hit Luzhenovsky and whether he would survive (66). The author of an article in the conservative newspaper *Novoe vremia* (“New Time”) from March 18, 1906, sees both Luzhenovsky and Spiridonova as “unlucky victims of the nasty provincial revolution”: “... I don’t know Spiridonova, a murderer, and I don’t want to know her. I know only a good, kind woman, gentle person, who is feminine, soft, moral” (86).²⁴ Again, we see a strong tendency to displace the idea of personal responsibility for oppression on one side and murder on the other through the concepts of victimization, fate, and revolutionary spirit, and to blame simply the unfortunate circumstances of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

²⁴ Citation in the original: «Я знаю лишь хорошую, добрую девушку, нежного человека, женственную, мягкую, нравственную».

In jail, Spiridonova claimed back her power as a narrator through writing. The tsarist police were well aware of the power that the revolutionary word - and especially the word of a revolutionary martyr - could carry in public. In a letter from March 1906, Spiridonova revealed that guards were ordered to watch her every second to make sure that she was not writing (Lavrov 16). Spiridonova could not give up writing and tried to write on the walls of her cell. When the administration of the jail demanded that she stop damaging the walls and threatened to place a guard inside her cell, she replied that she would gladly accept it because then there would be one more “conscientious revolutionary” (43).

Maria Spiridonova successfully developed this discourse by becoming “the SR Blessed Virgin” (Boniece 151). Spiridonova’s myth as a martyr was constructed on a juxtaposition of few concepts such as pain and strength, sexual abuse and innocence, and contamination and purity. Spiridonova’s letter from prison after Luzhenovsky’s assassination stressed the great deal of physical suffering that she had to go through because of the beating by Cossacks: “I would cover my face with my hands; they would remove my hands with the butts of their guns. Then the Cossack officer wound my braid around his hand and lifted me up; with one powerful thrust, he threw me back down on the platform... Then they dragged me by the foot down a staircase, my head striking against the steps...Swearing terribly, they would beat my naked body with their whips... They put out a burning cigarette on my naked body... To make me scream, they crushed the soles of my ‘elegant’ feet – or so they called them – with their heavy boots” (137). The description of torture elevated her to the status of a holy martyr in the eyes of the Russian people because she went through pain, like Christ did before he was crucified.

Spiridonova herself made references to Christ in the light of her situation: “Do you know that I belong to those people who laugh on the cross? I laughed when I was clubbed into unconsciousness; I laughed as I listened to the death sentence” (Steinberg 43). Her “laughter” is Nietzschean, life-affirming; through it, Spiridonova positions herself spiritually superior to her torturers. In public eyes, like Christ, Spiridonova just offered the other cheek for more beatings, but for her as a revolutionary, this submission was strategic: the more bruises and scars from whips she got on her body, the more people took weapons in their hand to fight the tsarist cruel system. Steinberg, who was also a member of the Social Revolutionary Party and who wrote a book about Spiridonova’s life, remembered that “Russia cried out like a wounded animal when it learned of the tragedy of Spiridonova” (27).

Despite having the name of the Virgin Mary – Maria, Spiridonova was known as Marusya (a folk, more informal version of her name) to emphasize that she was not a symbol of traditional Orthodoxy that historically took the tsar’s side but a symbol of peasant mother Russia, suffering, forgiving, and spiritual. In a letter to Spiridonova, SRs Gershuni, Sozonov, Karpovich, and Sikorskii call her “a symbol of not only the tortured country that is bleeding under the heel of a drunk, unbridled Cossack, but also a symbol of young, resurgent, fighting, resistant and self-sacrificing Russia” (Lavrov 88).²⁵ Representing Russia itself, Spiridonova was the preaching traditional Christian dichotomy of spirit over body: “You can kill me, you have the power and the laws to do so, but I shall die standing” (Rabinowitch 433). Embracing the idea of death brought the sense of immortality in her myth as she gave it timeless legacy. Even though Spiridonova

²⁵ Citation in the original: «Но символ не только измученной страны, истекающей кровью под каблуком пьяного, разнузданного казака, - вы символ ещё и юной, восставшей, борющейся, стойкой и самоотверженной России».

expressed regret for not dying at the time of assassination, as a political fighter, she benefited from being sentenced to death: “there is a still greater happiness – death on the scaffold. Between the act and the scaffold there lies a whole eternity. It is perhaps the supreme happiness of man. Only then does one know and feel the whole strength and beauty of the Idea. To commit the deed and later to die on the scaffold - it is like sacrificing one’s life twice” (Steinberg 33). She embraced the idea of the ultimate sacrifice and, comforting her mother, told her that “from five children it is fair to give one to the homeland” (Lavrov 44). However, Spiridonova did not see the scaffold until 1941, when she was executed by the Soviets.

Spiridonova’s narrative was also based on sexualization of her image by others and Spiridonova herself. Spiridonova’s letter hinted at the possibility of her sexual abuse by Cossacks after the arrest but she never directly stated the facts: she wrote that Avramov, one of the officers, “behaved indecently towards her” and that he “had actually taken advantage of her weakness” (Steinberg 22). She also described how Avramov tried to undress and touch her sexually. Spiridonova drew a very detailed picture of the officer’s harassment on the train to Tambov: “He is drunk and gentle, his arms are hugging me, undressing, his drunk lips whisper nastily: ‘What satin breasts, what graceful body’” (Lavrov 13).²⁶ The fact that she repeatedly stated that most of the time she was in delirium allowed her myth to spin out of her control. Journalists created more and more stories about a virgin who was not only brutally raped, but also infected with syphilis. Social Revolutionaries used her fame as a fighter and a victim to promote their

²⁶ Citation in the original: «Он пьян и ласков, руки обнимают меня, расстёгивают, пьяные губы шепчут гадко: «Какая атласная грудь, какое изящное тело»».

political agenda. And the Russian people sympathized with her situation as if she was their daughter or sister.

From a narrator of their stories, Savinkov and Spiridonova also became an object of narration. And as a character in revolutionary narrative, Spiridonova had to go through a series of plot twists, “a sequence of moves to enhance its [body, character] social value” (Armstrong about main characters in British novels 6). Spiridonova had to refute some embellished details that appeared in the newspaper *Rus* (such as the story with syphilis²⁷) publicly. V.E. Vladimirov contributed the most in spreading Spiridonova’s narrative through his reports in the newspaper *Rus*, especially the story with syphilis (Lavrov 33). However, lies were as much a part of her myth as truth; lies were possibilities that were linguistically brought into being, reshaping the existing myth-reality. Lavrov stresses that even though Vladimirov’s publications were far from objective, they played a significant role in saving Spiridonova’s life as they were widely distributed not only in Russia, but also abroad (80-81). Because of them, the readers in Russia and Europe became more and more outraged about “an insult to human dignity”; female readers felt especially strong about “demand[ing] justice for [their] desecrated sister” (Boniece 140).

People were waiting for more and more updates about Spiridonova’s case. A letter to her sister was immediately published, which resulted in her sister’s arrest (Steinberg 28). Spiridonova’s mother’s letter also revealed the maltreatment of Spiridonova in prison: by then, she had already started having serious health issues including coughing with blood, loss of vision, swelling, and having hallucinations (Steinberg 32, Lavrov 32, 40). Spiridonova’s myth spread all over Europe, where people

²⁷ Prison doctor Fink reported that he examined Spiridonova’s rash but did not consider it a syphilitic rash; Spiridonova did not express any other symptoms of syphilis (Lavrov 76).

were formed protest groups and signed petitions to free her (43-44). One journalist wrote that “Mariia’s life ended; began *zhitie*,”: the word “*zhitie*” was used only to describe the life of saints in the Russian literary tradition (Geifman 109). Spiridonova’s train trip to a Siberian camp resembled a political campaign, when each railway stop turned into a mass gathering of people who came to listen to Spiridonova, shake her hand, take an autograph and a picture, and give her small gifts of food and clothing (Steinberg 48-51). Even nuns recognized Spiridonova’s martyrdom as just and holy: “A nun brought us a beautiful bouquet of wild flowers with the inscription: ‘To the beloved martyrs, from the nuns of N. Convent’” (57). Photographs taken at the railway stations and speeches made here later circulated across the whole of Russia. But what people asked for most often was written words and statements. They needed Spiridonova to continue her revolutionary narrative. She wrote, “I particularly remember one sooty-faced young proletarian who stretched his filthy hands down from the roof again and again, tendering us bits of paper and imploring us with a voice that was hoarse by this time to ‘Write, sisters, write.’ Each one of us wrote down her name and the deed in which she had taken part. Several of us, by dint of bent backs and continual writing, actually managed to write out a short proclamation” (52).

It was very important for Spiridonova to keep communicating her life and ideas to people for a number of reasons. First, she declared herself a professional terrorist: after firing shots in Luzhenovsky, she could use the fuss of the moment and run but she did not: “Execute me!” she declared proudly when people were looking around and trying to find who was shooting (Lavrov 48). Spiridonova was particularly insulted when tsarist police tried to accuse her of terrorist acts that she did not commit and that she considered

disgraceful or badly planned (Rabinowitch 440). Second, she strived to keep the continuity of her being and therefore, her legend, throughout her life and multiple imprisonments. “The old habits were resurrected to such strengths and vitality as if there had never been a thirty-one-year break in time,” she wrote in 1918, when she was again arrested, this time by the Soviet secret police (433). And third, Spiridonova wanted to fight until the very end and writing was another channel for resistance.

Savinkov was the one usually accused of being too cold-blooded and task-oriented and Spiridonova was generally perceived as a victim rather than a killer. However, sometimes she demonstrated astonishing hardness. When she was informed that one of her party fellows Ilya Maiorov cracked under the pressure of the secret police officers who threatened to send his elderly father with a missing leg to a concentration camp and his young son to prison, Spiridonova said, “Go ahead and lock the boy up, people remain people even in a camp and it often happens that they become people only in a camp. As for the old man, give him some morphine in a shot of vodka. He’ll fall asleep and that will be that” (438). This strength and rigidity in Spiridonova contrasted with her image of a pure and innocent virgin who sacrificed herself for the greater good of Russian *narod*.

Through her mythologization and elevated social status, Spiridonova was also able to achieve her personal goals by stepping in as a successful political leader. Under the pressure in Russia and abroad, tsarist police were forced into replacing her death sentence with life imprisonment (425). After the February revolution she was released, became the head of the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries in Petrograd, and later, while working with the provisional government, she was appointed to be in charge of the Peasant Section of

the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies. When she was imprisoned for the second time, her myth was still alive among peasantry, and, as Steinberg noticed, "Spiridonova's second martyrdom began" (217). Like Savinkov, she became a prophet of her own fate: she suspected that, like Chaadaev,²⁸ she would be imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital by the Bolsheviks (Lavrov 178). Later, throughout the years, with rapidly degrading health, she was released and again arrested multiple times, until September 11, 1941 when she was executed by the Soviets with 157 other prisoners in Medvedevsky forest close to Orel (266). Joseph Stalin was afraid of her possible escape and further sabotage activities while the Nazis were getting close to Orel where Spiridonova and others were kept.

Savinkov's revolutionary myth developed through multiple channels: through his official image as a political terrorist, through his, often controversial, personal relationships, and through his own, equally polemical writing. Savinkov, who claimed throughout his life to have been working for people, never connected to the *narod* in a symbolic manner, like Spiridonova. His reputation was controversial; his name appeared in a great number of memoirs: some described him as an arrogant and cold manipulator, others as a brilliant storyteller who loved wine, women, and morphine. Many contemporaries remember him in the center of attention at any gathering. Vladimir Zenzinov thought of him as an exceptional entertainer. He recalls that, one day, during the lunch time somebody came up with an idea to write a poem on any topic before dessert, offering an extra shot of cognac for the winner. Savinkov proclaimed that it was an easy task and that he would gladly write three poems instead. And indeed, Savinkov

²⁸ Petr Chaadaev was a Russian philosopher of the Decembrist period. He was diagnosed as mentally ill for criticizing Russian conditions under tsarism.

produced three poems (lyrical one, social one, and decadent one), won his extra shot and pointed out: “My first poem was ready yet before the fish, the second one – before the roast, and the third one – before dessert. Besides, you entrusted me with making orders with a waiter, which greatly interfered with my poetic inspiration” (Zenzinov 300).²⁹ Even Savinkov’s description in the police records is quite idiosyncratic: “His features: 2 arshin 8 3/8 vershok³⁰, of weak constitution, appearance gives an impression of an agile and nervous person, stooped, chestnut hair and moustache, short-haircut, bold, he shaves his beard, brown eyes that are anxiously shifting, near-sighted, round head, somewhat retreating forehead, slightly aquiline nose, oval thin face with freckles; ears of medium size, a black birth mark the size of a twenty-kopeck coin covered with black long hair on the outer side of the left forearm” (*Spravka №18* [“Record №18]).³¹

Throughout his life, Savinkov was particularly interested in the portraits of terrorists as well as their justifications for revolutionary violence, because he could never stop feeling the sinfulness of murder himself. Savinkov’s voices of dedication to terrorism and of ethical questions sound differently in his literary works. Unlike *The Pale Horse* and the other two books of his trilogy that goes into the depth of a terrorist’s emotional state, *Memoirs of a Terrorist* is an almost scientifically passionless analysis of technical details of political assassinations that was written as a work of fiction, also providing psychological portraits of the agents. In *Memoirs*, Savinkov only touches on

²⁹ Citation in the original: «мое первое стихотворение было готово еще перед рыбой, второе — перед жарким, а третье — перед сладким. И кроме того — вы же еще поручили мне делать заказы кельнеру, что очень мешало моему поэтическому вдохновению».

³⁰ Units of measurement in Imperial Russia: 1 arshin (“yard”) = 2 1/3 ft, 1 vershok (“tip”) = 1 3/4 in.

³¹ Citation in the original: «Приметы его: роста 2 арш. 8 3/8 верш., телосложения слабого, наружностью производит впечатление подвижного нервного человека, сутуловат, волосы на голове и усы каштановые, на голове коротко острижены, лысый, бороду бреет, глаза карие, беспокойно бегающие, близорук, голова круглая, лоб несколько покатый, нос с небольшой горбинкой, лицо овальное, худощавое в веснушках; уши средней величины, на наружной стороне левого предплечья чёрного цвета родимое пятно величиною в двугривенный, покрытое тёмными волосами».

the ethical issues of revolutionary murder. He is more interested in asking why people go into terror. His autobiographical character asks this question to every new member of the Combat Organization and receives very different answers. Kalyaev stresses “psychological inability for any peaceful work” (*Memoirs* 13). Pokotilov is convinced that “the whole revolution is in terror” (28). A son of People’s Will revolutionaries and a revolutionary with an old-school spirit, Sozonov has “passionate faith in the people and [...] deep love for them”: terror for him is a “matter of personal sacrifice, of heroic deed” (38, 43). Similarly, for Dora Brilliant, terror “was something which acquires the color of justification only with the sacrifice of the terrorist himself” (42). Schweitzer believed that central terror was “the most important task of the moment, that compared with this all other tasks paled into insignificance” (77). In his novel, Savinkov constantly emphasizes the fact that despite all the different reasons that brought them to terror, the Combat Organization felt like a family to all of them, “one fraternity, living by one idea, by one aim” (47). In a letter from a labor camp, Sozonov calls their organization a “knightly order,” where “the word ‘brother’ expressed but inadequately the reality of [their] relations” (47). This feeling of camaraderie and brotherhood would stay with Savinkov until the end of his life. Like former social-revolutionary Vladimir Zenzinov indicates in his memoirs *Perezhitoe* (“Experiences”), this feeling of camaraderie was Savinkov’s main motive for revolutionary struggle. He remembers a conversation between Mikhail Gotz and Savinkov, during which Gotz asked Savinkov for what purpose he lived and what the stimulus for his revolutionary activity was. Savinkov responded: “The sense of camaraderie. Love and respect for comrades in business. Everything that comrades demand should be done.” “It was obvious that the question did not catch him off guard –

perhaps, he often asked that himself and long had an answer ready,” continues Zinzinov (301).³²

Savinkov’s friends returned the devotion. In a letter to Maria Spiridonova and another female social-revolutionary, Maria Shkol’nik (who supposedly asked him to tell them more about the legendary Savinkov),³³ Sozonov describes his first days in the Combat Organizaton and his first meeting with Savinkov. At that time, Sozonov was learning to be a cabbie. All the discussions about future terrorist acts happened under the pretense of giving a ride to Savinkov:

... behind my back I hear an as yet unfamiliar voice that pronounces words too correctly, somehow in a gentlemanly manner... at times a cigarette flickers and illuminates a thin, pale face. He asks how I am doing, how I am feeling. Wary, I answer; according to the rules, one is not supposed to bare the soul. But it is impossible not to answer: he broaches the most intimate questions (how does a person feel on the eve of a [terrorist] act?) in such a careful and delicate manner that an answer comes unwittingly. He talks about the proximity of a great celebration himself... little by little, from a simple abstract, from a bare symbol, the Combat Organization turns into something living that can be loved with a love no less alive or human than the love one feels for a brother, or a bride...

³² Citation in the original «Чувство товарищества. Любовь и уважение к товарищам по делу. Всё, что товарищи потребуют, должно быть выполнено»; «Ясно было, что этот вопрос не застал его врасплох — он наверное часто сам задавал его себе и давно имел на него готовый ответ».

³³ Sazonov uses an abbreviation P. I. Savinkov received the code name Pavel Ivanovich for the Plehve’s operation from Azef who was known as Ivan Nikolaevich (Spence 32).

*(Pis'ma Sozonova Egora Sergeevicha Spiridonovoi f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 547, 1.1, N II, №21)*³⁴

Sozonov recounts that P.I. was the center of their “family,” that he brought everyone together and helped overcome the misfortunes such as March failure³⁵ and Pokotilov’s death. From the very first meeting he was amazed by Savinkov’s sensitivity, “the ability immediately to step over formalities and touch a person’s most sensitive spot without causing any pain” (GARF f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 547, 1.1, N II, №21).³⁶ While in jail in Zabaikal’e, Sozonov wrote to Savinkov’s mother that even though she had lost so much of what can never be compensated,³⁷ she had gained a new family, who had given up or lost as much as she had (*Pismo Sozonova Egora Sergeevicha Savinkovoi Sof’e Aleksandrovne f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 546*).

Savinkov’s comrades admired his charisma. They even copied him in the manner of dressing and talking (Chernov 157). Quoting Edward Shils, Gregory Freidin describes relationships between a charismatic person and others as following: “what distinguishes a charismatic figure, group, or institution from its ordinary counterpart in society is not matter of a particular program – the program merely conducts the current of authority – but the difference in intensity of expression between the feebly electrified ‘periphery’ of

³⁴ Citation in the original: «за спиной слышится голос ещё чужой, слишком правильно, как-то побарски произносящий слова... временами вспыхивает папироска и освещает тонкое, бледное лицо. Он спрашивает, как живётся, как чувствуется. Отвечаешь, насторожившись, по правилам откровенничать ведь, не полагается. Но не ответить нельзя: он касается самых интимных вопросов (как чувствует себя человек накануне акта?) так осторожно, так деликатно, что отвечаешь как-то невольно. Он и сам говорит о близости великого торжества... Мало-по-малу Б.О. из простой отвлеченности, из голого символа превращается в нечто живое, что можно любить не менее живой, человеческой любовью, чем брата, невесту...».

³⁵ Savinkov describes the first failed attempt to kill Plehve in *Memoirs*. While waiting on Plehve with a bomb, Sozonov had to turn his carriage the other way because other cabbies started making fun of him and, as a result, he missed Plehve.

³⁶ Citation in the original: «умение сразу перешагнуть через формальности и взять человека прямо за живое место, не причиняя этим боли».

³⁷ Her oldest son Alexander committed suicide in 1904 while in exile in Siberia. Her husband died in an asylum in 1905.

a culture and the always steaming, awesome powerhouse of its ‘center’” (4). Savinkov’s strong personality made him the center of the Combat Organization even before he became its official leader. Other members of the terrorist group were drawn to his strength and self-will. Because of his exceptional leadership skills, even after the October Revolution and the failure of social-revolutionary movement, quite a few people such as anti-Bolshevik revolutionary Roman Birk,³⁸ British Prime Minister David Lloyd George,³⁹ Symbolist poet Maximilian Voloshin⁴⁰ still believed that one day Savinkov would save Russia. Winston Churchill was very impressed with Savinkov’s persona. He called him an “extraordinary product” and “the essence of good sense expressed in terms of nitroglycerine” (Churchill and Langworth 117).

However, after Savinkov’s fallout with the Social-Revolutionary Party, many changed their opinion about him. For example, Viktor Chernov, one of the founders and the primary party theoretician, gave a number of unflattering comments about Savinkov. Even though Chernov described him as an interesting person, an engaging storyteller with a good literary taste, he shamed Savinkov for his contempt of people, manipulation, “extreme subjectivism,” “revolutionary militarism,” and “aestheticism and spiritual aristocracy” gained from Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius (156-158).

³⁸ Citation in the original: «Вернётесь Вы в Россию и я уверен, что Вы своим умом и энергией спасёте Россию, именно Петроград». (“You will return to Russia and I am sure that with your mind and energy, you will save Russia, specifically Petrograd.”) (*Pis'ma Birka*. GARF f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 30).

³⁹ “Savinkov is no doubt a man of the future but I need Russia at the present moment, even if it must be the Bolsheviks. Savinkov can do nothing at the moment, but I am sure he will be called on in time to come. There are not many Russians like him” (Lokkart 125).

⁴⁰ Citation in the original: «Из всех людей, выдвинутых революцией и являющихся, в большинстве случаев, микробами разложения, я только в Вас вижу настоящего ‘литейщика,’ действенное и молниеносное сочетание религиозной веры с безнадежным знанием людей» (“From all the people who were nominated by the revolution and who are, in most cases, the microbes of decomposition, I see only you as a real ‘caster,’ a effective and lightning combination of the religious faith and hopeless knowledge of people”) (*Erenburg, Savinkov, Voloshin v gody smuty* 191)

There were some sides of Savinkov that were feigned and intentionally demonstrated, while others were random, chaotic, and real. All of them created his controversial, but intriguing cultural portrait. In her memoirs, Russian legendary female terrorist Vera Figner describes her discussions with Savinkov while living in Beaulieu, France in 1906-1907. Like many of his contemporaries, including his closest friends, Figner had a mixed opinion about his personality: while calling him the most brilliant man she has ever met, Figner constantly accuses him of dishonesty and theatricality when it comes to his moral dilemmas. Fascinated with Figner's revolutionary fame, Savinkov considered himself an heir of some sort: once he sent her a letter with a signature "Your son." "Not a son, rather a foundling!" was Figner's reaction (Figner 178). Figner mentions Savinkov's non-Russian and very aristocratic appearance that suited an English gentleman much more than a Russian revolutionary (165-166).⁴¹

One of the issues Savinkov and Figner raised in their long conversations was the difference between a contemporary social-revolutionary terrorist and a People's Will revolutionary of the previous generation. Savinkov insisted on "mysticism" that he himself could not comprehensively explain: "Kalyaev was 'a believer,' and he himself believed in 'something,' uncertain, from the other world, above people and their surroundings" (171-172).⁴² As to Figner, she thought that a bigger scale of revolutionary activity and involvement led to the increased demands for a doer and the decreased demands for an individual (171).⁴³ Figner's conclusions are quite close to the truth:

⁴¹ Wędziagolski also recalls Savinkov's aristocratic behavior during the Civil War: once, right under the enemy's fire, Savinkov walked for about 100 meters in no hurry, carefully choosing dry ground not to damage his elegant shiny shoes (*Novyi Zhurnal* 184).

⁴² Citation in the original: «Калыев был «верующим», а сам он верил во «что-то», неопределённое, потустороннее, находящееся вне человека и окружающей природы».

⁴³ Citation in the original: «сообразно расширению сферы и размеров деятельности, требования к деятелю повысились, а требования к личности, благодаря росту численности партии, понизились».

indeed, Savinkov's utility as a terrorist lay in his ability to strategize and to organize much more than in his readiness to pay the price of his personal life. Reflecting upon the issue of Savinkov's moral torments about the responsibility for murder and self-sacrifice, Figner argued that a determined terrorist of her generation did not have any inner struggle: an individual life was such a small measure compared to the *narod's* burdensome life that there should have been any doubts of sacrificing it (179).⁴⁴ She suggested that, due to an increased economic level of living for the previous twenty-five years, social-revolutionary terrorists of the new generation had higher individual needs and therefore, increased demands to place a higher value on an individual life (179).⁴⁵ Figner recalls that Savinkov responded: "If you did not value your life, if you did not measure its value, then you gave very little to the revolution; you gave only what you did not need and, one might say, committed a political suicide" (180).⁴⁶

Both Spiridonova's and Savinkov's mothers actively participated in creating the narrative of their legendary children. Moreover, they composed their own images of suffering but heroic mothers of revolutionaries. The lines pierced with personal loss and pain alternate with political statements, lamenting about the merciless governmental system and hoping for the success of the revolutionary movement. Alexandra Spiridonova published *Address to Russian Mothers* in *Molva* on March 20, 1906, with a purpose of uniting mothers who lost their children in Russian jails, labor camps, and on the scaffold. Similarly, Sophia Savinkova presented herself as one of the thousands of

⁴⁴ Citation in the original: «индивидуальная жизнь была такой несоизмеримо малой величиной в сравнении с жизнью народа, со всеми её тяготами для него, что как-то не думалось о своём».

⁴⁵ Citation in the original: «С тех пор за период в 25 лет у революционера поднялся материальный уровень жизни, выросла потребность жизни для себя, выросло сознание ценности своего «я» и явилось требование жизни для себя» (171).

⁴⁶ Citation in the original: «если вы не ценили свою жизнь, если не взвешивали ценность её, то отдавали революции очень мало; вы отдавали только то, что вам не нужно, и совершали, можно сказать, политическое самоубийство».

grieving mothers in her *Mother's Memoirs* published in *Russkoe Bogatstvo* (1906), *Byloe* (1907), and *Vestnik Evropy* (1910), giving an account of Savinkov's story from a different angle. In her essay "Na volos ot kazni" (On the Verge of Execution, 1907), Savinkova states that it is the suffering of another mother or father, another sister or brother that urged her to pick up a pen and tell the truth about their violent era (247). Suppressing her pain, she even wrote letters to her husband, pretending they were from their sons, in order to save his already weak psyche. She mentions that every time she felt the strength to endure multiple petitions and prison visits was leaving her, she told herself that she was not alone: "Spiridonova's mother, Balmashev's⁴⁷ mother, Kalyaev's mother – there are dozens, thousands of pitiful ones like you! I should come to my senses! I should pull myself together! I should face these horrors with dignity!" (248).⁴⁸ Later, during a prison visit with Savinkov after his arrest in Sevastopol in 1906, his mother describes that as a reply to her howl of despair at the son's sight, Savinkov asked her not to cry: "In cases like this loving mothers don't let themselves shed tears."⁴⁹ "And I got quiet; not once ever since I dared to cry in order not to disrupt my son's courage with tears," confesses Savinkova (252).⁵⁰

Savinkov was the narrator and the narrated of his story at the same time. Even after his arrest, when the power to tell his own story was seemingly taken away from him, he was still able to directly participate in creating his myth: he continued to publish his

⁴⁷ Stepan Balashev (1881-1902) was a Russian revolutionary with no direct political affiliation. He killed the Minister of Interior Affairs Dmitri Sipyagin, Plehve's predecessor, and became the first person who was executed for political reasons during the Nicholas II's ruling.

⁴⁸ Citation in the original: «Ты не одна, ты не одна! – шептала я сама себе. – А мать Спиридоновой! Мать Балмашева! Мать Каляева! Таких, как ты, жалких матерей – сотни, тысячи! Надо опомниться! Надо взять себя в руки! Надо встретить этот ужас с достоинством!..».

⁴⁹ Citation in the original: «В таких случаях любящие матери не дают воли слезам...».

⁵⁰ Citation in the original: «И я притихла; ни разу потом не посмела я заплакать, чтобы не нарушить слезами мужество сына».

works and thoroughly planned his literary representation. He wrote a prologue for *Memoirs* that the original work did not have. In his letter to the publisher, he gave specific instructions not only about the place for the prologue and comments in his book (because he was unhappy with the placement of comments in the publication of his trial), but also about the type of paper that should be used (*Pis'mo Savinkova B.V. Ivanovu* GARF f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 7a, 13 XII 24). Savinkov was always very concerned about the quality of his writing, which is evident from his personal letters, constantly seeking feedback about his works. “Tell me also, whether it is worth it to keep writing in general or is it better to stop tempting God. If you curse me, I will thank you,” Savinkov writes in a letter from December 1907 to Alexei Remizov, one of the modernist writers and his contemporaries (*Pis'ma Remizovu* f. 420, op. 1, ed.hr. 82).⁵¹ Savinkov was attacked not only for the controversial content of *The Pale Horse*, but also for his style of writing. At times, Savinkov was accused of mastering the ability to imitate great Russian writers, such as Leo Tolstoy, rather than produce original style. In his next letter to Remizov, he argued the need “to go back to simplicity, clear forms, maybe even to classics” (*Pis'ma Remizovu* f. 420, op. 1, ed.hr. 82).⁵² The reason why Savinkov’s style reminded Tolstoy might be hidden in his desire to strip his narrative of the unnecessary stylistic elements that were typical of the Symbolist writing and return to the basics. “I write as you advised: simple, without quirks and about what I know well,” Savinkov continues in his 1908 letter to Remizov (*Pis'ma Remizovu* f. 420, op. 1, ed.hr. 82).⁵³

⁵¹ Citation in the original: «Скажите также, стоит ли вообще писать дальше или лучше бросить искушать Господа Бога. Если выругаетесь - поблагодарю».

⁵² Citation in the original: «пора возвращаться к простоте, к ясным формам, может быть к классикам».

⁵³ Citation in the original: «Пишу так, как Вы советовали: просто, без вывертов и о том, что хорошо знаю».

Both Savinkov's and Spiridonova's revolutionary myths are founded on the concepts of martyrdom and sacrificial love for people and Russia. Savinkov was enchanted with the idea of heroic murder and sacrifice for Russian people and Russia's better future that Kalyaev and Sozonov professed. In a social-revolutionary mind, Russia could not have been resurrected until Russian land was returned to peasants. Both Savinkov and Spiridonova put the agrarian question in the center of their political ideology: they believed in socialization of land and reacted to the 1917 Bolsheviks' Degree on land nationalization as the betrayal of peasants. In his article "On the Way to the Third Russia," Savinkov recognized peasantry and their will to land as the main natural, creative, instinctive force (20). However, both of them were alienated from *narod's* life (even though Spiridonova had a stronger mythological connection to the people than Savinkov ever did). Their revolutionary idealism could not connect with the trivial basic needs and apolitical attitudes of the countryside. This alienation became one of the primary reasons for Savinkov's political, social and personal failure that he bitterly realizes in the last two parts of his trilogy and the reason why, in Karl Radek's⁵⁴ overly dramatic metaphor, earlier, already in *What Never Happened*, "he, a dead revolutionary, started the funeral of his own ideological corpse" (244).⁵⁵ Spiridonova blames this alienation for her mistake in trusting the Bolsheviks when she briefly supported collectivization because she believed, better than she, the Bolsheviks could understand the needs of villages (Lavrov 261).

Savinkov's estrangement from *narod* was quite visible even in his works. In his analysis of *What Never Happened* in 1913, the literary critic Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik

⁵⁴ A Marxist activist and an international communist leader

⁵⁵ Citation in the original: «он, мертвый революционер, занялся похоронами своего собственного идейного трупа».

points out that Savinkov's faith in a Russia of workers and peasants, his faith in the people and their future liberation, his faith in a new, better world and in "eternal truth," should have been shown through the characters and the structural development of the novel. Instead, he argued, Savinkov only talked about a hidden "eternal truth" without making it evident (147). However, the mere fact of faith in the people is something that appears in Savinkov's later works. His *Memoirs* expose Savinkov's contempt for the people's political apathy and unwillingness to risk everything for the revolution. He demonstrates the degree of "good conscience" among workers on the example of an elderly, grey-headed weaver who "would be glad to die for land and freedom at once if you like... But what about children!" (*Vospominaniia terrorista* 181).⁵⁶ Savinkov believed that the people were something he himself could die for. However, he never did. Unlike Spiridonova, Savinkov was never ready to die and had never been an executor of the act himself, preparing other people for a "heroic deed" instead. One could look differently at his role as a direct organizer but at the same time an always-outsider to the murder in process: one might say that he did not live what he preached, while others might see a higher degree of responsibility of being in charge. In his novel *What Never Happened* published in 1912-1913, through the character Andrey Bolotov, he confessed: "It is hard, nobody knows how hard, to give away one's life. It is still harder to kill. But, believe me, it is immeasurably harder than anything else... to dispose of the fate of others. That requires tremendous power, much more than for terror. One has to be heroic, to take the responsibility for bloodshed, for the bloodshed of his comrades" (Ropshin

⁵⁶ Citation in the original: «Рад бы вот хоть сейчас умереть за землю и волю... Да ведь дети!»

218).⁵⁷ When Kalyaev in *Memoirs* complains that he hasn't received a bomb to throw and demands one because he does not want "to risk less than others," Savinkov replies that "the risk was always the same and that in case of arrest he would be tried with the rest and under the same statute" (28).⁵⁸

In *The Black Horse*, Savinkov experiences an ideological crisis because his ideas of the Third Russia miserably failed. During the Civil War of 1917-1922, the country was divided into the Reds fighting for the Bolsheviks who had seized the power as a result of the October Revolution and those who were fighting against the Bolsheviks (the Whites, the Greens including socialists, monarchists, anarchists, etc.). People were finally fighting for Russia but it was not the fight about which Savinkov and other social-revolutionaries had dreamed; the "holy" fight for an idea had long since faded and Savinkov felt only the meaninglessness of the war and the ever-present social disparity between the Russian intelligentsia and the *narod*: "The 'God-bearer' tricked everyone. The 'God-bearer' either bows and scrapes or riots; either repents or whips a pregnant woman on the belly; either solves the 'world' issues or raises chickens in stolen pianos" (154-155).⁵⁹ In a conversation with Egorov, former social-revolutionary George from *The Pale Horse* and now a colonel Yuri Nikolaevich asks him why he hates communists. Egorov calls them "devils" and tells him that they burned his house and killed his son. George then asks why he fights for the Whites who support Russian aristocracy, landowners. Egorov replies that they will "unscrew landowners' heads" as well when

⁵⁷ Savinkov wrote his early stories under the pseudonym V. Kanin. Later, starting from *The Pale Horse*, he wrote under the pseudonym of V. Ropshin but most readers could guess who was hiding behind this name.

⁵⁸ Citation in the original: «риск всегда одинаков и что в случае ареста он будет судиться вместе и по той же статье закона».

⁵⁹ Citation in the original: «'Народ-богоносец' надул. "Народ-богоносец" либо раболепствует, либо бунтует; либо кается, либо хлещет беременную бабу по животу; либо решает 'мировые' проблемы, либо разводит кур в ворованных фортепиано».

“the time comes” (130-131). More and more, Savinkov realized that the *narod* would never fight for his idea, and any idea for that matter. For a *muzhik* in the Russian countryside, it makes no difference who they are, the Whites or the Reds, the tsar or the communists: everyone is an “uninvited guest” (140-141). The ideological clarity of borders and sides of the revolutionary period, where the distinction between friends and enemies was obvious, turned into blurred lines and naked struggles for power, absurd mass bloodshed when Russians kill Russians: “And I ask myself: brother against brother or bedbug against bedbug?” (149).⁶⁰

Like Spiridonova, Savinkov quickly acquired international fame not only as a terrorist but also as a writer who wrote about terror as an insider, revealing the psychological torments of a person who decided to commit murder. Unlike Savinkov who wrote belletristic literature, Spiridonova developed her revolutionary myth through journalistic writing because, as a woman, she needed to establish herself on the public scene, bringing her own name and her own identity. Savinkov used writing as a means to resolve his inner paradox of a professional terrorist who was torn by Christian guilt. Semi-autobiographical fiction allowed him to displace different forces within him into different characters. This Savinkov’s dilemma could explain a somewhat negative review of *What Never Happened* that was published in New York Times on December 16, 1917, where the author of the review accused Savinkov of creating “flickering, distorted silhouettes” rather than full-rounded characters “of unalterable conviction and purpose” (*New York Times*). Unlike Europe that was sympathizing with Spiridonova as a character of her myth and gathering public protests, the United States found Savinkov’s characters so indecisive and “uncertain of their cause” that they compared them to Hamlet who cries

⁶⁰ Citation in the original: «И я спрашиваю себя: брат на брата или клоп на клопа?»

more than acts. The American press did not see Savinkov as a legend but only as an agent of the revolution that they regarded as a natural force. When Savinkov was a member of the Combat Organization and later, after the 1917 October Revolution, many foreign governments who felt intimidated by the power of tsarism first and the Soviets later continued to trust Savinkov. In *Memoirs*, Savinkov mentions significant international financial support that the Russian revolutionaries received. In his letter to Savinkov in jail in 1924, Y.S. Akimov recalls that lectures about Savinkov in New York attracted more people than any other lectures and his books were selling out like “tasty pancakes” (Litvinov 126). Like Spiridonova, Savinkov was fully aware of his own legendary status. Lynn Ellen Patyk writes that he tracked and preserved his myth by clipping and saving reviews of both his literary and his political activities (209).

Spiridonova received her share of international fame as well. Journalist Louise Bryant traveled to Russia in 1917, where she interviewed Spiridonova who worked with the Bolsheviks at the time. In her book *Six Red Months in Russia*, Bryant, impressed by the opportunities for women in the Bolshevik socialism, called her “the most politically powerful woman in Russia or in the world” (67).

As much as philosophically grounded Savinkov indulged in his life-affirming discourse of death and terror, he could not escape Dostoevsky’s human tragedy – the suffering of a murderer. In one of her diaries, Gippius, one of Savinkov’s closest friends in France, recalls that her husband, Merezhkovsky, again went to Savinkov, trying to convince him to spare the life of the tsar “not for the tsar, but for Savinkov” (*Revolutsionnoe Khristovstvo* 23) However, Savinkov’s contemporaries’ recollections about him are often inconsistent with Savinkov’s literary confessions. Savinkov jumped

from one extreme to another: one moment he was saying that “blood of the killed ones presses him by its weight” (22) and another moment he would notice indifferently: “It is a business like any other, one gets accustomed to it” (22, Maugham 177). In *What Never Happened* though, he put the same thoughts in a more poetic form:

Just as a mariner becomes accustomed to the sea and no longer gives any thought to the possibility of drowning; just as a soldier becomes accustomed to war and no longer thinks of being killed; just as a physician comes to lose all fear of contagion; so had Bolotov become accustomed to his ‘underground’ and had ceased to be haunted by the thought that some day he might be hung. But somewhere in the depths of his soul, lulled through it had been to unconsciousness, there stirred a dark and restless feeling – that same feeling that never leaves the mariner, the physician, or the soldier. (Ropshin 8)⁶¹

During World War I, Savinkov continues to believe that even the most gruesome violence at some point becomes commonplace: “It is impossible to always be afraid. It is impossible to always have compassion. It is impossible to always hate. Indifference replaces fear, habit replaces compassion, and curiosity replaces hate” (*Niurenbergskie igrushki* f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 4, page 1). This deliberate apathy and insensitivity appears as a defensive reaction to the violent and rapidly changing world with which Savinkov, whose greatest need was to be active, tried to keep up to date. Unable to return to Russia

⁶¹ Citation in the original: «Как моряк привыкает к морю и не думает, что утонет; как солдат привыкает к войне и не думает, что будет убит; как врач привыкает к тифу или чахотке и не думает о заразе, - так и Болотов привык к своей безыменной жизни и не думал, что его могут повесить. Но где-то в глубине усыпленной души жило темное и многотревожное чувство, - то самое, которое не покидает ни моряка, ни врача, ни солдата».

from abroad, he found the risk and excitement of action there, interested in people's experiences and challenging his own character.

Spiridonova and Boris Savinkov created a modern revolutionary subject while also being created as a literary one. Savinkov became a literary prototype for different literary characters in a number of books, such as Andrey Bely's *Peterburg*, Ilya Erenburg's *Life and Death of Nikolai Kurbov*, Roman Goul's *Azef*, Albert Camus' *The Assassins*, and others. More fragile, romantic, and spiritual in appearance, Maria became a character in various stories, such as I. Surguchev's "Neighbor." Interestingly, Maximilian Voloshin wrote poems about both Spiridonova - "Seagull" – and Savinkov – "Ropshin." Even the names of the poems expose the difference in their legends: Spiridonova was a symbol, while Savinkov was a persona, a leader. Voloshin starts his "Seagull" as:

... On a clean body there is a trace of the whip,
And blood on the marble forehead...
And wings of a free white seagull
Are slowly dragging on the ground... (Lavrov 136).⁶²

Voloshin depicted Spiridonova as the Purity, the Femininity, the Ultimate Sacrifice of a Russian woman, Maria, Mother of Jesus, and Marusya, peasant Russia, united as one, with the last lines exposing the typical protectionism of Russian intelligentsia towards people, "younger brothers":

The soul died in nasty weather...
It died in grim darkness –

⁶²Citation in the original: «...На чистом теле след нагайки,/ И кровь на мраморном челе.../ И крылья вольной белой чайки/ Едва влачатся по земле...»

For younger brothers, for freedom

As a crucified victim on the cross.... (137).⁶³

Voloshin continued the theme of Christian references in Spiridonova's narrative, emphasizing her strength as a revolutionary and her weakness as an innocent woman and a victim. Savinkov's poem was written much later, in 1915, when Savinkov became friends with Voloshin while living in France. In one of their letters from Paris to Nice, Voloshin sent him the poem:

Cold mouth. Folds of a dispassionate cheek.

And a glance from under the tired eyelids.

As such, the iron century has forged you

In passionate fires and in feverish delirium... (*Erenburg, Savinkov,*

Voloshin 175).⁶⁴

Like many of his contemporaries, Voloshin looked at Savinkov as a product of his time, a martyr who was hardened by the circumstances and tempered by the revolutionary fire. In the middle of the poem Voloshin introduces "a big dull moose with a cross between the horns" signifying Savinkov's perseverance and destiny to save Russia (176). Savinkov responded that though he liked the poem and the moose, he did not understand what connection the moose has to him (177). Voloshin saw Savinkov as both a judge and an executor – an apocalyptic theme that appears in Savinkov's works as well: "In your hands is a dagger, and in the heart is a cross/ A judge and a sword..." (176).⁶⁵

Spiridonova was often portrayed as a martyr and was never portrayed as a chastener of

⁶³ Citation in the original: «Душа погибла в непогоду.../ Погибла в мрачной темноте -/ За меньших братьев, за свободу/ Распятой жертвой на кресте».

⁶⁴ Citation in the original: «Холодный рот. Щеки бесстрастной складки./ И взгляд из-под усталых век./ Таким сковал тебя железный век/ В страстных огнях и в бреде лихорадки».

⁶⁵ Citation in the original: «В руке – кинжал, а в сердце – крест -/ Судья и меч».

those who must be punished (even though she actually killed Luzhenovsky, while Savinkov was never a direct executor of a terrorist act). Savinkov was rarely seen as a martyr by the public (with an exception of his portraits as a depleted and exhausted sufferer in his mother's essays) but he successfully developed the discourse of sacrifice and martyrdom in his poetry and among close friends.

By the end of his life, Savinkov felt betrayed by many friends who did not approve his political maneuvers and ideological doubts. Three years before publishing *The Pale Horse*, in a letter to his first wife Vera Glebovna from August 28, 1906 after his arrest and escape abroad, Savinkov wrote about the feeling of loneliness and despair that he experienced: "Suppose I have sinned greatly but who and when would understand in what state of despair I live. All around is darkness, always darkness... I am looking for an honest word. But will I find it?" (*Pis'ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 8).⁶⁶ These lines build an emotional thread to his lonely and somber character George from all three parts of the trilogy, but the pain of constant search and rejection differ from George's apathy and boredom. In the same letter, he continued: "always and everywhere, I should have known beforehand that it is not I, broken and put together out of mosaic pieces, ... who can find here love, geniality, and like-mindedness" (*Pis'ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 8).⁶⁷ His loss of friends and temporary inability to come back to Russia simultaneously saddened and angered Savinkov. Through his literary activity, he tried to make sense of his own moral atomism. At the same time, he complained about

⁶⁶ Citation in the original: «Пусть я во многом грешен, но кто и когда поймёт в каком отчаянии я живу. Кругом тьма, всегда тьма... Опять ищу честного слова. Найду ли?»

⁶⁷ Citation in the original: «всегда и везде я должен бы был знать заранее, что не мне изломанному и составленному из мозаичных кусков,... найти здесь любовь, теплоту и единомыслие».

feeling “like a caged animal”: “No matter how hard I try I cannot get rid of...heavy bitterness for the violated, ... the spat on something that is of the utmost importance to me, and more important than life, of course. I am talking... about love for my profession and about memories of the past” (*Pis'ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 8).⁶⁸ Later, in letters from 1908, when Azef's betrayal was exposed and even before Savinkov's works were published, he repeatedly mentioned *travlya* (“hounding”) that he experienced abroad (*Pis'ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed. hr. 9).

Part of Savinkov viewed being a terrorist as his profession, a noble profession devoted to noble causes, which is why the necessity to be understood and accepted was so strong in him. When the leader of the Combat Organization Evno Azef was exposed as a double agent, Savinkov took Azef's deception close to heart not only because Azef was his close friend and mentor, but also because he firmly believed in terrorism as a means of revolutionary reform. For Savinkov, Azef betrayed the cause and the principles as much as his fellow revolutionaries. In his article “Terror i delo Azefa” (Terror and Azef's Affair, 1909), Savinkov resorts to the Christian parallels in order to demonstrate that terrorism as a concept existed above individual terrorists. He compares Azef and another traitor Georgii Gapon⁶⁹ with Judas Iscariot, arguing that despite the betrayal, Christianity keeps on living. Similarly, according to Savinkov, terrorism would stay alive because Azef could not disgrace the “clean” sacrifice of the heroic many, including Gotz,

⁶⁸ Citation in the original: «я, как ни стараюсь, не могу отделаться от чувства тяжёлой горечи за поруганное,... оплёванное то, что для меня дороже всего, дороже и жизни, конечно. Я говорю... о любви к своему ремеслу и о памяти о прошлом».

⁶⁹ Gapon was a Russian Orthodox priest who, on January 9, 1905, led a peaceful people's procession to the tsar's palace in St. Petersburg. The procession was fired upon by the tsar's soldiers. The day got the name of Bloody Sunday. In the aftermath, Gapon turned out to be a police agent.

Spiridonova, Pokotilov among others: “Azef is not allowed to destroy the temple that he hasn’t built” (10, 12). In order to defend the “legitimacy” of Plehve’s murder, Savinkov goes into details, trying to prove that police did not have control of every single move made by the Combat Organization (11). He argues that “the moral significance of terrorism” should not be questioned because “dynamite is more eloquent than words” (10). Savinkov finishes the article with another reference to the Christian discourse, calling for people to love and not to lose their faith.

However, the Social-Revolutionary Party, including Savinkov, was never able to fully recover after Azef was exposed. Savinkov and Azef were so close that even for Azef, it “seem[ed] wild that they [could] take different paths” at some point (*Pis’ma Azefa*, GARF f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 18). Political and personal disappointment, general fatigue, fear of eternal emigration, frustration from the inability to get published widely as a Russian writer – all these reasons influenced Savinkov’s decision to cross the Soviet border in 1924 only to be arrested during breakfast.⁷⁰ Even at this moment, the sarcastic and reserved terrorist in him continued to play the game by making farce out of his own arrest. When he heard one of the policemen announcing to him that he was arrested, Savinkov calmly answered: “Nicely done! May I finish my breakfast?” (Litvin 200).

Even though he officially accepted the Soviets, Savinkov never stopped believing that the Russian revolution and social-revolutionary terror were just and timely and that he played a fair game: “I am not a criminal, I am a prisoner of war. I waged a war and

⁷⁰ Wędziagolski argues that Savinkov’s lover Lubov’ Dikgof-Derental’ and her husband Aleksandr Derental’ were, in fact, the secret police agents and that they were responsible for Savinkov’s arrest. In his recollections about Savinkov, Wędziagolski expresses his surprise at Savinkov’s “childish gullibility” when it came to his lover, so untypical of him in all other life situations (142-143).

now I am defeated” (Litvin 65).⁷¹ In his 1924 letter to Il’ia Fondaminsky from prison, Savinkov named several reasons for accepting the Soviets. He argued that a new generation in Russia, who truly understood the Russian *narod*, made the revolution. This generation was unfamiliar to the émigré revolutionaries, who, according to Savinkov, ran away from Russia or who were thrown out through their own fault. In his letter, Savinkov expressed regret turning to foreign help for the sake of saving Russia and saw a new type of state emerging in Russia (*Poslednie pis'ma i stat'i* 8-9).

Unbalanced and unjust social and political practices resulted in years of class disparity and alienation between peasants and Russian intelligentsia. Social failure and anxiety of Russian intelligentsia and their inability to inspire masses for a revolution led to violence and political terror. Lifton calls this condition “historical dislocation”. Anna Geifman argues that “the dilemma of the awkward Russian individualist” entailed a failure to relate organically to the new reality ‘to establish an immediate bond between himself and the larger social life’” (17). Spiridonova became a revolutionary legendary martyr but, despite her image of peasant Marusya, remained what Bolsheviks called a “greenhouse intelligent” (Lavrov 187). So did Savinkov. On one hand, he was tormented by social angst and “spiritual aristocracy” as a member of the Russian intelligentsia, and, on the other hand, he still struggled with his inner dilemmas about justified murder. Both Savinkov and Spiridonova claimed to be killing for love, for truth, and for people, but, as Anthony Neil Wedgewood Benn put it, “A faith is something you die for, a doctrine is something you kill for” (as qtd. in Geifman 57). Pursuing personal goals of self-realization, both Savinkov and Spiridonova used the problematized concepts of love, truth, and reason in order to create their own myths as noble terrorists. Indeed, despite

⁷¹ Citation in the original: «Я не преступник, я военнопленный. Я вёл войну и я побеждён».

their progressive thinking, honest compassion towards the people's condition, and undeniable love of Russia, Savinkov and Spiridonova killed for the ideology –the ideas, power and their own truths '*pravda*' – rather than for love and *istina*.

CHAPTER 2

THE AESTHETICS OF DEATH IN THE LITERARY WORKS OF BORIS

SAVINKOV

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you. (Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Aphorism 146)

There is an art of the ugly soul beside the art of the beautiful soul; and the mightiest effects of art, that which tames souls, moves stones and humanizes the beast, have perhaps been mostly achieved by precisely that art. (Friedrich Nietzsche Human, All Too Human 82)

I remember the first time I went hunting. The white-crop fields were red, there were cobwebs everywhere, the wood was silent. I stood on the edge of the wood close to the road ravaged by the rain. The birches were whispering, the yellow leaves were flying up and down. I waited. Suddenly there was a fused movement in the grass. A hare, looking like a small grey bundle, rushed out of the bushes and squatted down cautiously on his hind legs. He looked about him. I tremblingly lifted my gun. An echo resounded far in the wood, there was a puff of blue smoke among the birches. On the darkened grass, wet with blood, the wounded hare struggled and whimpered like a baby. I felt sorry for him. I fired the second shot. The wailing ceased. At home I forgot all about him as if he had never existed, as if I had not taken from him that which was most precious to him – his life. And I ask myself why I suffered when I heard

his outcry, while the fact that I killed him for my amusement did not arouse any emotion in me. (Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 5-6)

On the first pages of his most famous semi-autobiographical novel *The Pale Horse*, first published in January 1909, in the journal *Russian Thought*, Boris Savinkov describes his first kill. As a terrorist, Savinkov never threw a bomb himself, but he became a mastermind behind numerous political assassinations, successfully hunting and killing people instead of hares. His own detailed description of a hare's murder opens up the secrets of his consciousness that, during his whole life as a terrorist, a revolutionary, and a writer, was paradoxically and simultaneously filled with remorse and self-admiration. In this memory about hunting, Savinkov's main character, George, confesses that the fact of killing itself did not disturb him greatly, nor did the reason for killing, which was pure entertainment. But, the sound of pain, the sound of a dying animal, was hard for him to comprehend and accept. The unbearable part of the murder was not taking away life but causing pain. It was this pain and destruction that would eventually lead to Savinkov's complete disillusionment with revolutionary movement that he described in the third part of his trilogy, *The Black Horse*, 1924, and in the recently found manuscript that is believed to be the second part.⁷²

This pain was an acute symptom of Savinkov's divided soul, in which his two conflicting hypostases constantly clashed. Savinkov was a strong believer in terrorism as a necessary method of revolutionary battle, and a part of him always strived to achieve the status of Nietzschean *Übermensch* (albeit in a misunderstood form). Savinkov was drawn to the *Übermensch*'s amorality, his will to exist beyond good and evil, his fortitude

⁷² The third part of the trilogy was discovered only a few decades ago, when Savinkov's far relative Tatiana Savinkova handed over the previously unknown manuscript to the Russian archives. It was first published in 1994 in the journal *Znamia* (The Banner).

in overcoming death, and his need for infinite movement despite the forces of life. At the same time, Savinkov could neither completely overcome his own humanity nor adequately challenge the moral pillars of Christian Orthodoxy that were so ingrained in the literary, social, and philosophical traditions of Russian society. This second part of him suffered from remorse, unatoned guilt, and the deep sense of self-rejection inherent to the Dostoevskiiian sinner.

Savinkov's two hypostases emerged in different ways and to different degrees in his prose and poetry, though it is impossible to draw clear-cut boundaries between their manifestations in the two genres. In literary works of both genres, Savinkov's divided soul found relief in rhetoric of death that allowed Savinkov-the-Übermensch to claim immortality as a reward for overcoming death and morality, while at the same time creating the possibility of Christian salvation and eternal life for Savinkov-the-Sinner. George of Savinkov's trilogy and Savinkov's Poetic I in his verse speak the language of the Bible to express themselves. However, in the words of the Poetic I, doleful lamentations and images of apocalyptic nightmares alternate with hopes for Christian mercy, whereas George's Biblical rhetoric radiates with cynicism, mockery, and emotional withdrawal.

In his works, Savinkov uses Biblical discourse with a heavy emphasis on the apocalyptic Book of Revelation, voiced both by his characters and through implied meta-narrative. From time to time, George's language reveals a tendency towards melancholy, a sincere need of human connection, or the need to justify his decisions. In these episodes, we gain glimpses into the author's own internal conflict: the self-proclaimed Rider named Death who, despite his legendary status of cold-blooded terrorist, still

desperately sought justification for his profession, his choices, and even his love of terrorism. Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius's doctrine of Revolutionary Christianity, which justified terror as sinful but necessary, briefly appeared as a possibility for assuaging Savinkov's divided soul, but Savinkov's duality was incurable. It stemmed from Savinkov's personal losses, understandably frequent among the revolutionaries, and also from the exceptional sense of loyalty and comradeship he felt towards his fellow terrorists. It was also rooted in Savinkov's inability to subordinate entirely his individualistic messianism to the collective causes of revolution. On the one hand, as a revolutionary, he was offering up his life and his service to the Russian people, in a sense of negating his own individuality. On the other hand, he was a legendary leader and terrorist mastermind and, as such, he had personal, individual responsibility for each murder he planned.

Contemporaries noted Savinkov's frantic love of life, his skill at varied self-creation and "life-creation" (*zhiznetvorchestvo*),⁷³ and a flair for the theatrical. This paradoxical mix eventually destroyed both Savinkov-The Übermensch and Savinkov-The Sinner. The Dostoevskian sinner in Savinkov could not endure his failure to create integral narrative of self. Savinkov-The Übermensch found himself in agonizing political inactivity in exile after his side lost in the Russian Civil War (November 1917 – October 1922). Deceived by the Soviet secret police, who lured him back to Russia with the false bait of leading an underground organization, Savinkov attempted to cross the Soviet border in August 1924, was captured, and desperately waited nine months for an opportunity – which was not

⁷³ This term was introduced by the Russian symbolists and understood as "creating art out of life and life out of art". Irina Paperno argues that the concept of *zhiznetvorchestvo* in Russia and Western Europe was born on the turn of the 20th century, with modernism and its new mentality that, led by the apocalyptic spirit of the period, suggested developing a new "model of reality" and celebrated Nietzschean call for "self-creation" (3-4).

forthcoming - to work with the Soviet government. Disillusioned and despairing, he took a final step out of his Lubyanka prison window at 11:20 p.m. on May 7, 1925. As the Russian modernist writer Alexei Remizov wrote after Savinkov's suicide: "To me, his death is understandable: sooner or later he had to destroy himself, too" (as qtd. in *Mogil'ner* 89, my transl.).⁷⁴

2.1 SAVINKOV'S HYPOSTASES: NIETZSCHEAN ÜBERMENSCH AND DOSTOEVSKIAN SINNER

*The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes
a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts;
uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them.
It kills in the name of life – a progressive despot; it lives
at the behest of death – an operator in genetic experimentations;
it curbs the other's suffering for its own profit – a cynic (and a psychoanalyst);
it establishes narcissistic power while pretending to reveal the abyss –
an artist who practices his art as a 'business.'* (Kristeva 15-16)

While romanticizing the idea of death for the noble cause of revolution and freedom that involved not only the murder of a victim but also martyrdom of a killer, Russia's turn-of-the-century Social-Revolutionaries were not quite ready for the reality of death, murder, and pain as inevitable costs of revolution. They claimed to be acting in the name of people and for the sake of the people without realizing that in the people's eyes, there was no difference between tsarists, revolutionaries, Whites, Reds, or Greens – all their "noble" ideas were soaked in the blood that they spilled. The most heart-wrenching and immoral part of any revolution includes killing "thy neighbor," a person who shares the same language, culture, land; a person who walks the same streets, reads the same books, watches the same movies. The hare's scream that Savinkov describes in *The Pale*

⁷⁴ Citation in the original: «... его смерть мне представляется понятной: рано или поздно он должен был уничтожить и самого себя».

Horse is his constant reminder that in revolution, the enemy is not faceless, and death is not painless.

The narrator deceives both himself and his readers with the false confession that after the hunt, he very quickly forgot about his victim. In fact, the episode with the hare is quite symbolic and flashbacks to this incident appear repeatedly in a number of Savinkov's works. In his later novel *What Never Happened* (1918), Vladimir Glebov (nicknamed Volodya), one of the Moscow social-revolutionaries, kills Evgenii Glyozkin, a police colonel. Andrei Bolotov, a social-revolutionary protagonist in the novel, compares Glyozkin's scream to the sound of a wailing hare, and this cry disturbs him months afterwards: "And then Bolotov heard something that he could not forget for long afterwards, the memory of which made him jump in bed at night, in cold sweat. He heard a broken, wailing hare yelp. It was impossible to believe that these high-pitched sounds, so unlike a human voice, were coming from the throat of this strong, aged man in blue pantaloons and white shirt" (Savinkov *To, chego ne bylo* 275-276).⁷⁵ Another reference to Savinkov's first kill appears again in *The Black Horse*, when Vrede, one of George's co-fighters against the Reds during the Civil War, catches a young war commissar, a former student, who is barefoot because the peasants have taken his boots. When George threatens to hang him, the commissar starts begging for his life and the opportunity to "serve the people." But the "people" whom he wants to serve, respond by laughing. After George leaves the tent, he hears a scream and thinks to himself: "A human doesn't shrill

⁷⁵ Here and further my translation. Citation in the original: «И тут Болотов услышал то, чего долго потом не мог забыть, что долгое время спустя заставляло его в холодном поту ночью вскакивать с койки. Он услышал прерывистый, стонущий заячий лай. Было невозможно поверить, что эти визгливые, непохожие на человеческий голос звуки выходят из горла вот этого, крепкого, пожилого, в синих рейтузах и белой рубашке, человека».

this way. A wounded hare does” (*Kon’ Voronoi* 176).⁷⁶ Social-revolutionaries exclusively targeted political figures (albeit without mentioning possible street casualties) and did not aim to cause fear in the general public, and Savinkov never doubted his choice of terrorism as a means of struggle with oppressive regime. However, he never ceased to feel guilt coming from a more universal, metaphysical concept of killing.

In each episode of killing, Savinkov’s characters connect the pain of a dying person to the dying hare in the hunting scene. Based on this instinctive, biological ability to experience pain, they see the murdered not as a faceless and voiceless enemy but as living and breathing beings. The moment when Savinkov’s characters feel sorry for these victims is when they hear them struggling to live: pain breaks the ideological barriers and shakes the symbolic framework of revolutionary apocalyptic thinking. Pain comes as an authentic truth that demands Savinkov’s humanity, which is why George shoots the hare for the second time to stop its suffering and relieve his own empathic response.

Thus, revolutionary discourse functioned within a symbolic framework of violence, in which the actively propagated terminology of heroism, oppression, and victimization attempted to numb the psychological significance of taking another person’s life. But pain bursts into Savinkov’s narrative as an authentic and unrestrained phenomenon, which belongs to the category of what psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan calls “the Real” (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I and II*). Speaking of the Real, Lacan claims that it resists representation, which is evident in Savinkov’s texts as the flashbacks to a hare’s scream interrupt the revolutionary tale rather than represent it. Screaming is a biological human reaction to pain that cannot be stopped or controlled. Pain as the Real in

⁷⁶ Here and further I provide translations for the quotes from *The Black Horse* if Sir Paul Dukes’ translation is insufficient. Citation in the original: “Так не кричит человек. Так визжит подстреленный заяц.”

Savinkov's works is a trauma that transcends the experience of the self, the reality as perceived by the self, a reminder of something absolute, a priori.

For Savinkov's characters, pain is a physical manifestation of the struggle to live, because even in the terrorist world where death is always nearby, death is nevertheless always rhetorical, it can never be experienced. As Heidegger argues, "death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualised', nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be ... Being-towards-death, as anticipation of possibility, is what first makes this possibility possible, and sets it free as possibility" (307). In other words, death does not factually present itself in our life, our Dasein 'being-in-the-world,' and we are incapable of building meaningful physical connections with it, but it is constantly present with our being as an unceasing possibility. By accepting this possibility, we give actuality to death. We live with a constant unconscious memory of death as the ultimate end; as a means of self-preservation, we "forget" about death to be able to function, to find meaning in our everyday life that ultimately leads to death. Pain is what brings this memory out of our unconscious and awakens what in *Civilization and Its Discontent* Freud defines as Eros - a living force, the struggle to survive versus the death-drive Thanatos (791). Savinkov found the sounds of pain disturbing because they represent a victim's living force against the physical act of murder. The living force was outside this physicality, and therefore, it was out of his control.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud describes a boy playing with a spool that he pushes away and then pulls back, thus mastering the absence of an object (a potentially unpleasant event) to gain control and therefore, pleasure (642). The intentional repetition of this "distressing experience" represents the death-drive. By

repeating this action again and again, he prevents unforeseen possible pain that the absence can cause. Savinkov's need to write about death comes from his desire to control inevitability of death/absence and to affirm its constant presence in life, but the scream of the hare that he constantly remembers is the reminder of the pain that is outside of any order and therefore, his control. As an element of the Real, pain can never be relieved through repetition/writing – it keeps reoccurring in Savinkov's work as a flashback that disrupts the narrative.

Here lies the biggest tragedy of the famous terrorist Boris Savinkov: realizing that monstrosity and humanity wage a constant war inside of him but still holding a strong belief in the revolutionary cause, he felt the need to use his artistic vision and linguistic capabilities to turn himself from a “monster” into “an aesthetic phenomenon”⁷⁷ by creating separate manifestations of his self in his literary works. Nietzsche wrote, “We possess art lest we perish of the truth” (as qtd. in Ridley 4). Through his literary creations, Savinkov could contain his violence and deter the momentum when a paradoxical mix of monstrosity and humanity threatened to destroy him – as it eventually did.

Julia Kristeva's poststructuralist theory of abjection sheds further light on Savinkov's state of self-rejection. Kristeva distinguishes between the subject, or the self; the object, or the other; and the abject, or the rejected part of the self. Savinkov-The Übermensch strove to negate Savinkov-The Sinner, while Savinkov-The Sinner attempted to atone for the sins of Savinkov-The Übermensch. Both hypostases terrorized each other as much as they threatened Savinkov as an integral self. According to

⁷⁷ The phrase comes from Friedrich Nietzsche's quote from *The Gay Science*: “As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still bearable to us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be able to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon” (163-164).

Kristeva, the abject often produces feelings of horror or disgust because it threatens the self (for example, vomit and corpse can be considered abjects – recognized as foreign, yet familiar, they create psychological discomfort and inner conflict). Both sides of Savinkov were essential elements of him that he nourished and rejected at the same time, non-subjects and non-objects. Employing Kristeva’s example of vomit as an abject and the process of vomiting as intuitive protection of the self, we can draw a parallel with Savinkov who “vomited” himself on the page in order to expel his both hypostases. He was disgusted by his monstrosity, which was so intricately infused with his humanity. And yet there is beauty to be found in this expulsion, there is the aesthetics of an internal struggle that shows through the art of his writing, there is eerie magnetism in his portraits of death as he made them come alive.

Unable to become one or the other of his hypostases fully, Savinkov chose the sublimating discourse of aestheticizing death as a sufficient liminal space where his selves could intersect. Death is central to both personae: for an *Übermensch*, in the concept of death, life-affirmation and immortality starts, while for a Christian sinner, death brings salvation. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche wrote that “in Art man rejoices over himself as perfection” (53). Not in the traditional sense of perfection but in the meaning of its Latin root *perfectio* (‘to finish, to bring to an end’), through the rhetoric of death, Savinkov attempted to realize both hypostases as parts of himself.

In his book *Portraits and Sketches*, Fyodor Stepun, the Russian philosopher and historian, devotes a chapter to reminiscences about Savinkov during the First World War. He describes the unique obsession that Savinkov had with death. Stepun remembers that “deathly danger not only increased the feeling of life in him [Savinkov], but it also filled

his soul with a special, eery joy” (142).⁷⁸ Stepun argues that even though Savinkov did not have “a big literary talent,” he “was drawn to the pen not by superficial vanity and not by writer’s itch, but by something far more significant: in order not to destroy himself with his nihilistic metaphysics of death, he had to bring it to its artistic manifestation.” After all, Stepun continues, “it is impossible to live with death without *granting life to death*” (146-147).⁷⁹ Savinkov believed that his revolutionary and terrorist work was helping people to gain freedom, first from the tsarist oppression and then from Bolshevik deprivations. His political declarations, letters, and articles are affirmative statements of collective goals and plans. His belletristic works, both novels and poems, reflect his personal turmoil on the morality of revolutionary violence. In these works, Savinkov deals with issues of double identity and intellectual conscience, murder and responsibility, the aesthetics of death and the horrors of dying.

2.2 CHRISTIAN RHETORIC IN SAVINKOV’S PROSE AND POETRY

The epigraphs for both *The Pale Horse* and *The Black Horse* contain two scriptures that reflect the two hypostases of Savinkov. One is from Revelation vi. 8: “... and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him” (*The Pale Horse* 1).⁸⁰ Savinkov used apocalyptic Christian rhetoric and saw himself as a warrior who brought justice to the corrupted world, a Rider named Death, but instead

⁷⁸ Citation in the original: «смертельная опасность не только повышала в нём чувство жизни, но и наполняла его душу особою, жуткою радостью».

⁷⁹ Citation in the original: “У Савинкова не было большого художественного таланта.... Савинкова тянуло к перу не поверхностное тщеславие и не писательский зуд, а нечто гораздо более существенное: чтобы не разрушать себя своею нигилистическою метафизикою смерти, он должен был стремиться к её художественному воплощению. Не даруя смерти жизнь, *жить смертью нельзя.*”

⁸⁰ This epigraph was, in fact, originally added by Zinaida Gippius. The last part of the quote “and Hell followed with him” is omitted from the translation by Z. Vengerova but exists in the Russian original. Here and further I will provide my translation for the quotes from *The Pale Horse* if Vengerova’ translation is missing or insufficient.

of a scythe, he had a bomb. The second scripture immediately juxtaposes the first one: “But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (from 1 John ii. 11, *The Pale Horse* 1). In the epigraphs, we hear the voice of Savinkov, the Author, who on one hand, realized that he lived “in darkness” and sinfully killed those who were as much brothers to him as those who shared his cause and whom he loved so passionately. But on the other hand, he accepted this darkness as inevitable at the moment and gave himself the right to take charge, assigning himself a mission to bring people through the Apocalypse to a better Russia.

Later, when George quotes the Book of Revelation 14:15, the apocalyptic God-fearing tone turns into a sarcastic and political remark: “Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap” (*The Pale Horse* 106-107). In the apocalyptic scene, God resurrects those saints who proved their strong faith through suffering while fighting the Antichrist. George uses the metaphor in the opposite meaning: reaping here is a punishment of those against the cause. In his eyes, all those who oppose the revolutionary movement are followers of the Russian Antichrist – the tsar.

Even though Savinkov as the author treats the Christian discourse from multiple angles, as a Rider named Death, Savinkov’s stance is consistent with George’s view. It is completely void of traditional Christian elements of suffering: even though he was a tormented fighter, he was not a martyr. In *The Pale Horse*, George confesses: “I may say about myself: ‘I looked up and I saw the pale horse and the rider whose name is death.’ Wherever that horse stamps its feet there the grass withers: and where the grass withers there is no life and consequently no law. For Death recognizes no law” (70). As a

terrorist, a person who walks hand-in-hand with death, George denies any law, including the moral laws, which sets him apart from other social-revolutionaries who always stressed the “morality” of their terrorism in targeting only political ministers who supported the oppressive tsarist system. But like George, Savinkov was drawn to the undeniable dichotomy of life and death that existed outside of the symbolic paradigms.

The same rhetorical line self-proclaiming the prophecy of the Rider named Death appears in some of Savinkov’s poems. Besides apocalyptic Christian references, he draws a parallel with a long-standing Russian literary tradition to see poets and writers as prophets and vessels for God’s word: “When a sinless Seraph/ Flaps his eagle’s wings/ The heavenly city of Jerusalem/ Will appear in front of us...” and “I know: the holy fire burns/ A killer won’t enter the Christ’s city/ He will be trampled down by the Pale Horse and tsars will hate tsars” (Savinkov *Kniga Stikhov* 6).⁸¹ Let us compare these stanzas to Alexander Pushkin’s famous poem “Prophet” written in 1826 and quoted by George’s friend Vanya, another member of the Combat Organization, in the in *The Pale Horse*: “With fainting soul athirst for Grace,/ I wandered in a desert place,/ And at the crossing of the ways/ I saw a sixfold Seraph blaze...” and “... Then in the desert I laid dead,/ And God called unto me and said:/ “Arise, and let My voice be heard,/ Charged with My will go span/ The land and sea, and let My word/ Lay waste with fire the heart of man” (15, transl. by Maurice Baring). Similar to a prophet in the traditional sense, Savinkov’s revolutionary prophet, “an unacknowledged singer and an undefeated leader”⁸² as he called himself in another poem, was meant to become a messenger for divine truth and

⁸¹ Citation in the original: «Когда безгрешный серафим/Взмахнёт орлиными крылами,/Небесный град Иерусалим/Предстанет в славе перед нами»; «Я знаю: жжёт святой огонь,/Убийца в град Христов не увидит/Его затопчет Бледный Конь/И царь царей возненавидит».

⁸² Citation in the original: «Певец непризнанный и вождь непобежденный» from the poem «Давно вечерняя легла на землю тень...».

justice for the Russian people, despite the possible rejection and misunderstanding of the crowd (*Kniga Stikhov* 8). In order to hear God's word, Pushkin's prophet has to go through physical pain and transformation (the Seraph tears out his tongue and his heart). For Savinkov, it was his strong belief in the need to take charge and confront state violence with heroic revolutionary violence that allowed him to call himself a prophet. His Poetic I calls renewed Russia a new Jerusalem and sees himself as a warrior who fights evil and destruction with terror and more destruction. In Savinkov's Russia, the spark of dynamite replaced the holy fire of a word that burned people's hearts in Pushkin's era.

The discourse of death where Savinkov-The Übermensch and Savinkov-The Sinner intersect is often explored through the biblical passages that appear in *The Pale Horse*. Two days before the murder of the Governor-General, Vanya, who is devoted to the ideas of terrorism and Christian martyrdom, comes to George and reads with him The Resurrection of Lazarus from The Gospel. This episode directly refers to the scene from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, when the main character Rodion Raskolnikov, already intending to confess about his murder to Sonya, asks her to read the same pages to him. In Savinkov's novel, the Resurrection of Lazarus presents another intersection of the Übermensch/sinner dichotomy through the concept of death within the religious context. Up to this moment, George identifies himself solely as a Rider named Death, a warrior, who brings death and therefore, above it. Here the religious framework of the novel emerges from a different angle, while still focusing on death as the central liminal concept. On the one hand, resurrected Lazarus is a symbol of salvation and eternal life, but on the other hand, the resurrection of Lazarus is the event that leads to the

crucifixion of Jesus, “the resurrection that leads to death” (according to the interpretation of this biblical scene by Moloney and Harrington 322-345). At the time of listening to the Gospel, both George and Raskolnikov do not feel the need to repent. Raskolnikov experiences spiritual awakening in the end of *Crime and Punishment* and accepts Christianity as the only way to salvation, whereas George faces more disappointment, pain, and loneliness after killing Elena’s husband.

George manipulates the biblical images to establish a metaphoric parallel between God’s wrath and people’s wrath. His fantasy about the General-Governor’s death is eerily descriptive: “I am anticipating the joy of our triumph. I can see blood on the coat. I can see dark church arches, lit up candles. I can hear the chant of prayers, stifling smell of the incense. I want his death. I wish for him ‘flames and a lake of fire’” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 47).⁸³ A lake of fire from the Book of Revelation warns the devilish people of an after-life punishment and their second death. George rejects the spiritual side of Christianity. He punishes the oppressors during their lifetime on earth. George often adopts the religious apocalyptic rhetoric to claim that his violence is righteous in the name of eternal and universal justice. He references the Bible only in the context of revenge and violence. “Those who took up a sword shall perish by the sword,” George refers to the slightly changed phrases from Matthew 26:52, while calling the Bible “the book of life” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 65).⁸⁴ He uses this metaphor ironically, and later, concludes that “there is no love, no peace, no life. There is only death. Death is the halo and death is the crown of

⁸³ Citation in the original: «Я радуюсь заранее нашей победе. Я вижу кровь на мундире. Вижу тёмные своды церкви, зажжённые свечи. Слышу пение молитв, душный ладан кадила. Я хочу ему смерти».

⁸⁴ Citation in the original: «Кто поднял меч, тот от меча и погибнет».

thorns” (70).⁸⁵ George does not see beyond death. He has no faith. Instead, his world centers on death: in his Christian rhetoric, it replaces the image of Jesus from the canonical Gospels. George sets up an implicit contrast to the tsar who wears the Imperial Crown of Russia (the Great Imperial Crown). Like the crown that is only a symbol of monarchical power, tsar’s power remains purely symbolical, because death is above both tsars and paupers.

2.3 INDIVIDUAL VS. COLLECTIVE IN SAVINKOV’S WORLDVIEW

It is perhaps natural to place pleasure and life on one side of the human experience and, correspondingly, death and lack of pleasure on the other. For Savinkov, however, this division was much less obvious. Phillip Fisher argues that one may view the aesthetics of terror through the prism Pascal’s *Pensées*: “In Pascal’s longest and most stunning picture of the human condition he places man between two infinities, the infinitely large scale of the universe, in the face of which man is insignificant, and the infinitely small, in the face of which he is a monster. Each of these two infinities would usually call up a catalogue of wonders, of pleasures, of astonishments, but for Pascal, each is an abyss” (51). In the circumstances of the Revolutionary Apocalypse, as a revolutionary and a member of the Russian intelligentsia, Boris Savinkov lived to improve the people’s situation, and in this context, his work was only a drop in the powerful revolutionary wave that embraced the whole country. At the same time, he was a legend, the famous terrorist who planned the deaths of the top figures in the country and as such he was trapped in his own monstrosity. Both infinities were an abyss for Savinkov: the first put his exceptionalism in question, while the second threatened his

⁸⁵ Citation in the original: «Нет любви, нет мира, нет жизни. Есть только смерть. Смерть – венец и смерть – терновый венок».

humanity. While embracing the apocalyptic spirit of the Rider named Death, he continued to ask himself whether he was chosen or cursed.

Boris Savinkov encountered death early in life: Savinkov's older brother Alexander, a social democrat, committed suicide in 1904 while in Siberian exile, and a year later, his father, Viktor Savinkov, died in a psychiatric hospital. A former judge, Victor Savinkov had had a nervous breakdown after learning that Ivan Kalyaev, his pupil and Savinkov's mate-in-terror, had been executed; Savinkov's father never recovered (*Pis'ma Savinkova Viktora Mikhailovicha*, F. 1557, op. 1, ed. hr. 22). Moreover, during years in the Social Revolutionary Combat Organization, Savinkov witnessed multiple deaths of co-terrorists and his close friends. In *Memoirs of a Terrorist*, Savinkov describes the human losses in Plehve's and Duke Sergey Aleksandrovich's assassinations. Alexei Pokotilov, one of his team members, was killed while preparing bombs used in the attacks, as was Mikhail Schweizer. Egor Sozonov, who had actually thrown the bomb that killed Plehve, was arrested and then killed himself in prison. As for Kalyaev, who had thrown the fatal bomb into Sergei Aleksandrovich's carriage: Kalyaev was executed in 1905. Another participant, Dora Brilliant, was eventually arrested and died, insane and tormented by remorse, in the Peter-and-Paul Fortress in 1909. Savinkov was united with all these members of the Combat Organization: they shared a common goal and also a common ideology. Savinkov found a channel for self-renunciation through passionate devotion to his brothers in terror and further indulged in the discourse of death by sharing it with his dearest comrades. Besides, as a person who strived for power, he also enjoyed the sense of fearlessness that the discourse of death allowed for him.

Savinkov, then, with his split and tormented soul, incapable of total renunciation of human contact, is different in ways from the main character of his prose works, George. George is a perfect assassin. On the first pages of *The Pale Horse*, he is governed not by personal anger or hate but, like Savinkov, by the necessity of a murder for the common goal – “terror and revolution” (Savinkov *Kon’ Blednyi* 9). However, he is also cold-blooded and amoral. Even though George is prone to philosophical tangents about the ethics of murder, he alienates himself from any system of beliefs or dogmas: “They say, one shall not kill. They also say, that one can kill a minister but not a revolutionary. They say the opposite as well” (9).⁸⁶ As George himself states, he “spit[s] on the whole world” (*The Pale Horse* 38). Elena, a married woman who George loves, is the only person to whom he can relate on a deeper, intuitive level. Even with her, though, his feelings turn into obsession and jealousy, which, once again, lead to death: the murder of her husband. Questions of morality do not factor into George’s world view: indeed, though a Social Revolutionary, he is predominantly uninterested in politics. He recites the French symbolist Paul Verlaine’s “Un grand sommeil noir”: “Je ne vois plus rien,/Je perds la mémoire/Du mal et du bien...” (“I no longer see a thing/I am losing my memories of evil and good...”), “Je suis un berceau/Qu’une main balance/Au creux d’un caveau” (“I am a cradle/That a hand rocks/In the depth of a burial vault...”) (*The Pale Horse* 12-13). George sees himself as the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, a new man beyond good and evil.

And yet, perhaps surprisingly, George, like Savinkov himself, is prey to feelings of loneliness. He is an “invisible” man at the beginning of his revolutionary work (in *The Pale Horse*) and throughout it until the very end (in *The Black Horse*): “I am used to the

⁸⁶ Citation in the original: “Говорят, нельзя убивать. Говорят ещё, что министра можно убить, а революционера нельзя. Говорят и наоборот.”

uncertain life of a revolutionary and its loneliness. I do not think of my future, and do not want to know it. I try to forget the past. I have no home, no name, no family” (*The Pale Horse* 8); and similarly, “I have no home and no family. I have no losses because I have no gain” (*Kon’ Voronoi* 136).⁸⁷ George and Savinkov share these feelings of non-belonging. Savinkov’s archived notebooks from 1903 and 1907 reveal deep feelings of loneliness, yearning, and melancholy that haunted him throughout his terrorist years: the word *toska*⁸⁸ repeatedly appears in them (f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 3 and 4). At the same time, for George, loneliness and hopelessness give him his strength as a terrorist, along with the ability to accept blood and death as the end in itself. Violence becomes commonplace: “If a louse in your shirt / Mocks you; ‘you are a flea,’ / Then go out and kill!” (*The Pale Horse* 23).

With this short byword, George challenges himself to “overstep,” to borrow a term from Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov in his *Crime and Punishment*. Recall Raskolnikov’s attempts to explicate his reasons for murder: “Whether I can step over barriers or not, whether I dare stoop to pick up or not, whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the right...” (Dostoevsky 425). Savinkov’s George mentions Raskolnikov as a person “choked” by the old lady’s blood, contrasting him with George’s associate Vanya, who will feel “happy and blessed” after committing murder (*The Pale Horse* 26). George achieves what Dostoevsky’s character does not: he can lose nagging memories and to a large extent his humanity.

⁸⁷ Citation in the original: «У меня нет дома и нет семьи. У меня нет утрат, потому что нет достояния».

⁸⁸ The word does not have an adequate English equivalent; it is used to describe mixed feelings of longing, anguish, ennui, and melancholy.

George calls himself “a foreman of the red workshop” and terrorism – his “trade” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 118).⁸⁹ Unlike Vanya, who views terrorism as a moral calling for personal sacrifice, George feels pride and devotion to terrorism as a profession. One of Savinkov’s contemporaries, sociologist A.S. Izgoev argues that “terror as a trade emptied George’s soul” (111). He assumes that first there was terrorism that gave birth to George as a terrorist. It might be true only in part: even though George eventually comes to the feeling of emptiness that Izgoev mentions, he creates terrorism as much as terrorism creates him.

George alienates himself from people and tries to keep the distance even in his narrative, written in the form of a diary. The trilogy presents a sketchbook of episodes and portraits as if scribbled on the run by the main character. However, conversations about death and scenes of violence alternate abruptly with more mundane descriptions of nature or city scenery. For example, in the entry from March 11 George’s mate-in-terror Fyodor talks to George about his past and the murder of his wife by Cossacks: “- Yes, - he continues after short silence, - there was one.... who was solidary with me.... kind of wife. –So? – Nothing... Cossacks killed her” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 11). The line follows by a sudden remark: “The day is fading away outside the window” (11).⁹⁰ In a later episode when the terrorists discuss the most efficient way to throw a bomb at the General-Governor, George does not say a word. Instead, he interrupts the narration by observing his fellow revolutionaries: he mentions the sun scorching on Fyodor’s dark cheeks and Fyodor’s springtime joy, Vanya, who pensively stares into the distance, and Henrich nervously smoking and pacing back and forth. “Above us is the blue sky” – Savinkov

⁸⁹ Citation in the original: «Я – мастер красного цеха. Я опять займусь ремеслом».

⁹⁰ Citation in the original: « - Да, - продолжает он, помолчав, - была тут одна... со мной солидарная... вроде будто жена. - Ну? – Ну, ничего... Убили её казаки. За окном гаснет день».

writes (50). George constantly moves between being an insider, a participant in the storyline, and being an observer who lingers to describe the moment. One minute, he talks about the skill of successful disguise and the technical elements of bombs, while being completely immersed in the needs of that particular moment. The next minute, he suddenly pauses to recognize the eternity and commonality of time, nature, and the blue sky spreading over the heads of both terrorists and their victims.

Similarly to the hare scream, then, nature reminds Savinkov-The Übermensch of his humanity, but this time it happens intentionally as Savinkov claims his role as a narrator: “I love the sad autumn. I like to sit down on a bench in the open and to listen to the wood’s rustling. I am enveloped in an atmosphere of serene peace. I feel as if there were no death, no blood – but only the earth sacred to all, and the sacred heaven above it” (*The Pale Horse* 131-132). In this moment, he remembers Vanya who is to be executed after the successful assassination and he is saddened that “life will come again to a standstill,” because it is people like Vanya who set in motion both life and revolution that go hand in hand in his eyes (132). In these episodes, the narrative slows down to expose Savinkov’s own thoughts expressed beyond George’s usual tone, which becomes in turn melancholic, hopeful, and emotional. Savinkov’s manner of switching between a conversation about terror, killing, or death and poetic retreats reveal his angst for both immortality as an Übermensch (the ability to connect nature with destruction as a matter of fact, as natural continuation of life) and authenticity as a sinner (the contemplation of the world outside the self, the realization of the temporality of terrorist discourse and the permanence of nature and humanity).

Besides Elena, the only other person who receives special attention and even affection from George is Vanya, whose prototype was, mostly likely, Ivan Kalyaev. Even though George does not share Vanya's idealism and Christian God-fearing sense of being, he is drawn to Vanya's innocence and purity of heart. After his first failed attempt to assassinate the General-Governor in the street, George even decides not to attack the General-Governor in the palace out of respect for Vanya because Vanya does not want to kill the General-Governor's children (*The Pale Horse* 123-124). In a conversation with George, Vanya blatantly addresses Savinkov's worst fears: "I think that there are only two ways, no more than two. One is to believe that everything is permissible. You see? Everything. And then you are Smerdyakov, provided, of course, you dare to do anything. After all, if there is no God and Jesus is but a man, then there is no love, it means there is nothing... And the other way is the way of Christ... Listen, if there's love in your heart, real, deep love, then you can even kill" (*Kon' Blednyi* 14).⁹¹ Vanya refers here to Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Pavel Smerdyakov, Fyodor Karamazov's illegitimate son and servant, kills his father. Whereas Raskolnikov had developed an elaborate, though flawed, theory for a justifiable murder and then come to realize its failure, Smerdyakov killed in a desire to overcome his own mediocrity and depravity. He hangs himself later in the novel, still completely convinced of his own innocence and brilliance.

Vanya argues that love is what distinguishes a social-revolutionary terrorist from Smerdyakov, a person of limited intellectual capacity and aspirations. Vanya believes

⁹¹ Citation in the original: «мне кажется, есть только два, всего два пути. Один, - все позволено. Понимаешь ли – все. И тогда – Смердяков. Если, конечно, сметь, если на всё решиться. Ведь если нет Бога и Христос человек, то нет и любви, значит нет ничего... И другой путь – путь Христов... Слушай, ведь если любишь, много, по-настоящему любишь, то и убить тогда можно».

that through true Christian love, a murderer sacrifices the most precious gift that he has – his life – and accepts suffering as the only way to redeem pain and death and also purify the world for those he leaves behind. Moreover, when George suggests that he should leave terrorist work, Vanya rejects the idea: “I cannot not kill because I love” (15).⁹² Vanya recognizes George’s amorality (“there’s no law for you”) and knows that for George, “blood [...] is water” (15).⁹³ Savinkov himself, however, constantly fears that despite his love for people and Russia, he is too pragmatic, too individualistic, and too thirsty for power to kill solely out of love. Still, he wishes for Kalyaev/Vanya’s world where the death and love bring together the terrorist and the martyr as one, and both dying and killing are active forces in the apocalyptic struggle. Savinkov’s tragedy is in his spiritual and psychological inability to come to terms with this “ideal” terrorist world.

In a conversation with Elena, in reply to her question about his reason for being a terrorist, George wants to tell her that “blood cleanses blood” and that they “kill unwillingly, that terrorism is needed for the revolution, and the revolution is needed for people” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 44).⁹⁴ But he stops himself because Elena would not understand the apocalyptic revolutionary fever that possesses George. The author Savinkov realizes something that the terrorist Savinkov would not comprehend completely until years later: that the almost arithmetically unconditional progression of terrorism-revolution-people’s good was flawed. Another reason why George cannot find an adequate explanation for Elena about his choice to “live with blood” is that blood is not only needed for the

⁹² Citation in the original: «я не могу не убить, ибо люблю».

⁹³ Citation in the original: «У тебя нет закона, кровь для тебя - вода».

⁹⁴ Citation in the original: «что кровь очищает кровь, что мы убиваем против желания, что террор нужен для революции, а революция нужна для народа».

revolution, but he, personally, needs it as well: “- ... You told yourself: it is necessary[...]. – No. I said: I want it” (*Kon' Blednyi* 46).⁹⁵

Indeed, part of Savinkov always feared merging with his character, becoming George for whom the revolutionary need to kill equated with the personal joy of killing. In one of his poems, Savinkov describes experiencing euphoria after murder:

I walked, staggering,
The fiery ball was glowing...
The road
Was blazing,
White dust
Was blinding,
A black shadow
Was swaying.
On this July day
My strength
Was broken.
I walked staggering
The fiery ball was glowing...
And in me I already felt rising heavy
Joy.

⁹⁵ Citation in the original: «-Вы сказали себе: так нужно < ... >. –Нет, я сказал: я хочу».

Joy of the century, -

Joy that I killed a person (*Kniga stihov* 55-56).⁹⁶

The poem is written in choppy expressive phrases, imitating the rapid breathing of a person who cannot contain his excitement from an adrenaline rush. Hallucinogenic metaphors of the sun, the dusty road, and shadows and the character's "staggering" present the emotional state of the Poetic I: he is intoxicated with the blood that he spilt and the intense reaction to his own "overstepping." "The fiery ball" and "the blazing road" symbolize the intensifying power of revolution, while the contrasting color scheme of white and black defines the opposition between the new and old worlds. The character is filled with "joy of the century" which is the apocalyptic spirit of the time, when moral paradigms are shifting under political needs. He mentions neither the person he killed, nor the reason for murder because what is important for him is his defiance, his inner ability to transgress the sanctity of a human life, and his integrity not only to kill but "to have the right."

George also connects the after-murder feeling with intoxication when he meets with Elena: "White, she lies in my arms and there is no more hangover from the spilt blood. There is nothing" (*Kon' Blednyi* 97).⁹⁷ Between the moments when he feels either anticipation of the murder or the intoxication from it, George feels numb. He lives free from the metaphysical burdens of a murder that torture Vanya.

⁹⁶ Citation in the original: «Я шёл, шатался,/Огненный шар раскалялся.../Мостовая/Пылала,/Белая пыль,/Ослепляла,/Чёрная тень/Колебалась./В этот июльский день/Моя сила/Сломалась./ Я шёл, шатался,/Огненный шар раскалялся.../И уже тяжкая подымалась/Радость/Радость от века, -/Радость, что я убил человека».

⁹⁷ Citation in the original: «Она, белая, лежит у меня на руках и уже нет похмелья пролитой крови. И нет ничего».

Savinkov-The Sinner manifests himself more clearly in poetry. In one of Savinkov's more famous poems, *Tertsiny* ("Terza Rima," 1911) Savinkov glances back over his life, in the "mirror of [his] memories" (3).⁹⁸ The Poetic I of "Terza Rima" is at the end of his life path, casting his own judgement on his life that was "petty and bothersome deception" and left him with a "restless swarm of memory demons" and the "dear, cruel shadows" of those who are now gone (3).⁹⁹ Unlike the self-appointed and self-righteous Rider named Death in *The Pale Horse*, the character of the poem questions whether he assumed the higher calling that was not there: "I was not called. Was I even named?" (4).¹⁰⁰ He wonders if his life was lived in constant self-deception and if he sinned not out of higher necessity but out of his personal convictions. But in the last stanza, he finds his peace: "But in this world there is Judge and Lord/ Christ is love. Golgotha is redemption./ We are the branches. He is the rod. He is God's son./ I believe: sinners have His forgiveness..." (4).¹⁰¹ Savinkov was influenced by Merezhkovsky's religious-philosophical doctrine of Revolutionary Christianity that viewed a terrorist act as "a crown of thorns, a terrorist's path as a way to Golgotha, and his execution as redemption" (*Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 25). Gippius, too, argued that revolutionaries should accept the necessity of murder and the sinfulness of violence as their cross to bear. However, here, Savinkov accepts this idea only partially: not because of the heroic sacrifice that was so popular within the revolutionary narrative but because of the Christ's sacrifice on the cross, every sinful person was already forgiven. Here the Poetic I

⁹⁸ Citation in the original: «Вот зеркало моих воспоминаний».

⁹⁹ Citation in the original: «Жизнь – мелкий и докучливый обман»; «О, бесов памяти мятежный рой!/ О, милые, безжалостные тени!».

¹⁰⁰ Citation in the original: «Я не был призван. Был ли я хоть зван?»

¹⁰¹ Citation in the original: "Но в мире есть Судья и Господин./ Христос – любовь. Голгофа – искупление./ Мы – ветви. Он – лоза. Он – Божий сын./ Я верю: грешникам – его прощенье..."

channels Vanya from *The Pale Horse* in his belief that salvation lies in Christ's love that is unconditional and a priori.

The image of the Rider named Death appears in another poem also written in 1911 – “Was it the kiss of the prince of darkness that confused me?...”¹⁰² The character of this poem confesses that in false beliefs and “in madness” he, “the Rider,” “drew his sharp sword” (4).¹⁰³ The messianic apocalyptic rhetoric here is almost the opposite from the one in *The Pale Horse*: instead of serving as a weapon of justice, the character confesses to following a false prophet who seduced him and incited him to murder. The aesthetic images of blood, familiar from *The Pale Horse*, reappear through the metaphor of “a book written in blood”¹⁰⁴ that was opened for the Poetic I by Abaddon, an angel of destruction, as we see in the final line of the poem – “And [Abaddon] whispered in my ear: the soul is killed by blood” (5).¹⁰⁵ This poem reveals Savinkov's anxiety: was he just a destructive force in the revolutionary struggle? Could spilt blood ever be justified? Could a person stay alive while living and breathing with death?

Savinkov's angst manifests itself in the image of *dvoinik*, a doppelgänger, which haunted him throughout the years. Lacan interprets doppelgänger as a “specular” other that exposes a disconnected self, a lack of wholeness, and a lack of identification at the same time (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book I 188). Savinkov's poetic doppelgänger is a physical manifestation of his abjection, which is why it produced anxiety and fear within him. The poetic world becomes the transit point between the Lacanian imaginary stage, where Savinkov's self is ideal, whole, and coherent, and the Lacanian symbolic

¹⁰² «Не князь ли тьмы меня лобзанием смутил?....»

¹⁰³ Citation in the original: «Я, всадник, острый меч в безумье обнажил».

¹⁰⁴ Citation in the original: «И книгу мне раскрыл, написанную кровью».

¹⁰⁵ Citation in the original: «И на ухо шепнул: душа убита кровью».

stage, where language introduces order and therefore, fragmentation. In the poetic world, Savinkov-The Sinner and Savinkov-The Übermensch meet, which causes aversion and rejection as the two threaten each other.

Today he came to me,
He came unexpectedly,
I did not notice, - he came in
Like an uninvited guest.
I heard the sound of his steps
And did not believe the sound...
I raised my head and glanced at him,
He, dark, silently gave
Me his hand.
And I recognized him right that moment
By his shining eyes.
I recognized his eyes,
The eyes I hate:
It was myself... (*Kniga stikhov* 62)¹⁰⁶

The poem starts with colors, images and sounds: a dark guest walks into the Poetic I's room and extends his hand without saying a word. Before the moment of recognition, the character does not feel threatened but rather surprised by the unexpected guest and puzzled by his visit. The shift into the state of hate and aversion comes at the moment of

¹⁰⁶ Citation in the original: «Сегодня он ко мне пришёл./Пришёл неожиданный./Я не заметил, - он вошёл./Как гость незванный./Я слышал звук его шагов./Не верил звуку.../Я поднял голову, взглянул./Он, тёмный, молча, протянул/Мне руку./И я узнал его тотчас/По блеску глаз./Его узнал я по глазам:/То был я сам...».

recognition because recognition means naming. With the fractured signified, assigning the signifier (naming) is uncanny, repulsive, impossible.

Recognizing the inability to separate his two hypostases, Savinkov attempted to accept his own duality: “He is dull,/ cozy,/ domestic,/ not scary/ not a torturer,/ not a consoler,/ And not a guardian,/ Not a person and not a devil./ He is I. He is my, unknown to everyone,/ A loyal companion until death” (*Kniga Stikhov* 65).¹⁰⁷ Even though he realized that his unified and stable identity could exist even in abjection, Savinkov is afraid to be absorbed by one of his hypostases completely: in the poem “He has rosy cheeks...,”¹⁰⁸ the Poetic I describes what his doppelgänger, while hiding who he is, taught him – “how to live, how to believe, how to love,/ How to kill a person,/ How to lie,/ And when to tell the truth” (*Kniga stikhov* 68).¹⁰⁹ The doppelgänger brings his own symbolic order and rules that the Poetic I is unable to resist, claiming that he will never forgive him for “the blood that [the character] did not dare to spill/did not dare/ because he did not want this” (68).¹¹⁰

Savinkov is haunted by the blood that he did not spill and the blood that he spilt. In his poem, “He bowed very low to me...”¹¹¹ he imagines an emotionally disturbing encounter with one of his victims, a wrinkled, grey, toothless old man who appears and reappears inescapably. In another poem, “When they bring my coffin...,”¹¹² Savinkov imagines his own funeral as he watches it from the side. The syntactical and semantic

¹⁰⁷ Citation in the original: «Он мутный/Уютный,/Домашний,/Не страшный,/Не мучитель,/Не утешитель,/И не хранитель,/Не человек и не бес./Он – я. Он мой, никому не известный./До гроба верный сожитель».

¹⁰⁸ «У него румяные щёки...»

¹⁰⁹ Citation in the original: «Как жить, как веровать, как любить,/Как человека убить,/Как надо солгать,/И когда можно правду сказать...»

¹¹⁰ Citation in the original: «Ту кровь, которую я пролить не посмел,/Не посмел,/Потому что он этого не хотел»

¹¹¹ «Он очень низко мне поклонился...»

¹¹² «Когда принесут мой гроб...»

choices show the alienation of the character from himself: “And the mister who called himself I will not exist anymore” (*Kniga stikhov* 75).¹¹³ As an unbiased observer, the Poetic I concludes the trivial activities of his life: “He was born, then he killed,/ Then he loved,/ Then he was bored,/ Then he played,/ Then he wrote,/ Then he died” (76).¹¹⁴ The character does not know his name or the purpose of his life, and he does not care much because it is “one less” (76).

We see an intriguing juxtaposition in Savinkov’s aesthetic world when he simultaneously looks at himself as Death and in death, thus locating himself in the margins of the discourses on immortality and salvation. Again, the moment of recognition or unrecognition is the moment of interaction between imaginary manifestation and linguistic materialization of Savinkov’s doppelgänger. According to the German medieval mythological tradition, it is impossible to meet one’s own doppelgänger without a consequence of impending death. Symptomatic of the death-drive, Savinkov compulsively re-creates the image of doppelgänger over and over but continues to forcefully delay the point of identification: he exposes his doppelgänger but refuses to name him.

2.4 THE ART OF DYING. THE ART OF WRITING DEATH. *ZHIZNETVORCHESTVO* OR THEATRICALITY?

In the face of destruction, of inevitable transience and perdition – of death – the drive will have directed itself at retaining something not subject to entropy, at tarrying on the edge of creation. This ‘instinct’ to take life and freeze it, so to speak, in a more primary state, to keep it ‘there’, to effect some arrest, might be an aesthetic one, in the sense that any aesthetic ‘drive’ would wish to posit an inorganic entity – an artwork, ... that, in the name of being

¹¹³ Citation in the original: «И не будет уже господина,/Который называл себя: я.»

¹¹⁴ Citation in the original: «Он родился, потом убил,/Потом любил,/Потом скучал,/Потом играл,/Потом писал,/Потом скончался».

created, takes on a different, a resistant relationship to death and the destructiveness by which it operates (Smith 20).

The blood circulating in the leg of the mite is a tender image, not a terrifying one, it is only the dizzying vortex of worlds within worlds that can later capture and efface our first tender response to the actual scene (Pascal as qtd. in Fisher 52).

In his book *Mortality's Muse: The Fine Art of Dying*, Donald Siebert reminds us that “in the Middle Ages, the Latin phrase *ars moriendi* [the art of dying] referred to a tradition of dying in an ideal Christian way” (xxi). The idea of the art of dying existed as a part of the revolutionary narrative of martyrdom. Though Savinkov never engaged in the material act of dying, he actively practiced “the art of dying” in his literary works. In the scenes of death, Savinkov aestheticized the processes of dying and killing. In *The Pale Horse*, the word “blood” and its cognates appear 50 times during the short novel of 119 pages. Blood is an element of both the symbolic and the real Lacanian order, representing life and death at the same time. Blood functions within multiple symbolic structures. In the Christian tradition, it signifies the redemption of sins through Christ’s blood, the ultimate sacrifice of God. In mythological tales, vampires who drink blood reach immortality and damnation. On one hand, in death, blood stays with the body while the soul enters eternal life, but on the other hand, spilling blood means spilling the essence of life. For Savinkov, blood is the rudiment of life, faith, and idea. For example, in his short entry from March 14, he engages it as a symbol in several discourses: in the religious context (“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of water and they became blood”), in its proverbial meaning (“You cannot quench blood with water, you cannot burn it out with fire”¹¹⁵), and in his ideological and psychological

¹¹⁵ Citation in the original: «кровь водой не зальешь и огнем не выжжешь».

self-inquiries (“In the name of what do I go out to kill? Is it only for the sake of blood, and more blood?...”) (*The Pale Horse* 8-9).

Sometimes, George desperately tries to justify his monstrosity, his lust for blood, and his right to live even as a terrorist and a murderer: “Vanya says: ‘If everything is permissible, then you are Smerdyakov’. But what makes Smerdyakov worse than others? And why should one be scared of it?” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 33).¹¹⁶ George defends himself by comparing his amorality to the ancient Greeks’ lack of Christian moral dichotomy that negates life and human nature. He shadows Nietzsche’s recollections in *The Birth of Tragedy* about the culture of classical Greek tragedies that represented a healthier state of the human condition. George quotes the Greek goddess of wisdom Athena: “The bosom of the endless earth will be showered with blood and brain...” George continues: “Let it shower. I don’t mind this a bit” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 33).¹¹⁷

For Savinkov and his characters, blood was the normalized reality of life, and his business as a terrorist was also his art as a writer. Through his character, Savinkov ponders on his own desensitization to loss and violence. As a matter of simple fact, George ponders about a possibility of death for Erna, a bomb maker in the Combat Organization and a woman who unrequitedly loves George: “What if she should actually be blown up? If, instead of flaxen hair and wondering blue eyes, there should remain only a red heap of flesh?” (*The Pale Horse* 104). His numbness is shocking and incomprehensible. At the same time, George is indifferent even about his own fate.

Describing his time in prison, he mentions that he lacked the desire to live or die. He was

¹¹⁶ Citation in the original: «Ваня говорит: «Если все позволено, тогда Смердяков». А чем Смердяков хуже других? И почему нужно бояться Смердякова?»

¹¹⁷ Citation in the original: « «Лоно земли беспредельной обрызжется кровью и мозгом...» Пусть обрызжется. Я ничего против этого не имею».

concerned neither with the life he lived, nor with the after-death experience. The only questions that he asked himself were whether the rope would cut into the skin and whether strangulation caused pain (*Kon' Blednyi* 100). Again, pain as the Lacanian Real is the only experience that breaks the revolutionary mythological bliss and reveals Savinkov's paradox. The ideas of living and dying perfectly fit into George's narrative of heroic terrorism, whereas pain negates it.

Savinkov's paradoxical mix of monstrosity and humanity makes him an ultimate exemplar of *zhiznetvorchestvo* ("life-creation"). In his Nietzschean philosophical stance, through art, he redefines himself, and through the aesthetics of death, he makes an attempt to save himself from "truth" - the impossibility of his two hypostases to merge. In the meta-narrative literary tradition, as an author, he never dies, remaining in charge of every created character and manifesting his selves through the multiplicity of portraits. As a terrorist, Savinkov could not help enjoying the adrenaline of his adventurous, underground life. Savinkov's contemporaries often blamed him for loving the game a little too much. In an entry from May 12, Savinkov describes George's suspenseful chase with the secret police. His focus on the action verbs creates rhythm, perfectly simulating the rapid pace of the hunt: "I run in. I hide in the gates. I pressed my back against the wall and froze. Minutes pass like hours [...] He watches. He waits. He is a cat and I am a mouse. Four steps to the door" (*Kon' Blednyi* 60).¹¹⁸ George enjoys not only the risk of an adventure, but also his ability to outsmart the police.

Because of Savinkov's love for the adrenaline rush, Savinkov's contemporaries, and especially his political enemies, often perceived his duality as theatricality.

¹¹⁸ Citation in the original: «Я вбегаю. Я прячусь в воротах. Прижался спиной к стене и застыл. Длятся минуты-часы.... Он караулит. Он ждёт. Он кошка, - я мышь. До дверей четыре шага».

Savinkov's inner struggle between the two morally exclusive choices even earned him the name "Hamlet of the Revolution" from Silver Age poet and one of the first Russian decadents Vladimir Gippius (*Virezki iz zhurnalov*, f. 5831, op. 1, ed. hr. 323). Mikhail Gotz, one of the ideological founders of Russian terrorism, called Savinkov "a broken Stradivarius' violin" (as qtd. in *Revolutsionnoe Khristovstvo* 22). Many opponents of Savinkov, including the first Soviet Commissar of Education, Anatoli Lunacharsky, believed that he always wore a mask: "Boris Savinkov is a chevalier of fortune, a theatrical person to the highest degree. I don't know whether he always plays a role to himself but in front of others, he always plays a role" (Lunacharskii 138).¹¹⁹ Lunacharsky continues to compare Savinkov with a hysterical woman who cannot sit still for a moment because she constantly needs everyone's attention (139). As a professional terrorist, Savinkov, indeed, had to be a good actor: working under disguise, he had to be gentleman George O'Brien, Ural timber merchant Frol Titov, English businessman Arthur McCullough moving in with his "wife" Dora Brilliant, and many others. Most members of the Combat Organization had to demonstrate exceptional acting skills in order to merge into Moscow or Petersburg society: they played cabbies, cooks, chauffeurs, butlers, or street sellers.¹²⁰ Whether Savinkov was always acting or pretending is another question. After spending the majority of his life being in character, Savinkov himself might have been trying to solve the problem of his belonging and self-identity. Lunacharsky argues that even Savinkov's inner torments portrayed in his literary

¹¹⁹ Citation in the original: «Борис Савинков – это артист авантюры, человек в высшей степени театральный. Я не знаю, всегда ли он играет роль перед самим собою, но перед другими он всегда играет роль».

¹²⁰ They often had to build real relationships to stay in character, for example, preparing for the Plehve's assassination, Ivanovskaia who played the cook had to become friends with the yard-keeper, and Sazonov was an active participant of the servants' gossip talks (*Vospominaniia terrorista* 49-50).

works were an element of Savinkov's self-mythologization, meant to create "around his 'heroic' persona, aura of complexity and titanic sorrow."¹²¹ Savinkov felt hurt when people, including his first wife, accused him of dishonesty in his works (*Pis'ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed. hr. 11).

Other contemporaries, such as Mikhail Chernyavsky, believed in the honesty of Savinkov's abjection. Chernavsky became acquainted with Savinkov in late 1909, in Paris, when he was sent by the Party to volunteer for the recently revived Combat Organization under Savinkov's leadership. He immediately recognized Savinkov's inner duality and struggle.

Inside [Savinkov] there lived two distinct people. And this bifacialness (I apologize for the awkwardness of the term) appeared rather often. Usually two distinct personalities living within one individual work out a certain *modus vivendi* which, in spite of the significant disagreements between them, allows them to exist side by side without major conflicts. Savinkov did not possess such a *modus...* The two personalities living within him carried on a constant battle with one another, aggravating everything else. (Chernavskii as qtd. in Palmer 49-50)

The rhetoric of death that balanced out the two sides of Savinkov in writing became this *modus vivendi*. It did not eliminate the inner conflict in Savinkov but opened the stage for the battle, performance, and the opportunity to openly negotiate "bifacialness" through his characters.

¹²¹ Citation in the original: «вокруг его 'героической' фигуры ореол сложности и титанической скорби».

One of the questions that might arise while investigating Savinkov as a political and cultural persona is whether he was first a terrorist and then a writer, or the opposite, because “evil men have no songs.” As a person who created life out of art and art out of life, both of his professions were equally important for him. As Keith Lehrer argues in his book on art, self, and knowledge, “it is a mistake to Platonize form and content in a way that castrates the role of experience” (76). In the case of Savinkov, meaning already lay in his experience. Savinkov was especially active as a writer in moments of hibernation, when he was forced into political and social lethargy. Among other SRs, Savinkov confessed that he needed to write “in the way that a bird needs to sing”: “I cannot stop writing, even though I could never give myself up to art completely” (as qtd. in *Revolutsionnoe Khristovstvo* 35).¹²² Savinkov’s deliberation in creative work did not purport to cast ethical judgements but focused on creating a new reality. He discharged his power (and monstrosity) through art to stimulate life as a terrorist. While reciting obscure decadent poems, Savinkov liked to repeat: “There is no morality, only beauty; and beauty lies in free evolution of personal identity, in continuous development and disclosure of everything that has been founded in a human soul” (Zenzinov 301).¹²³

Zinaida Gippius describes Savinkov as a person who was able to “assess and grasp what he needed the most at that moment and immediately turn it into his own active power” (*Kniga Stikhov* ix).¹²⁴ This is the way, she continues, that he “found himself, a writer” (ix). While exploring the Freudian death-drive in literature and art, Robert Smith

¹²² Citation in the original: «Писать мне необходимо, как птице петь. Я не могу не писать, хотя никогда не мог отдаться искусству целиком».

¹²³ Citation in the original: «Морали нет, есть только красота; а красота состоит в свободном развитии человеческой личности, в непрерывном развёртывании и раскрытии всего, что заложено в душе человека.».

¹²⁴ Citation in the original: «угадывать и схватывать то, что оказывалось ему в данный момент нужным, и мгновенно претворять в собственную действенную силу».

argues that “creativity is ‘determined’ by the death-drive, where the death-drive is obsessive, compulsive, repetitive, undeviating, monomaniacal and so forth” (xv). In her Warsaw diaries, Zinaida Gippius repeatedly mentioned Savinkov’s obsessive, almost maniacal nature when it came to everything: revolutionary cause, personal feelings, writing, family, etc.: “He never possesses everything that he has, but always one thing, and with him taking no notice, this one thing starts possessing him” (Pakhmuss 106).

Reading about Gippius’ memories, we cannot ignore the immediate logical connection to Dostoevsky’s prophetic novel *Demons*.¹²⁵ In the novel, Dostoevsky ruthlessly criticized the Nechaev’s nihilist movement, the origin of Russian terrorism, and the subsequently born phenomenon of *nechaevshchina* that led to chaos, senseless violence, suffering, and killings of innocent people. Dostoevsky believed that Russia was ill. Its illness was that, possessed by the nihilistic Western spirit that was misinterpreted and misapplied, even the most ingenious and pure-hearted people were capable of committing the most loathsome deeds while “sometimes not even being a loathsome [people] at all” (Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* 109).¹²⁶ This abundance of energy and spirit combined with the lack of a solid foundation for “ethical” violence rooted in metaphysical, social, and historical tradition cultivated the symptoms of *nechaevshchina* in Savinkov. In the diaries, Gippius mentioned *bezrazmernost'* (“dimensionlessness”) - as “the lack of measure” - that Savinkov knew about himself and that she also noticed about him (Pakhmuss 106). Step by step, Savinkov uncovered that self-destructive compulsion

¹²⁵ also translated as *The Possessed*

¹²⁶ Citation in the original: «Опять-таки в моём романе «Бесы» я попытался изобразить те многообразные и разнообразные мотивы, по которым даже чистейшие сердцем и простодушнейшие люди могут быть привлечены к совершению такого же чудовищного злодейства. Вот в том-то и ужас, что у нас можно сделать самый пакостный и мерзкий поступок, не будучи вовсе иногда мерзавцем!»

about which Dostoevsky warned his contemporaries. He demonstrated the gradual development of this compulsion through the character of George. While denying any sense of personal hatred toward the Governor-General in his first diary entries, in the entry from July 6 he obsessively declares that he hates the Governor-General's palace, his servants, his guards, his carriage, his horses, his glasses, his desires, thoughts, and prayers, his "hollow cheeks," his voice and gait, his fed and clean children, his faith in himself, and his hatred towards revolutionaries (*Kon' Blednyi* 66-67).

As George's sociopathic agitation worsens, the lines between the revolutionary need for killing and personal blood lust become more and more blurry. Even George's love for Elena turns into the obsessive desire to consume her. Thinking about her, he remembers "a strange southern flower": "in the center of the pointed thorns a full scarlet flower. One might think a drop of red blood had spurted forth and coagulated into purple... I had stroked its leaves; its thorns pricked my hands; I breathed in its poignant, penetrating, and intoxicating perfume... a mysterious spell was at work. The red flower bewitched me and tortured my soul" (*The Pale Horse* 105). George cannot get rid of his need to possess – a flower, a woman, a human life. This obsession leads George to murder Elena's husband - a personal, Smerdyakov-like murder – in an attempt to satisfy his own blood lust. George realizes that he crossed an invisible but critically important line when he calls himself "a ship without a rudder" (*The Pale Horse* 163). He notes that behind the line, "there is no definite distinction, no difference [...] Blood begets blood and vengeance lives by vengeance... It is not him alone that I have killed" (165-166).

In the second part of the trilogy, disappointed and disillusioned George in emigration calls himself and his former fellow terrorists "pieces of ship" that sunk

(*Neizvestnaia rukopis'* 166). Savinkov uses a similar metaphor of a ship in his personal letter to Maria Prokofieva, a female terrorist and Sozonov's fiancé, in 1911: "I feel remorse for all the adversity and failures. Of course, I am the one to blame. To blame not only officially, but much worse: I broke the ship on the underwater rocks, like a bad helmsman, negligent and blear-eyed. Now there are pieces of it in the water. I am collecting them, hammering nails. But what is the point? I am still the helmsman" (as qtd. in *Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 58).¹²⁷ Savinkov's hopelessness and heaviness of heart here parallel George's distress after the murder. Instead of the empowerment and immortality of an *Übermensch*, he found Raskolnikov. However, this Raskolnikov lacked remorse and the possibility for redemption: unlike Raskolnikov who had Sonya, George lost Vanya, his only moral checkpoint, and the murder killed his love for Elena. With no love for Elena, the murder loses its meaning for George, becoming only "a dead leaf of his lost days" (*Kon' Blednyi* 120).¹²⁸ George comes to the conclusion that he cannot be saved: his fate is to live in the shadows, to live with death, and to kill, over and over, in the way of Nietzschean eternal return, until the end of his days.

After accepting this thought, he sarcastically calls upon the Nietzschean Zarathustra's lightness of being by comparing blood to cranberry juice and terrorist struggle to the puppet theater. For him, all of life is a cheap performance, vulgar in its platitude. George's cynicism here is one of the reasons why Savinkov was accused of insincerity and theatricality.

¹²⁷ Citation in the original: «Меня мучит совесть... мучит за все несчастья и неудачи. Вся вина лежит, конечно, на мне. Не формальная только вина, гораздо хуже: я разбил корабль о подводные камни, как плохой кормчий, нерадивый и недалёковидный. Теперь по воде носятся обломки. Я собираю их, забиваю гвоздями. Что толку? Ведь кормчий всё тот же я».

¹²⁸ Citation in the original: «Мертвый лист моих утраченных дней».

Or is it not all a puppet show? The curtain is up, we are on the stage. The pale Pierrot loves Pierrette. He swears eternal love for her. Pierrette has a lover. A toy pistol cracks, blood flows – it is only cranberry juice. A street organ squeaks. Curtain. Then the second number: the pursuit of a man. He has a hat with a cock-feather stuck in it. He is an admiral in the Swiss fleet. We have red mantles and masks. Rinaldo di Rinaldini is with us. The carabineers pursue us but cannot catch us. The pistol cracks again; the street organ squeaks. Curtain. Number three: Athos, Porthos, Aramis, the three musketeers, are on the stage. Their jackets are splashed with wine. They have pasteboard swords in their hands. They drink, kiss and sing. Now and then they kill. Who can surpass Athos in courage? Or Porthos in strength? Or Aramis in cunning? The finale. The street organ drones an elaborate march tune. Bravo! The gallery and the stalls are pleased. The actors have done their jobs. They are being dragged by their three-cornered hats, by their cock-feathers, and thrown into a box. The strings get entangled. Which is the admiral Ronaldo, which is the enamoured Pierrot? Who can make head or tail of it? Good-night until to-morrow.

(Pale Horse 173-174)

In the section “On Reading and Writing,” Nietzsche explains what it means to defy “the spirit of gravity” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 41). First of all, he argues, “whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read but to be learned by heart,” meaning that it is not only about teaching the principle, but also about performing and living it for people to follow (40). Being a terrorist for George means performing his acts of terrorism as life.

“We are on the stage,” he writes, describing three theatrical acts of their revolutionary performance. The roles are changing: one day, he is Pierrot, a sad clown from an Italian pantomime who constantly suffers because of his naivety. George feels that he was pulled into his tragic circumstances with Elena by fate’s decree, but at the end of the day, pulling the trigger was no harder than killing a political enemy out of revolutionary justice. In the original Italian comedy, Pierrot loves Columbine who breaks his heart and leaves him for Harlequin. However, here Pierrot loves Pierrette, his female counterpart who is equally miserable and naïve. Elena loves George but she is frightened by his risky lifestyle and his profession as a murderer. She is too far removed from the revolutionary fever of the apocalyptic thinking that possesses her lover.

Another day comes, and George changes his role to a hunter who is chasing a Swiss admiral under the leadership of Rinaldo di Rinaldini, a bandit from a German novel by Vulpius Christian August. Life now is an adventure story, in which pulling the trigger is not only easy, but also enjoyable. In the third act, George compares his brothers-in-terror to the three musketeers, the characters of the famous novel by Alexander Dumas. Similar to revolutionary terrorists, they are heroes, and nobody can doubt their courage, strength, and wit. But their swords are cardboard, and their courage has its time and place: the moment when the curtain falls and the revolutionary apocalypse is over, new Pierrots and new musketeers will come while the old ones will be forgotten.

“The tedious merry-go-round goes on turning,” George continues, “Come to the show (*balagan*) – it is open to public.... Is it vaudeville or is it drama?” (*The Pale Horse* 174-175). George sees life as farce and argues that there is no meaning in life because

nobody can find a way out of self-deception and illusions. This thought as well as the imagery of Pierrot, Pierrette, and cranberry juice comes from Alexander Blok's play *Balaganchik* (Little Show-Booth, 1906) that exposes the threat of ambiguity and delusion. As an honest and even crude type of street folklore, *balagans* often mocked those elements of reality that remained invisible in everyday life. In Blok's play, Pierrot waits for his beloved Columbine, but when she arrives, the mystics think that she is Death. In the commotion, Harlequin takes away Columbine. The Author comes to the stage and tries to explain the meaning of his love story but he is pulled away from the curtains. Later, at the ball, Harlequin jumps into a paper window and Pierrot sees Death in the window. As he comes closer, it turns out to be Columbine. The Author reappears, trying to join their hands, when suddenly all the decorations fly away. Pierrot stays lying on the stage, where he reads a monologue about the illusions around him. The reference to Blok's play in George's narrative reveals his pain of ambiguity: he does not know whether he overstepped the line by killing for a personal gain and whether the line was there to begin with, which is why, following the dancing Zarathustra, he defeats his "spirit of gravity" by laughing at blood and death and his own insignificance. This passage, again, evokes Pascal's two types of infinities that George faces - the abyss of monstrosity and the abyss of insignificance. At this point, he does not want to kill anymore: not because he realized the fallacy of justified murders, but because for him, personally, murder lost its meaning. *The Pale Horse* ends with George thinking about suicide: he does not want to be a terrorist anymore because, on the one hand, he stepped over the line of the impossible, but did not notice the difference. On the other hand, he

realized (again resonating with Nietzsche) his inability to accept “the prayers of slaves” (179).

However, George never dies and even returns again to the same metaphors of “blasphemous *balagan*” and “cranberry juice” that “floods up to the horse bridles” in *The Black Horse* (*Kon’ Voronoi* 144). He continues to ridicule episodes of violence and death: “Through the field-glasses I watched figures on the neighbouring hills running in and out amongst the birches and falling under our fire. They looked like toy soldiers rather than men. With toy swords, like matches; toy rifles, like pencils; toy explosions, like the puff of a cigarette” (*The Black Horse* 30). Savinkov uses similar imagery describing the action he witnessed in World War I, when he was a volunteer in the French Army and a war correspondent. This is the way in which he illustrates the crash of an enemy train that was caused by the bombing of the railways: “The clock-work toy broke... Were there people on the train? There were dolls, toy soldiers. No people. No railway station. No rails. There is a spring, there is tin, there is cardboard. There is a half-fairy Nürnberg” (*Niurenbergskie igrushki* f. 1557, op. 1, ed.hr. 4, page 2).¹²⁹ In his story “Nürnberg toys,” he reveals the ability and even the need to forget about war that allowed him to see falling toys instead of dying people. “Don’t resent me, and if you can, understand me,” he finishes the story.¹³⁰

Savinkov saw violence everywhere, probably because he followed it. Above all his needs was the need to be active and useful, but he ended up feeling more and more empty. In the second installment of the trilogy, George is a frustrated, unhappy and even

¹²⁹ Citation in the original: «Разбилась заводная игрушка... Разве были в поезде люди? Были куклы, игрушечные солдаты. Нет людей. Нет вокзала. Нет рельсов. Есть пружина, есть олово, есть картон. Есть полу-сказочный Нюренберг».

¹³⁰ Citation in the original: «Не возмущайтесь, а если можете, поймите меня».

fearful “retired” terrorist who lives abroad in exile and realizes: “No revolution. Everything is gone. So goes love” (*Neizvestnaia rukopis*’ 157).¹³¹ He is still bored and craving action that is far away in St. Petersburg that appears to him as “touch-me-not, apocalyptic beast” (157). George calls himself “a humble slave,” sees his life as a “cemetery” with “unfenced and unmourned crosses” and rejects the aesthetics of death that he used to appreciate: “How can a murder be beautiful?” (161).¹³² His colonel George in *The Black Horse* (now working under the pseudonym Yuri Nikolaevich) is an even more alienated, disappointed, and bitter person than terrorist and emigre George. Amidst the Civil War, fighting on the White side, he realized that committing a murder was even easier for people around him, no matter what side they are on. Human life depreciated even more: “A man lives and breathes with murder, wanders in the bloody darkness, and in the bloody darkness he dies” (*Kon’ Voronoi* 144).¹³³ Staying active is still the most important element of life for George as it was for Savinkov: “Now a beastly feeling lives in me: I want to fight. To fight even if it is impossible to win” (147).¹³⁴

The publication of *The Pale Horse* (and later, the third part of the trilogy *The Black Horse*) produced ambiguous and often negative reactions from Savinkov’s contemporaries.¹³⁵ His contemporaries and even a number of modern-day scholars read *The Pale Horse* as a critique of the revolutionary movement and Savinkov’s disillusionment with the life of a terrorist. However, this opinion is mistaken. Close to the

¹³¹ Citation in the original: «Нет революции. Всё прошло. Так проходит любовь».

¹³² Citation in the original: «И разве может быть красивым убийство?»

¹³³ Citation in the original: «Человек живёт и дышит убийством, бродит в кровавой тьме и в кровавой тьме умирает».

¹³⁴ Citation in the original: «И теперь во мне живёт звериное чувство: я хочу драться. Драться, даже если нельзя победить».

¹³⁵ Even Savinkov’s first wife Vera Glebovna did not like *The Pale Horse*, as he mentioned in a letter to her (*Pis’ma Savinkova Borisa Viktorovicha Savinkovoi Vere Glebovne* f. 1557, op. 1, ed. hr. 11). In fact, she did not approve of his literary activity in general, which upset him. She used to say: “Boris is better than his words” (Zenzinov 302).

end of his life, jailed in Lubyanka, while still managing the publication of his works through correspondence with Ilya Ionov, the head of the State Publishing House, Savinkov refuted the opinion that he was disappointed by terrorism (*Pis'ma Savinkova B.V. Ionovu* f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 7a, page 22).¹³⁶ The purpose of Savinkov's literary works fades if his art is understood as merely acts of representation, the reflection of Russia and the dangerous and morally ambiguous life that he led as a terrorist. Neither fulfils the mission of deconstructing reality that is often ascribed to literatures of any period. Instead, Savinkov's works add new content to his existing experience through the literary medium. They give a new form to his terrorist activity and ethical dilemmas. In fact, Savinkov himself stated that he never claimed to solve the moral problem of revolutionary violence in his work, but he just raised the questions (*Pis'ma Savinkova B.V. Ionovu* f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 7a, page 22).¹³⁷ Based on historical events and characters, Savinkov stepped beyond reality into the aesthetic world where despite the familiar historical plot line, a reader is introduced to sketches of revolutionary heroes, and in each of those, Savinkov drew his own features, dreams, and fears.

Keith Lehrer argues that “art reconfigures or transforms experience by creating content” (9). As both an art creator and an art recipient, Savinkov tried to negotiate not only his experiences, but also his place in these experiences within bigger ethical and historical paradigms. Savinkov stressed the fact that he did not draw his own portrait in the character of George and that terrorists he had depicted in his works could not exist in

¹³⁶ Citation in the original: « 'Конь Бледный' был встречен с недоумением. Мне приписали разочарование в терроре, что было неверно».

¹³⁷ Citation in the original: «Я говорю о проблеме насилия. Допустимо насилие или нет? Допустимо убийство или нет? Я не пытался эту проблему решить. Я хотел её только поставить».

real life,¹³⁸ which signifies that the world of his novels is rather a projection of his consciousness, unsatisfied and conflicting with reality, than the reflection of the real situation and real portraits of terrorists in Imperial Russia (*Pis'ma Savinkova B.V. Ionovu* f. 5831, op. 1, ed.hr. 7a, page 22).

As readers of Savinkov's work, we constantly have to move back and forth between the aesthetic experiences of death that he brings to the reader and the historical reality behind them to find meaning. As Alexis Peri and Christine Evans notice, even George constantly moves back and forth between the settings of the scenes. They argue that when George is inside, whether it is a café, theater, or an apartment, he is more involved with his inner questions of Christianity, martyrdom, and violence; whereas when he is in the streets, George is completely focused on the immediate task (166). This transition between the scenes and emotional states reveals the continuous negotiation between the two hypostases of Savinkov.

Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, whom 28-year old Savinkov met in Paris in the winter of 1906-1907, provided intellectual and personal encouragement for his decision to engage in literary activity seriously. Prominent representatives of the Silver age symbolism and engaged in the religious-political contemporary debates on the morality of revolutionary violence, Merezhkovsky and Gippius developed the idea of a new type of church, the Church of Holy Spirit. It was based on the apocalyptic texts from the Revelation by St. John and the doctrine of new religious consciousness, Revolutionary Christianity, under which they tried to justify Russian terrorism as morally wrong but necessary. In her article "Revolution and Violence," Gippius argued: "Yes,

¹³⁸ Citation in the original: «Разумеется, 'Конь Бледный' не автобиография. Жорж – не я, и остальные герои повести – не портреты. Таких террористов не было».

yes, violence is not right but justified! One should not spill blood, it is impossible. But for this impossibility to become real, it is necessary!” (Merezhkovskii, Gippius, Filosofov *Tsar’ i revolutsia* 128). Their ideas resonated among revolutionaries looking for redemption and a new moral compass. In fact, intellectuals of the new Revolutionary Christianity also discovered inspiration in the actions of revolutionaries: Dmitrii Filosofov who completed the ideological triple union with the Merezhkovskys to the point that they made jokes about “ménage en trois,” wrote to Savinkov that he “saved the aesthetics of the revolution, showed...its two beautiful sides (will and feeling)” (*Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 102).¹³⁹ Even though Savinkov was close to Merezhkovsky and Gippius’ intellectual circle, their religious-philosophical teaching did not placate his inner demons. In her Warsaw diaries, Gippius described Savinkov as an “imperious, lonely person,” in whom through “the struggle of spirit,” “the external and the internal, the individual and the collective intertwined” (Pahmuss 106).¹⁴⁰

Merezhkovsky and Gippius were Savinkov’s closest friends abroad, with whom he often opened up about his feelings of sinfulness regarding his terrorist activity. In her memoirs about Merezhkovsky, Gippius wrote that while killing, Savinkov felt that he was killed himself and that “the blood of the killed ones crushe[d] him with its weight” (Gippius *Dmitrii Merezhkovskii* 162).¹⁴¹ She endowed him with the status of a martyr even though he never came close to sacrificing his own life for a terrorist act. She claimed that, while others had an opportunity to redeem the murder, Savinkov

¹³⁹ Citation in the original: «Вы (помимо прочего) спасли эстетику революции, показали две её прекрасные стороны (волю и чувство)».

¹⁴⁰ Citation in the original: «Я понимала остро ‘боренье духа,’ в котором находился этот властный, одинокий человек.... Переплеталось внешнее и внутреннее. Личное и общее».

¹⁴¹ Citation in the original: «Главная тяжесть была в том, что Савинков сам как будто чувствовал себя убиваемым — убивая»; «Говорил, что кровь убитых давит его своей тяжестью».

“experienced two deaths: the one of a victim and the other of a murderer who was executed” (Merezhkovskii, Gippius, Filosofov *Tsar’ I Revolutsiia* 119).¹⁴² Gippius admitted that they tried to pull Savinkov out of active terrorist work, but were not able to do it because, even though Savinkov was drawn to them, they never understood him completely.¹⁴³ She remembered that Savinkov had never been a particularly religious person and treated the topic of Christianity carelessly: “V. Figner¹⁴⁴ and I never mentioned anything ‘divine,’ when she came to us. But Savinkov would show up, declare pompously that his way is ‘either to Jesus or into nothingness,’ and Dmitrii Sergeevich believes him, comes to visit him in the evening, alone, hoping for something, for some sort of enlightenment...” (Gippius *Dmitrii Merezhkovskii* 180).¹⁴⁵ Gippius did not fall far from the truth in accusing Savinkov of performing Christian discourse rather than fully engaging with it: in one of his poems, talking about unrequited romantic love, he connects romantic suffering to the idea of Christ’s suffering, thus, challenging the blasphemous nature of this connection: why is Christ’s suffering sacred, but romantic suffering is less important? (*Kniga stikhov* 16).¹⁴⁶ He innocently plays with the same conviction that was pushed to the extreme by George to justify the murder of Elena’s

¹⁴² Citation in the original: «Он же переживал две смерти: жертвы и убийцы, которого казнили».

¹⁴³ Citation in the original: «Нам прежде всего хотелось вытащить его из террора.... Повторяю, однако, что никто из нас, ни Д. С., к которому Савинков, главным образом, и обращался, его, как человека, вполне не видел и не понимал.»

¹⁴⁴ Russian revolutionary, a member of the SR Party from 1907 to 1909, author of *Memoirs of the Revolutionist*

¹⁴⁵ Citation in the original: «Мы с В. Фигнер, когда она приходила к нам, ни о чем «божественном» и не заикались. Но вот явится Савинков, скажет с пышностью, что ему — «либо ко Христу, либо в тартарары», и Д. С. верит, идет, глядишь, к нему вечером, один, на что-то в нем, на какое-то просветление надеется...»

¹⁴⁶ Citation in the original: «Не надо слов. И нет молчанья./Кошунство жжёт мои уста./Как будто ей закон страданья/Не есть закон её Христа».

husband: “Why is it good to kill for terrorism, necessary – for the homeland, and impossible – for oneself?” (*Kon’ Blednyi* 117).¹⁴⁷

Morally tormented, constantly reflecting terrorists were a rare phenomenon among social-revolutionaries. As a rule, revolutionaries who made a conscious decision to commit a murder had an implicit faith in the righteousness of revolutionary violence. A morally tormented and constantly reflecting leader of the Combat Organization who gained his legendary status because of multiple successful political assassinations was an almost impossible phenomenon. From the beginning of his revolutionary career in 1897, at the age of eighteen years old, as “a foreman of the red workshop,” till the end of his life, as “uninvited alien sealed with blood,”¹⁴⁸ Boris Savinkov tried to negotiate this impossibility through the aesthetic rhetoric of death, which Savinkov-Übermensch, striving for immortality, shared with Savinkov-Sinner, looking for salvation. In an attempt to overcome death by performing Death in the image of the immortal Rider on the pale horse, Savinkov challenged the possibility of religious salvation through death, thus displacing both discourses in the aesthetic realm. For his whole life, he remained in abjection, which often led to alienating other people personally, literarily, and politically. Ilya Ehrenburg, Russian poet and Savinkov’s friend, described him in the memoirs as “a particle of the war landscape, . . . a narrow strip of ‘nobody’s’ land that does not have a single blade of grass, and between the wire are broken rifles, helmets and remains of

¹⁴⁷ Citation in the original: «Почему для террора убить – хорошо, для отечества – нужно, а для себя невозможно?»

¹⁴⁸ Citation in the original: «Я – незванный, запечатленный кровью пришелец» (*Neizvestnaia rukopis’* 167).

those soldiers who haven't reached the enemy trench" ("Erenburg, Savinkov, Voloshin v gody smuty" 201).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Citation in the original: «Для меня Борис Викторович был частицей военного пейзажа, он напоминал узкую полосу «ничьей земли», на котором нет ни травинки, а среди проволоки виднеются поломанные винтовки, каски и останки солдат, не доползших до вражеского окопа».

CHAPTER 3

ENVISIONING RUSSIA VIA DOSTOEVSKY, NIETZSCHE, GIPPIUS, AND MEREZHKOVSky: SOURCES FOR SAVINKOV'S SYMBOLIC WOMEN

They've lodged a bullet. And, wounded, Russia writhes. Not only have they lodged their bullet, but so have we. And everyone who had a rifle has done the same. Who is for Russia, and who against it?... We?... They?... Both we and they?... (Savinkov Kon' Voronoi 221)¹⁵⁰

It's not that I don't accept God, ... it's the world created by Him I don't and cannot accept. (Dostoevsky The Brothers Karamazov 216)

While a number of studies explore Savinkov's political connections and his literary history, his theoretical and philosophical influences still need to be established and clarified. Savinkov was a member of the Russian intelligentsia who was deeply immersed not only in the political, but also in the cultural life of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, as a writer who created his own visions and as a revolutionary who strived to fulfil them in practice, Savinkov could not help engaging in contemporary philosophical debates on the future of Russia. Although it is difficult to differentiate the individual threads that define Savinkov's philosophical stances, we can single out the four major thinkers that were the most influential for his life and work: Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Zinaida Gippius, and Dmitrii Merezhkovsky.

¹⁵⁰ Citation in the original: «Пальнули. И, раненая, бьётся Россия. Пальнули не только они, пальнули и мы. Пальнули все, у кого была винтовка в руках. Кто за Россию? Кто против?... Мы?... Они?... И мы и они?...»

Their ideas on religion, violence, and Russia itself would find new formulations in Savinkov's writings, and particularly in his literary visions of women. All these writers struggled with Christian ideas and rejected what they saw as dogmatic principles that conflicted with the growing significance of the modern individual. Because of his famous statement that "God is dead," Nietzsche has been inaccurately labeled as an atheist and nihilist. In fact, in all his works, he stood against nihilistic views on life as emptying it of meaning and value, and considered nihilism to be the most concerning illness of European culture. Nietzsche despised the rotten structure of traditional Christianity that was held on false premises. He believed that God did not truly exist in people's lives anymore, but they continued to forcefully keep Him there: "God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanish his shadow, too" (Nietzsche *The Gay Science* 167). Dostoevsky, a conflicted and far from traditional Orthodox philosopher, journeyed far from his earlier radical thought experiment – which landed him in a Siberian prison – to embrace concepts of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality." Nonetheless, questions about Christianity and faith in an imperfect world continued to feature prominently in his literary texts. Gippius and Merezhkovsky, mutually reinforcing married partners who also co-wrote various works, built their arsenal of ideas under the strong influence of both men, even as they moved at various points away from many of their predecessors' teachings to preach an apocalyptic Christianity that would end the reign of the "Antichrist" Russian tsar.

Savinkov combined Nietzsche's rejection of traditional morality for the sake of living "beyond good and evil" with life-affirming principles of justifying human

existence in aesthetic terms. At the same time, he remained a Dostoevskian “underground man,” an anti-hero in a permanent state of ideological crisis and mental suffering, unable to find an adequate balance between political necessity and his own ethics. His philosophical and moral dialogism found an outlet in Merezhkovsky and Gippius’s socio-religious maximalism and their doctrine of Revolutionary Christianity, where they posited terrorism as a religious and philosophical issue. Merezhkovsky and Gippius were associated with the terrorist-leaning Social-Revolutionaries.¹⁵¹ In the article “Bes ili Bog?” (Devil or God?, 1908), Merezhkovsky justified revolutionary violence as holy in its fight against the Antichrist (i.e. tsarism). Merezhkovsky was convinced that all revolutionary activity resulted from conflicts between a person’s innate sense of freedom and imposed social laws. He saw terrorists as chosen holy martyrs whose hands carried out the will of the people (*Tsar’ i revolutsiia* 60).

It is interesting to note that all three thinkers expressed not just tolerance, but actual admiration of criminal types, people who had chosen violence. In his *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (House of the Dead, 1861-1862), based on his experiences in prison, Dostoevsky chose his fellow inmates as his main characters, describing their heinous crimes. Among them are the military recruit Sirotkin, who has killed his commander, the murderer Orlov, who remains completely indifferent to any punishment, Shishkov, who has killed his wife out of jealousy, and others. But despite these crimes, Dostoevsky portrays these men as holy¹⁵² (a fact that Nietzsche also mentions in his *Twilight of the*

¹⁵¹ Gippius and Merezhkovsky saw the Social-Revolutionary Party as the most “organic” party that “meets the Russian conditions” and has “its own historical past” (Gippius *Dnevnik*, Vol. 2, 181).

¹⁵² “I am ready to be the first to testify that, in the midst of these utterly uneducated and down-trodden sufferers, I came across instances of the greatest spiritual refinement. Sometimes one would know a man for years in prison and despise him and think that he was not a human but a brute. And suddenly a moment will come by chance when his soul will suddenly reveal itself in an involuntary outburst, and you see in it such wealth, such feeling, such heart, such a vivid understanding of its own suffering, and of the suffering

*Idols*¹⁵³), as he notes a rare but transcendent spirit of love and humanity in the prison that is all too scarce to find outside the prison walls. For Dostoevsky, incarceration and unimaginable suffering could lead to spiritual awakening and a deeper understanding of and sense of connection to other human beings. Yet, for Dostoevsky, terrorism was in no way a positive response to suffering. In his novel *Besy* (Demons, 1872), he warned his contemporaries against the dangers of terrorism, while nonetheless remarking that his own earlier radical circle could have turned violent had events turned out differently.¹⁵⁴

For Nietzsche, meanwhile, the greatest men are always criminals, because in order to be true creators, they have to resist the social order: “And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but this is creative” (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 116). And the Merezhkovskys welcomed Social-Revolutionary terrorists at their house; indeed, Gippius affectionately called them “our killers” (*Dnevnik* 142). Each of these thinkers explored ideas of criminality and its links to human achievement or potential; their ideas found echoes in Savinkov’s own formulations and struggles.

The four thinkers also influenced Savinkov through their visions of Russia; in my discussion, I will focus on the five main elements in all their philosophies that resonated with Savinkov’s own views of his country and in particular the Russian women he chose

of others, that your eyes are open and for the first moment you can’t believe what you have seen and heard yourself” (Dostoevsky *A Writer’s Diary* 210).

¹⁵³ “This profound man... found the Siberian convicts among whom he lived for many years – those thoroughly hopeless criminals for whom no road back to society stood open – very different from what even he had expected – that is to say carved from about the best, hardest, and most valuable material that grows on Russian soil” (Nietzsche 78).

¹⁵⁴ Dostoevsky claimed that he himself was “an old ‘Nechaevist’” (*A Writer’s Diary* 284). Immediately, he anticipated the objection: “I know that you will doubtless reply that I wasn’t a Nechaevist at all but only one of the Petrashevsky Circle [...] How do you know that the members of that circle could not have become Nechaevists... in the event that things had taken such a turn? ... But let me say one thing about myself alone: a Nechaev I probably could never have become, but a Nechaevist – well, of that I can’t be sure; perhaps I could have become one... in the days of my youth” (284).

to portray. For each, these five main elements are the fate of Russia, love, suffering, socio-spiritual symbiosis, and life-affirmation. Further, each thinker posited a special role for Russia in his or her visions of world transformation. The product of Savinkov's interaction with these philosophies was his own visions of Russia that took shape in his female images. Torn on an ethical level between his two hypostases, The Übermensch and the Sinner, while mainly remaining in opposition politically, Savinkov saw himself as a servant of Russia under any regime and in any circumstances. In his eyes, his life and personal salvation were possible only through the salvation of Russia as a nation. Throughout his revolutionary and post-revolutionary years, Savinkov expressed his visions of Russia in different female images. His descriptions of Russian women provide insight, then, into his own searches for Russia's paths to immortality and salvation.

2.5 DOSTOEVSKY, RUSSIA, AND SAVINKOV

As a Slavophile, Dostoevsky believed that Russia was more spiritually developed than Europe and, therefore, more prepared for "universal human renewal." For him, at least in his journalistic writings, such a renewal had to start with Orthodox Christianity and the teachings of Christ (*A Writer's Diary* 519). In a manner eerily similar to the convictions of his character Raskol'nikov in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky argued that "Russia [could] utter a new word of the living life in the future of humanity" (542). Savinkov believed not only in the exceptionalism of Russia, but also in its exceptional individuals, considering himself one of them: while revolutionary theoreticians "lacked practical civil-mindedness and the ability to steer the revolution," "the knights of terror" worked to bring an actual change (Wedziagolski 11). In fact, Merezhkovsky saw Savinkov as Dostoevsky's literary follower and called Savinkov's novel *The Pale Horse*

“the most Russian book” about the future of Russia after Tolstoy’s and Dostoevsky’s works (*Revolutsionnoe Khristovstvo* 349). Merezhkovsky believed that “what Dostoevsky predicted, Savinkov executed; what the former thought through – the latter lived through.” By this he meant “the religious suffering of revolutionary consciousness,” along with Savinkov’s ability (unlike Raskol’nikov’s failure) to “step over blood,” to shed blood without regret (375). Merezhkovsky argued that in the question of revolutionary violence, the difference between Dostoevsky and *The Pale Horse* is the same as the difference “between a chemical formula of an explosion and the explosion itself” (359-360).

Even though Savinkov frequently used Christian rhetoric, emphasizing martyrdom and suffering in his writings, he differed from Dostoevsky in never placing Christianity in the center of his life and work. However, in his ethical choices, he was clearly concerned with crossing the line that separated a strong-willed individual, capable of bringing Russia to its exceptional future, from another of Dostoevsky’s characters, Smerdyakov from *The Brothers Karamazov*, who mistook his own mediocrity for exceptionalism. For Dostoevsky, love was both the measure and the solution. Vanya from *The Pale Horse* resonates with Dostoevsky, stating that it is love that distinguishes a revolutionary terrorist-martyr from Smerdyakov (*Kon’ Blednyi* 14). And yet Dostoevsky would have rejected Vanya’s understanding of love: Dostoevsky felt that nihilism and egoism, not love, brought people to violence and terrorism, while Christian love could lead them to salvation of their souls. He believed that an individual could not exist in this world without “a higher idea” that was “the idea of the immortality of the human soul” (*A Writer’s Diary* 734). According to Dostoevsky, all the forces and concepts about life

arose solely from this idea. But the important consequence for him was that, by promising eternal life, the idea of immortality “[bound] people all the more firmly to earth” (736).

Savinkov could not use Orthodoxy as the point of origin because he strongly believed that it was unimaginable and “even criminal” to build a new country on its old foundation, not taking into account that “Russia has undergone a profound shift” (as qtd. in Wedziagolski 145). The change of Savinkov’s female characters throughout the trilogy (for instance, the apolitical Olga becomes a communist in *The Black Horse*) reveals his understanding of the inevitability of changes in Russia. Thus, for Savinkov, his love for Russia became the “higher idea,” acquiring the same sacred meaning that Christian love had for Dostoevsky. Despite being accused of anti-patriotism throughout his whole life, Savinkov felt an intuitive connection to this nation, and in Russia’s fall, he saw his own demise (Savinkov’s letter to Gippius in *Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 309). The immortality of Savinkov’s soul, he was convinced, lay in the salvation of Russia, and his anxiety on this front appears throughout his works. Each time his character, George, loses the woman he loves (who herself represents another version of Russia) at the end of *The Pale Horse* and *The Black Horse*, George feels empty and even suicidal.

Savinkov was a supporter of theories based on utilitarian and rationalist approaches that Dostoevsky strongly opposed: for Dostoevsky, such theories did not take into account the controversial nature of human freedom that, essentially, strived for the highest degree of self-will and manifestation. Because of the imperfections of mankind, Dostoevsky argued, it was impossible to achieve all-embracing harmony by simply building it from the outside. Therefore, as his ultimate personal and collective goal,

Dostoevsky posited the ability to master one's own freedom and transform its destructive energy into an altruistic drive toward building connections with others. This idea of life-affirmation and self-will was later developed by Nietzsche, albeit with a more individualistic bent. Dostoevsky was alarmed by the level of popularity that nihilism gained in the contemporary society because he believed that without "a great moral idea" all human connections and life itself are thinned out and lose meaning (*A Writer's Diary* 1316).

Savinkov's desperate need for the salvation of his soul in response to the blood he had spilled for Russia as "a great moral idea," however, should not be mistaken for repentance. Despite an extensive debate about suffering and salvation in Savinkov's works, there is never a question of repentance. Savinkov never denounced terrorism. It was a matter of principle and honor. Even though Dostoevsky strongly opposed terrorism and turned into a more consistently Orthodox believer after his incarceration, in his memories of being minutes away from death, he revealed that, along with other convicted members of the Petrashevsky circle on the scaffold, he had felt no need to repent because it "would have deemed it dishonorable to renounce [their] convictions" (*A Writer's Diary* 288). For both Savinkov and the earlier Dostoevsky, repentance would have meant negating their life choices and betraying the people and causes that motivated these choices. Dostoevsky recalled that being on the scaffold, he, along with the fellow revolutionaries, believed that their martyrdom not only did not require repentance, but was in fact a purifying factor that granted them certain forgiveness (289).

The Social-Revolutionaries of Savinkov's generation held similar beliefs. But if Dostoevsky pointed to the connection with the Russian people as a reason for his

transformation, social-revolutionary terrorists used the idea of the Russia people as the grounds for their martyrdom. The examples of multiple revolutionary narratives (Spiridonova, Figner, Kalyaev, Sozonov, etc.) reveal that the concept of martyrdom was widely and successfully exploited in the revolutionary context. Although Savinkov constantly used the theme of suffering in his literary work, he never presented himself as a religious person. Instead, we see a person who drew his energy from the strong personal convictions, but could not completely get rid of the Christian traditions in which he was born and grew up.

Savinkov never ceased devoting his suffering to the Russian people and proclaiming his love for them. However, like many members of the Russian intelligentsia, he had to renounce his idealistic views of the Russian *narod* when he experienced the dark side of the Russian folk during the Civil War, while reevaluating his view on human life. As George in *The Black Horse* deals with his disillusionment and broken dreams of a revolutionary terrorist, he tries to make sense of this newly discovered brutality of the Russian people, who do not think twice before robbing and killing whomever they consider an enemy. The symbolic black horseman as a messenger of the Apocalypse carries a measure in his hands and signifies Judgement Day. God's measure is not the Bolsheviks' justice, nor is it the Social-Revolutionaries' justice. Even in the senseless bloodshed of the Civil War, the highest value of God's justice is human life. This Dostoevskian realization never leaves George. As Evlampiev pointed out, Dostoevsky believed that "the concrete human person is perceived as being of primary and absolute significance, irreducible to any higher, divine essence" (12). The hypostasis of Savinkov-The Sinner forces himself through even the most Übermensch-like of his

literary characters. The Civil War years became a turning point in Savinkov's worldview, when he accepted that what Dostoevsky preached years earlier: that a human life stood above everything, even above fighting for it. George in *The Black Horse* does not idealize peasants anymore, even though he still believes in their "truth." Seeing the ruthless side of the Russian people makes him realize that the revolution and the apocalyptic wave brought up bestiality and thirst for senseless violence in everyone involved.

In fact, despite preaching all-encompassing and all-forgiving love, Dostoevsky himself was not at all idealistic about the Russian people. Even with his almost unconditional love for the "humiliated and insulted," he wrote about the bloodthirsty nature of the Russian people. He argued about the necessity to separate the beauty of a Russian peasant from his barbarity. According to him, the Russian people had gone through so many centuries of corruption, hunger, depravity, and humiliation that it was a miracle they had any humanity left. Dostoevsky called for loving the Russian people not for the crimes that they committed, but for the sacred yearnings in their hearts, because "the Russian himself grieves over it all the more and believes that it is all only extrinsic and temporary" (*A Writer's Diary* 347-348). Traces of this logic can be found in the roots of revolutionary terrorism and in Gippius' approach to its justification: many terrorists thought of themselves as noble fighters who temporarily and unfortunately had been placed in morally ambiguous circumstances and thus had to make tough moral decisions - but to a degree, in their eyes, the awareness of their own sinfulness purified their heinous crimes.

Despite his own some-time tendencies in this direction, Dostoevsky was equally aware of the amount of misconceptions that the Russian intelligentsia had developed

about the Russian people, whether by romanticizing them or by treating them as uncouth barbarians in need of urban civilization. Through these misconceptions, he argued, the intelligentsia had lost its roots and connections “with Russian soil and with Russian truth,” and therefore, with God. He condemned the sense of superiority that can be characterized by the concept labeled later by Nietzsche as *ressentiment*: “They bore only contempt for the Russian People, all the while imagining and believing that they loved the People and wished the best for them. They loved the People negatively, imagining in their stead some sort of ideal, a Russian People as they ought to be according to their conceptions” (*A Writer’s Diary* 126). Some contemporaries accused Savinkov of gambling on his love for the Russian people, but in his final statement to the Soviet court, Savinkov himself confessed that despite loving the people with all his heart and despite devoting his life to the people, he never truly knew them and lived “in a cocoon” (*Delo Borisa Savinkova* 80).

Dostoevsky believed that the socio-spiritual symbiosis between the Russian people and the Russian intelligentsia will take form in a symbolic homecoming to truth, faith, and Russian roots. However, Dostoevsky continued, not only did the Russian intelligentsia have to “bow down before the People and wait for everything from them, both ideas and the form of those ideas,” but the Russian people also needed to accept what the Russian intelligentsia brought to them (*A Writer’s Diary* 349-350). Dostoevsky clearly stated that the true unity was possible only with collaboration from both sides, and that neither side should “utterly annihilate” itself for the sake of this unity (350). While finding inspiration in the Russian people and nation, Savinkov also saw the value that the Russian intelligentsia and the Russian revolutionaries could bring to the people in

maturity of mind and consciousness. Hence he argued that the control over the revolution had to be shifted from the people with “the pathological infirmity of the masses” to the revolutionary elite (Wedziagolski 10).

2.6 NIETZSCHE, RUSSIA, AND SAVINKOV

Nietzsche, too, saw Russia as standing apart from the rest of the European world. He called Russians his “natural readers and listeners,” along with the Scandinavians and the French (*Ecco Homo, Basic Writings* 777).¹⁵⁵ The non-material and intuitive nature of Nietzschean philosophy attracted Russian thinkers: the Orthodox Christian philosopher Nicholas F. Fedorov even called Nietzsche “a Russian among the West Europeans” (*Nietzsche in Russia* xi). For the majority of Russian philosophers and writers at the turn of the twentieth century, the political crisis in their country was directly connected to cultural deterioration. They shared Nietzschean skepticism about the Western understanding of history as progress that assumed development was for the better. Likewise, Russian philosophers saw the roots of this cultural and ontological crisis in the failure of Orthodox Christianity.

Nietzsche called Russia “the only great nation today that has some lasting power and grit in her, that can bide her time, that can still promise something,” comparing it to the Roman Empire (*Twilight of the Idols* 72). He saw strength of will and fatalism as distinguishing Russian traits that set Russia apart from what he perceived as weak Europe. European nihilism for Nietzsche meant the celebration of passivity and

¹⁵⁵ By 1910, all Nietzsche’s major works had been published in Russian, but interest in Nietzsche appeared much earlier, in the 1880s. Nikolai Minski was one of the first writers to introduce Russian intellectual society to Nietzsche in his article “Starinyi spor” (An Old Argument), published in the newspaper *Zaria* (Dawn), №193 on August 29, 1884. According to Zinaida Gippius, the Russian intelligentsia got interested in Nietzsche’s ideas after an 1890 speech by Duke Alexander Urusov, a Petersburg lawyer (*Dmitrii Merezhkovsky* 63).

negativity and a denial of the will to power. He prophesied the rise of Russia and considered Russia's will dangerous because he did not know whether it would manifest itself as "a will to negate or a will to affirm" (*Beyond Good and Evil, Basic Writings* 321). Nietzsche believed that the Russian worldview had an advantage over the European perspective because of the Russian unique sense of "stout-hearted fatalism without rebellion" (*Genealogy of Morals, Basic Writings* 519). He gave the example of a Russian soldier who would accept his fate by lying down in the snow and refusing to react to the outside struggle of forces. "This fatalism," Nietzsche explained, "is not always merely the courage to die; it can also preserve life under the most perilous conditions by reducing the metabolism, slowing it down, as a kind of will to hibernate" (*Ecce Homo, Basic Writings* 686). What Nietzsche admired in a Russian soldier was not simply his ability to accept the suffering of death, but, more importantly, the ability to live a full life within this short period of dying. The Russian people had gone through so many turbulent moments in their history when surviving was not only hard, but almost incomprehensible, that they developed the resilience to adjust and affirm every second of life even in its critical moments.¹⁵⁶ Nietzsche considered this *amor fati*, the love of one's own fate, to be the "formula for greatness in a human being" (714). His concept of eternal return from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* lies in this idea of affirming every moment of one's life, which is the ultimate redemption for Nietzsche. What many contemporaries saw as Savinkov's opportunism, first in his collaboration with Winston Churchill and Benito

¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, it must be noted that the idea of accepting one's fate and accepting suffering had existed in the Russian culture for centuries. Russian fatalism undoubtedly flourished and grew stronger due to the trying historical experiences. However, it originated in the Russian medieval Orthodox tradition and the concept of kenosis – the emptying of one's own will and accepting divine will. At the same time, it would also be a mistake to equate Russian fatalism with passivity. On the contrary, not only does a Russian soldier on the snow uncompromisingly accept what is to come, but, he, in fact, fills every second of what is to come with irreplaceable value.

Mussolini and later in his willingness to work for the Soviets,¹⁵⁷ can instead be interpreted as Nietzschean *amor fati*, the ability to live according to the requirements of the given moment, while uncompromisingly accepting reality and adapting to any circumstances. In her 1917 diary, Gippius describes Savinkov as someone who was “astonishingly sensitive about time.” “That is why,” she explains, “while always staying true to himself, he can act according to what is needed for Russia - now” (*Dnevnik*, Vol. 2 119).¹⁵⁸ Being just one step from a scaffold every day of their lives, many revolutionaries had to adopt this Nietzschean concept of their fate.

At the same time, Savinkov’s sinful consciousness still reveals itself in a more sinister image of eternal return in his poetry. In the image of the doppelgänger he sees his curse prevailing through generations: in the poem “He sat down on my bed...” the Poetic I encounters a person who predicts the birth of his grandson and then his great-grandson – his doppelgängers - who will continue repeating his fate “until what’s meant to happen doesn’t happen, / Until men are saved, / Until the drawn circle encloses” (*Kniga stihov* 19).¹⁵⁹ Despite Savinkov’s ability to merge his life with the needs of Russia, he could never completely embrace his *amor fati* and kept looking for redemption that the concept of eternal return excludes by definition.

Similarly to Dostoevsky, Nietzsche defined a human being and his suffering as the absolute principle of life. For Nietzsche, everything started and ended with an individual life. However, an *Übermensch* assumed, first and foremost, an inner struggle

¹⁵⁷ Viktor Chernov, one of the founders of the Social-Revolutionary Party, held absolutely negative views of Savinkov by the end of his life, when Savinkov was captured and tried to convince the Soviet to give him a job. Chernov calls it “the irony of fate” that a person who was so inspired by the apocalyptic spirit ended up “in a Bolsheviks’ cow-stall” (163).

¹⁵⁸ Citation in the original: «И он (Савинков) удивительно чуток ко «времени». Поэтому, оставаясь собой всегда, он может действовать так, как нужно для России - сейчас».

¹⁵⁹ Citation in the original: «Пока должное не свершится./Пока человек не спасётся./Пока не замкнётся/Начертанный круг».

through man's own creative energy, rather than through divinely given power. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche treats suffering as intrinsic to human existence. Moreover, he states that what makes someone heroic is "going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope" (219). Nietzsche believed that humanity should stop seeking to overcome itself and learn to affirm its own existence. With Nietzschean ideas often misinterpreted and misapplied in the Russian context, Savinkov's George, an amoral terrorist, the Übermensch-type, who tries his hardest to overcome the last shreds of his humanity and rejects all the meanings and values, in fact epitomizes the nihilism that Nietzsche himself rejected. However, in a very Nietzschean way, Savinkov did not shun from his exceptional status in the revolutionary process. He enjoyed the role of the leader who finds strength in his own will to power rather than in social and moral norms.

Savinkov truly related to Nietzschean life-affirmation, "a yea-saying to the point of justifying, to the point of redeeming even all that is past" (*Ecco Homo* 241). For Savinkov, terrorism was justified in the very moment of his accepting it as necessary, which, despite his duality, meant accepting responsibility for all the bloodshed he planned. In this idea of taking responsibility and accepting events as personal choices lay the redemption that Zarathustra proclaimed. His character George mentions going to the library in his spare time to read the ancient Greeks. He admires the same quality in their living that Nietzsche mentions in *The Birth of Tragedy*: simplicity, acceptance, and anti-dichotomized thinking. "They, in old days, actually had no conscience; they did not seek for the truth," writes George (Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 41). He longs for this way of thinking, when life itself justified the world instead of being justified by the world.

Because Nietzsche focused on the inner strength of a person, “art, and *not* morality, is presented as the truly metaphysical activity of man” (Nietzsche *The Birth of Tragedy* 22). For Nietzsche, morality was what negated life and creation was what affirmed it. Even though in his literary works, Savinkov raised the ethical question of violence, he was visibly less concerned with morality, allowing his compass of social justice to direct him to one or another choice. Instead, he was more concerned with the fundamental nature of being a writer, one who exposes a terrorist’s ethical dilemmas, and a Russian intellectual, aware of the social responsibility that both words and actions carry. In the Russian revolutionary context, Savinkov was a Nietzschean “Socrates [who] practice[d] music” (36).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche argued that a great creative artist embodied the Apollonian and Dionysian dialectics in his approach to life, thus allowing his audience and himself to experience the full scope of human condition. Savinkov could never accept the existence of the two opposite forces within him, the will to immortality (the will to being) and the will to salvation (the will to becoming), but his work was born out of this tension. With an Apollonian basis, Savinkov, the leader of the Combat Organization at the beginning of the twentieth century, a statesman in the Provisional Government after the February revolution, and an influential figure in the anti-Bolshevik movement during the Civil War, strived for power and structure. He despised idleness and herd thinking. As an exceptional individual, he was immortal as the object of his myth, and so was Russia in its exceptional mission of bringing light to the rest of the world. From this perspective, both Russia and Savinkov were redeemed a priori, through their unique role. Meanwhile, the Dionysian in Savinkov found expression in apocalyptic

thinking and searches for the dynamism of collective unity, and of Nietzschean “perpetual becoming in time, space, and causality” (45). Nietzsche believed that in heroic attempts to overcome individuation, a person faced an unsolvable contradiction on the primordial level that resulted in suffering (71). In keeping with this idea, Savinkov believed in Russia’s special role and connected his personal salvation with Russia’s “becoming.” However, he felt an intuitive connection to the old communal roots expressed through the traditional Christian Orthodox path from crime to redemption. The need for personal salvation did not allow Savinkov to embrace a promise of primordial harmony with Russia. From here originated Savinkov’s suffering, what Nietzsche called “pure primordial pain” of “growing out of his state of mystical self-abnegation and oneness” (50). This pain and self-abnegation manifested itself in Savinkov’s obsession with death, his images of violence as a puppet theater, and his silhouette-like female portraits of Elena and Erna in *The Pale Horse* as symptoms of this primordial pain. Through the sublime and comic discourses, he relieved himself from an uncomfortable reality, replacing it with an aesthetic world instead of a metaphysical one.

For Nietzsche, salvation and punishment were “imaginary effects” of Christianity (*The Antichrist* 104). He argued that people perceived reality and any resistance that occurs naturally via the collision of living forces and wills as “insufferable anguish.” This condition cultivated “the doctrine of salvation” and “a religion of love,” because love appeared as the only ultimate condition of life as opposed to pain (120). Those who believed in the idea of salvation created “a new life and not a new faith,” meaning that one lived for the possibility of being, following another system of good and bad to pave one’s way to heaven, while suppressing all one’s living instincts on earth and rejecting

the present process of becoming (124). In Nietzsche's eyes, Christianity presented everything that was healthy and natural as sinful, and everything that was forced and nihilistic as moral. According to him, a person who stopped obsessing over the idea of salvation had taken his first step toward freedom (*Human All Too Human* 22-23). Nietzsche denounced the idea of God's love as man's ultimate goal because this love was binding: by sacrificing his son, God had imposed a debt on humanity that could not be repaid. Savinkov struggled with the idea of love, torn between his Nietzschean interpretation of it and his Dostoevskian connections between love and the Russian people as the heart of Russia. He was drawn to the romantic idealism of Ivan Kalyaev who placed Christian love in the center of his existence and killed out of this love. At the same time, for Savinkov, the weight of murder on his shoulders was heavier and more convincing than all the theories of the revolutionary need and salvation.

Influenced by Nietzsche's ideas of the *Übermensch*, Zarathustra, and futurity, Savinkov created a sketch of his own "higher" social space, his own socio-spiritual symbiosis, the Third Russia, that he described in his article "Na puti k Tret'ei Rossii" (On the way to the Third Russia) in 1920. For Savinkov, whom Merezhkovsky's associate, Dmitrii Filosofov, called "the knight of the Third Russia," the future of the Third Russia lay in the peasant community (Rozinskaia 51). His Third Russia was a product of aesthetic creation born out of suffering and duality. Savinkov employed feminine images of childbirth to describe the birth of the Third Russia: "In pain, a new Russia is being born – a Russia that is not tsarist and not Bolshevik. It is a democratic Russia, a peasant Russia, a Russia that is not a conqueror and not conquered. A great union of free peoples is born and voluntarily united around a free and strong Moscow" (*Na puti k Tret'ei Rossii*

17).¹⁶⁰ As the Third Russia, Savinkov saw a political entity based on the peasant democracy with small-scale peasants' land ownership. He also found it absolutely necessary to provide political autonomy to the new nation-states that decided to separate from Russia.

Nietzsche uses similar feminine symbolism when Zarathustra is speaking to the “higher men” about life through creation and the path to the *Übermensch*: “You creators, you higher men! One is pregnant with one’s own child! [...] Whoever has to give birth is sick; but whoever has given birth is unclean... You creators, there is much that is unclean in you. That is because you had to be mothers” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 290-291).¹⁶¹

“Giving birth” to a new Russia was vitally important for Savinkov because his own salvation depended on his creation: the birth of a new Russia would have meant that his own life, filled with blood of both friends and enemies and lost years of living in exile, in fact, had a meaningful ending. Nietzsche wrote, “the individual is promoting his salvation when, for example, he founds a church or a convent, he thinks it will be accounted to his credit and rewarded in the eternal future life of his soul, it is a contribution to the eternal salvation of the soul” (*Human All Too Human* 23-24). The Third Russia would have become Savinkov’s church to stand as a sign of his mercy for himself and as his own self-redemption.

The constellation of forces in Savinkov’s new, Third Russia was determined by the will to power of those who constituted its foundation – the peasantry and their

¹⁶⁰ Citation in the original: «В муках рождается новая Россия – Россия не царская и не большевистская. Рождается Россия демократическая, Россия крестьянская, не поработительница и не порабощённая, рождается великий союз свободных народов, свободно объединённых вокруг свободной и сильной Москвы».

¹⁶¹ The traces of this Nietzschean thought also appeared in the ideas of Merezhkovsky and Gippius: revolutionaries such as Savinkov had to take blood of the revolution, its “uncleanliness,” upon themselves for the sake of futurity, so a better Russia could be born.

attachment to the land, which Savinkov considered a “natural and legitimate” craving (20). The Third Russia was Savinkov’s *Übermensch*, a new organism, capable of creating its own values. It would live not in honor of the glories of the past but for the necessities of the present. He declared: “Russia fara da se,” meaning “Russia will make itself” or “Russia will save itself” (23). The original Italian phrase “L’Italia fara da se” was pronounced by Charles Albert of Sardinia, refusing the French help on the outbreak of the 1848 revolution. Interestingly, even though initially Savinkov had actively requested foreign financial assistance for the struggle against Bolshevism, he came to regret it later. In “On the Way to the Third Russia,” Savinkov argued that neither underground people (revolutionaries) nor the elite (social and intellectual) could build a new Russia. Speaking in Nietzschean terms, they were the “last men” for Savinkov who were set in their ways and therefore, unable to create. New, “higher men” would build it, and these “higher men” were the people themselves. Savinkov called them “the builders of the Russian land” (19). He gave the name of revolutionary Nikolai Tchaikovsky as an example of a person of the Third Russia because he was scolded by all the political sides, but no matter the circumstances he always served Russia and not its rulers (49-50). Savinkov’s thoughts resonated with those of Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Gippius, and Merezhkovsky in his statement that it was only through suffering that the Russian people could win and overcome their “Karamazov illness of will”: “Fighting the Bolsheviks means burning in inextinguishable fire. Fighting the Bolsheviks means hunger, cold, death with a rifle in hands.... [it means] to be defamed, chased, abandoned, and, of course, misunderstood” (45).¹⁶² Savinkov criticized the people for their yearning for comfort, lack of movement, and passive acceptance of social injustice and suffering.

¹⁶² Citation in the original: «Бороться с большевиками значит гореть в неугасимом огне. Бороться с

2.7 MEREZHKOVSKY, GIPPIUS, RUSSIA, AND SAVINKOV

Some of the main revolutionary intellectual schools, the Marxists and the Symbolists, discovered a source of inspiration in Nietzsche. At the same time, a number of writers and philosophers from both movements “simplified and vulgarized [him] for mass consumption” (*Nietzsche in Russia* 3). The Marxists singled out two main ideas: the creation of new values that they successfully used later in promoting the creation of a new kind of human being, *homo soveticus*, a Soviet Übermensch, and the idea of futurity that allowed them to look at the utopia of communism as an actual possibility to come (xiv). They believed that “self-overcoming humanity would replace God” (25).

The Symbolists, among them Gippius and Merezhkovsky, were drawn to the aesthetic perspective on human existence that Nietzsche offered. They were fascinated by the Apollonian/Dionysian duality in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which found reflection in many works of that time (for example, Andrei Bely considered *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* his personal manual).¹⁶³ Many symbolists declared the artist to be an Übermensch whose duty was to express his elite vision to select readers. One of Bely’s characters in his novel *Petersburg*, the terrorist Dudkin who was based on Savinkov, directly connects Nietzsche and the image of terrorist as a pianist who creates melodies for others: “We are all Nietzscheans, and you are a Nietzschean, though you wouldn’t admit it. For us, Nietzscheans, the masses, who ... are stirred by social instincts, become an apparatus of implementation, where all people ... are a keyboard, on which play the flying fingers of a pianist..., surmounting all difficulties” (57). This metaphor refers to Dostoevsky’s “underground man” from *Notes from the Underground* who lives to “prove himself that

большевиками значит голодать, мёрзнуть, умирать с винтовкой в руках [...], быть оклеветанным, гонимым, покинутым и, конечно, непонятым».

¹⁶³ From Bely, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii* (Moscow, 1931), p. 469

he is a man, and not a piano key!” (35) Nietzschean intellectual elitism was the biggest problem for a number of Symbolists and members of revolutionary intelligentsia because his rejection of the communal conflicted with the ultimate goal that lay at the basis of both the Social-Democrats’ and Social-Revolutionaries’ programs. Despite being accused of opportunism and elitism, Savinkov always emphasized the importance of the people in his literary works and political pamphlets.

Gippius, too, believed in Russia’s fate and Russian exceptionalism, but she accused both Dostoevsky and his predecessor Nikolai Gogol of mixing “the name of Orthodoxy with its essence.” According to her, the true Christian soul of the Russian people would reveal itself in literature in an ideal, sought-after form, rather than in explicit Orthodox doctrine (*Tsar’ i revolutsiia* 116). As Judith Kalb argues, Merezhkovsky believed that the Russians were meant to bring their faith to the West “through their Western-influenced but Christian-infused Russian Symbolist art” (62). Gippius and Merezhkovsky prophesized a new religious consciousness, founded in fin-de-siècle literary creativity that would start in Russia and eventually turn into a worldwide cataclysm of transformation. As a revolutionary, Savinkov sought to combine their ideas of worldwide renewal with practical political actions.

Publishing articles in Paris as Anton Krainii, Gippius mentioned Russian fatalism as a distinguished trait of the Russian people. She called it “heroic masochism” but viewed it, in general, in a positive light (Gippius “Literaturnaia zapis” 243). Analyzing Savinkov’s George, “a vulgarized Nietzscheanist”¹⁶⁴ from *The Pale Horse* and *The Black Horse*, she noted that George’s masochism was negative, “lacking in form.” She argued that, unlike poet Maximilian Voloshin and the dramatist Boris Zaitsev, whose heroic

¹⁶⁴ As characterized by Pomorzev in his analysis of *The Pale Horse* in 1909.

masochism manifested itself in the artistic but raw realism of their works, George could never find a productive channel for his impulses and thus ended up with meaningless and chaotic movement (243-248). Gippius assigned no major value to the third book of Savinkov's trilogy about George, *The Black Horse*, commending it simply for the amount of suffering that lived in its characters (248-249). Similarly to Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, she saw suffering as life-affirming experience that brought meaning. In her article "Revolutsiia i nasilie" (Revolution and Violence, 1907), Gippius stated, however, that an individual could not use suffering as a channel for forgiveness (*Tsar' i revolutsiia* 108). Gippius suggested justifying a terrorist act instead of asking for forgiveness: "It is impossible to forgive murder; but it is not only possible but necessary to *justify* it, that is to sanction any person's act if it was committed for the sake of the future and inspired by reason and moral feelings" (108-109).¹⁶⁵ At the same time, both she and Merezhkovsky saw the terrorists' need to suffer as a symptom of their latent Christianity (*Dnevnik* 116).

The apocalyptic spirit of the revolutionary years aggravated the intelligentsia's sense of fatalism to a critical degree. Many Symbolists believed that the revolution meant cleansing Russia of its historical sins and opening the doors to its foreordained messianic future. They agreed with Nietzsche that the transformation started with an individual, challenging himself or herself against the old order, which is why the concept of an individual heroic deed (a terrorist act) was so significant. However, it must be noted that Merezhkovsky and Gippius are the only Symbolists who associated with the Russian terrorist to this extent. In *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche harshly criticized morality, he wrote: "I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises... I also deny

¹⁶⁵ Citation in the original: «Нельзя простить убийства; но *оправдать* его, то есть санкционировать поступок любого человека, если он совершён во имя будущего и внушён разумом и нравственным чувством, - не только можно, но и должно»

immorality... We have to *learn to think differently* – in order... to attain even more: *to feel differently*” (60). Savinkov’s George issues a challenge of living above any morality to the world by repeating the same phrase in *The Pale Horse* that references both Nietzsche and John the Apostle in The New Testament: “And I will give thee the morning star” (2). George tries to balance his desire for immortality through being an exceptional type, free from the chains of morality, and his need for spiritual salvation through Christian discourse.

The two apocalyptic horsemen, too, are the symbols of inevitability in the novels. George attempts to control life and death in his hands but is inevitably absorbed by the apocalyptic revolutionary wave, meaningless and chaotic, that is bigger than he is. In the first novel, *The Pale Horse*, George is the horseman himself, the Rider named Death, who claims to execute the divine will of revenge, whereas in the third novel, *The Black Horse*, although still in charge, Colonel George allows the forces of fate to act beyond and upon him. Through a fatalistic lens, George (now Yuri Nikolaevich) witnesses elemental peasant violence that swept Russia during the Civil War. Life is still “a puppet theater” in his eyes but now it is also an apocalyptic train that is rushing into nowhere, reminding us of Gogol’s famous *troika*: “The train rolls on. ‘Comrade, don’t be afraid! Let’s lodge a bullet into holy Russia!’” (Savinkov *The Black Horse* 142).

For Nietzsche, Christianity belonged to neither Apollonian nor Dionysian forces because it negated any aesthetic values. However, the Russian Symbolists redefined Christianity as a positive aesthetic experience. As Rosenthal notes, while Merezhkovsky was inspired by Nietzschean aesthetics in which the Dionysian and the Apollonian merged to create art, he could never see the world entirely through Nietzsche’s eyes: that

is, as a generally absurd and incomprehensible place (437). As a result, Merezhkovsky developed the idea of socio-spiritual symbiosis, claiming that, by combining Western individualism and Eastern spiritual awareness, Russia could take on a messianic role, becoming an example of Christian regeneration for the rest of the world. As Kalb argues in her book *Russia's Rome*, Merezhkovsky participated in creating the myth of Russia as the Third Rome¹⁶⁶ that constituted one of the primary discourses in building the Russian national identity at the turn of the centuries. In his intolerance toward historical Christianity, Merezhkovsky and Gippius resonated with Nietzsche. “The new idea does not have the name of God yet. The name is still in the place God left,” wrote Gippius, referencing Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and his looming shadows of God (*Dnevnik* 111).¹⁶⁷ Merezhkovsky completely denounced not only the official church, but also Orthodoxy in its traditional, institutional form. He argued that the tsar and Orthodoxy as it currently existed in Russia were interconnected and that it was impossible to overthrow one without the other. Nicholas II, he continued, would rather be hanged like the “holy Russian revolutionaries” than renounce his faith (*Tsar and Revolutsiia* 60). Merezhkovsky believed that the official church had corrupted Christianity in Russia and deprived people of its living truth. He claimed that love and Jesus Christ were the fundamental elements that would bring a new type of Christianity to its spiritual

¹⁶⁶ Merezhkovsky argued that Moscow Russia had inherited its Orthodox autocracy from Byzantium (the Second Rome) and dreamed about becoming the Third Rome as the Last City of the World (*Tsar' i revolutsiia* 132). Peter the Great, according to Merezhkovsky, destroyed the patriarchate and turned himself into both the head of the state and the pontiff of the Church that ruled simultaneously the earthly realm and the kingdom of heaven (133). While in the West we see the Church transforming into the State, in the East we see the State swallowing up the Church. The impossibility of this amalgamation caused the schism first in the church structures and then on cultural and social levels. These schismatics became the first revolutionaries who, albeit misunderstood, felt “the religious impossibility of Orthodox autocracy” (135). According to Merezhkovsky, during Peter’s times, the religious-revolutionary movement started among the Russian people and among the Russian intelligentsia almost simultaneously (136). As Christ was the only Tsar and the only Pontiff both on earth and in heaven, a person who “replaced” Him was the Antichrist, “the last manifestation of the Apocalyptic beast” (144).

¹⁶⁷ Citation in the original: «В новой идее ещё нет имени Бога. Имя пока ещё там, откуда Бог ушёл».

dominance. One of Merezhkovsky and Gippius's main goals was connecting the revolution with religion and turning revolutionaries from atheists into Christian believers: "Autocracy is a religion, and revolution is also a religion. Revolutionaries themselves are the least aware of it. In their own minds, they are atheists"¹⁶⁸ (*Tsar' i revolutsiia* 59). In 1906, Savinkov, as one of the most obvious atheists, became their new religious project. Through art that often employed Christian imagery and rhetoric, Savinkov, though not an official Symbolist himself, reached for the affirmation of his life, a life that was full of murder and remorse, but nevertheless, undeniable and redemptive, because for him as a revolutionary and a patriot, there never was another way. Terror was not only a gateway but a way of living, fighting, and feeling united with others through the cause, on a spiritual level. Savinkov was drawn to Merezhkovsky's Revolutionary Christianity because unlike traditional Orthodox Christianity, it did not negate his life as a terrorist but affirmed it. Merezhkovsky, in his turn, tried to demonstrate an unbreakable link between Savinkov's need to live for the people and the Christian faith that the people were able to preserve in its purest form.

However, like Nietzsche, Merezhkovsky could not escape intellectual elitism in his ideas. In *The Black Horse*, Savinkov confesses the intellectual elitism of the Russian intelligentsia and its detachment from the people: "We knew Nietzsche, but could not distinguish between winter and spring crops; we 'saved' people, but judged them by the standards of our Moscow 'Uncle Vanya's'; we 'prepared' a revolution but disgustingly turned away from blood" (84). "I want to, but cannot love the people," confessed Merezhkovsky (as qtd. in Rosenthal 433). Merezhkovsky and Gippius never valued

¹⁶⁸ Citation in the original: «Самодержавие – религия, и революция – тоже религия. Всего менее сознают это сами революционеры. В сознании своём они - безбожники».

peasants above the members of intelligentsia because they believed that peasants were too simple-minded to fully grasp the intellectual and artistic understanding of Christ teachings. Gippius had a very condescending opinion about the typical Russian peasant and described him as an “ardent private owner by nature and a slave by upbringing” who is “cunning but obedient on the surface to any power if he feels that this is a truly brute force.” Gippius did not consider the Russian *narod* a strong intellectual force because she believed that peasants “still narrowly understand both space and time” (*Dnevnik*, vol. 2, 196). However, she shared Dostoevsky’s idea of homecoming, arguing that the majority of Russian revolutionaries were connected to the Russian folk not only by blood but also by spirit. Even though their privilege and education drew the revolutionaries away from the people, the revolution had a folk soul that all of them shared (114).

Similarly to Merezhkovsky and Gippius, Savinkov was concerned with existing socio-spiritual dichotomies and the possibility of symbiosis. Merezhkovsky, often seen as cold and abstract, was widely criticized for his theoretical approach to revolution and its idealization. Influenced by his concepts, Savinkov always strived to find their practical value by bringing these ideas back to the actual revolutionary barricades and Civil War battles. Gippius wrote in her diary from 1913 that he expressed his ideas about the two parties: one would be peaceful, socialist, and universal, while the other would be a separate terrorist entity based on “strict ‘moral’ laws” (*Dnevnik* 162). Like Nietzsche, Savinkov was obsessed with “futurity” but unlike Nietzsche, he was not satisfied with futurity that would never arrive. This is why he proposed the creation of the Third Russia, the idea of a peasant democracy as a new social structure. In his view of the people in his works, Savinkov significantly differed from the elitist perspectives of Merezhkovsky (at

least in his earlier phases) and Nietzsche who were skeptical of the “herd” and replied to the needs of social transformations with what Rosenthal calls “promethean individualism” (432).

Merezhkovsky and Gippius did not share Dostoevsky’s devotion to institutional Orthodoxy but they believed in salvation, not only personal, but also social, through Jesus Christ. Finding the Godman meant finding the universal sociality, Godmanhood, as rightful historical development (Merezhkovsky *Tsar’ i revolutsiia* 162). For them, revolution, love, and Christ are intrinsically connected. After finishing his trilogy *Christ and Antichrist*, in which he searched for such unity, Merezhkovsky admitted : “When I began the trilogy Christ and Antichrist, it seemed to me that there existed two truths: Christianity, the truth of the heavens, and paganism, the truth of the earth. But by the time I was finishing the trilogy, I realized that the union of Christ and Antichrist was a blasphemous lie; I knew that both truths, that of the heavens and that of the earth, are already united in Jesus Christ” (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* iii). Gippius pointed to the “dark connection” between the 1905 revolution and Jesus that she felt when they grew close to Savinkov “with blood of many on his soul” (*Dnevnik* 139). One of Savinkov’s contemporaries Mikhail Morozov pointed out that the bloody mix of wild reasoning, Apocalypse, and revolution in *The Pale Horse* (definitely influenced by Gippius’ rhetoric) was so similar to Merezhkovsky’s ideas that it was hard to believe it was written by Savinkov and not Merezhkovsky himself (96).

2.8 SAVINKOV’S WOMENS

Despite being accused of opportunism, theatricality, and moral hypocrisy, Savinkov had one undeniable constant throughout his life: he always remained loyal to

Russia and to what he believed was best for it and the people at that particular moment in history. He was an underground revolutionary when, as he thought, he could help Russia best through his terrorist activity. He was a statesman, the Deputy War Minister, in the Provisional Government under Kerensky after the February revolution because he felt this was his chance to conduct reforms through legal means. He was among the Whites, the Greens, and any other oppositional force that fought the Bolsheviks during the Civil War because he claimed that the Bolsheviks betrayed Russia and its people. He then accepted the Soviets when he came to believe that the Russian people had accepted them.

During his time in the Provisional Government, Savinkov played a controversial role in the so-called Kornilov Affair. Savinkov served as a negotiator between the head of the Provisional Government, Kerensky, who lacked decisiveness and strength of character in the critical months following the February revolution, and General Kornilov who, weary of political uncertainty, attempted a military coup. As a result, Savinkov was released from his duties in the government. Gippius, describing the Kornilov Affair in her diary, noted that Savinkov's main motivation was his "sincere, intelligent love for Russia and its freedom" (*Dnevniki* 525). She recalled Savinkov's assessment of the situation: "Russia for him (Kornilov) is first, freedom is second. As for Kerensky... freedom and revolution are first, Russia is second. For me..., these two merge into one. There is no first or second place. [They are] inseparable" (526).¹⁶⁹ It was true: despite his strong opposition to tsarism, during World War I he firmly spoke out against any revolutionary activity because he believed that in times of crisis a step against tsarism would have been a step against Russia. Later, in 1918, during their exile abroad, Ilya Erenburg recalled

¹⁶⁹ Citation in the original: «Россия для него (Корнилова) первое, свобода – второе. Как для Керенского... свобода, революция – первое, Россия – второе. Для меня же..., для меня эти оба сливаются в одно. Нет первого и второго места. Неразделимы».

speaking to Savinkov about Russia, its people, and his escape from the Sevastopol prison. Savinkov told him that a soldier let him go and took his place, justifying it by the fact that Savinkov had a wife and children, while he was single. Erenburg pointed out that even Savinkov's voice changed when he talked about the Russian people: "He is talking, and his voice is so gentle! I see now that he is not devastated George, but pious Vanya drawn to his terrible path by love" (197).¹⁷⁰

Russia was Savinkov's only real love, a love that manifested itself in his literary symbolic women, following the literary tradition of Alexander Blok, Maximilian Voloshin and others who created representations of women as a symbolic body of Russia in their works. Not many scholars have examined Savinkov's female portraits, possibly either for the reason of their lop-sidedness and thinness or because of their secondary nature to the main male characters in his novels. However, Savinkov's women expose Savinkov's tragedy of individualism and reveal his perspectives of Russia. They open the door to the ways in which he envisioned not only Russia's past, present, and future, but also his own place within each temporal dimension. While his main female characters in *The Black Horse*, Grusha and Olga, are more straight-forward portraits of peasant Russia and communist Russia respectively, Elena and Erna in *The Pale Horse* as well as Maud in the second part of the trilogy are less defined and developed as characters.

Erna is a member of the terrorist unit led by George. As a chemist, she works behind the scenes and her primary responsibility is to make bombs. Erna is in love with George, which constitutes the main reason for her decision to join the combat organization. He sleeps with her but rejects the emotional connection and commitment

¹⁷⁰ Citation in the original: «Говорит, и как нежен его голос! Я вижу – это не опустошённый Жорж, а верующий, любовью влекомый на страшный путь Ваня».

she desperately craves. Erna commits suicide when surrounded by the secret police at her apartment. George loves Elena, an officer's wife, who is very detached from the revolutionary world of violence that absorbs George. Elena loves George but does not intend to leave her husband whom George, overcome by jealousy, kills at the end of the novel.

While writing *The Pale Horse*, Savinkov worked closely with Gippius, his literary mentor. In their epistolary exchange, she was clearly unsatisfied with the main character's unstoppable attraction to Elena. George himself called this attraction love, which, according to Gippius, got inappropriately mixed up with Vanya's sort of love, a higher revolutionary feeling (*Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 107). Gippius approved the image of Erna as posing the question of love in a negative, fresh light, but insisted on bringing George to the realization that Elena as a positive but stagnant element is "not it" (108-109). Because Gippius and Merezhkovsky's Revolutionary Christianity focused on transcending the concepts of sex and gender via accepting the needs of flesh and Christian love as one, Gippius pointed out the accentuated genders in Savinkov's works. In her opinion, with Elena, George became "too much of a man" and "stopped being 'a person'," whereas Elena, as expected, was never "a person" because she was "ceaselessly a woman" (109).¹⁷¹ Gippius believed that Elena was a necessary character to keep but that the author needed to rise above his characters (115-116). Merezhkovsky shared his wife's position that Elena was a weak character. He saw Elena as a rudimentary person: like "Erna before her fall into sin" and at the same time as an Erna in the making (112). In his letter to Savinkov, Filosofov wrote that, even though he understood George's

¹⁷¹ Gippius always rejected any feminine origins in herself and others as inferior to male ones. She believed that "feminine origin has no memory, no creativity, no identity" (*Revolutsionnoe khristovstvo* 111).

decision to commit suicide¹⁷² at the end of the novel because “his love turned out to be bird brained,” he would have liked to see the development of consciousness “not only in the communal (Vanya), but also in the field (Elena)” (119, 122).

Despite the fact that at that time, Savinkov was at the beginning of his career as a writer and respected his friends’ literary opinions, he did not feel that his novel needed major character modifications: George’s personal obsession with Elena still took over his revolutionary instincts and led to murder, whereas Elena remained an underdeveloped character who never came to a religious revolutionary epiphany. The portraits of both Elena and Erna were influenced by the Nietzschean tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Elena is a manifestation of George’s longing to return to primordial harmony. Every time he sees her, the world of violence and murder fades away: “I looked into her eyes and wanted to tell her that she was the joy and the bright light of the day” (Savinkov *The Pale Horse* 55), “I heard her words and felt the contact of her body. A fierce joy flamed up in me” (86). George, who lives and breathes revolution, is even prepared to leave terrorism behind for her (85). But even though Elena does not understand George’s way of life, constantly asking him why he is living with death, she never demands that he quit terrorist work because as a prehistoric essence, she is static and cannot facilitate any movement. She does not guide George to one or another decision. Instead, her incessant presence as a constant reminder of a possible primordial unity infuses George’s world. “She hears what I hear,” writes George (*Kon’ Blednyi* 12). What Merezhkovsky, Gippius, and Filosofov thought of as emptiness in Elena is, in fact, a sublimated non-essence of Russia that never was and will never be, but that exists in

¹⁷² The novel ends with George holding a revolver and contemplating suicide. As he is safe and sound in the next two parts of the trilogy, he either never takes this step or survives his suicide attempt (with a higher probability of the former).

George's mind as an imperfect but vital manifestation of primal love and freedom strapped to their basics.

Elena, in her primordial freedom, does not want to be attached to one man. She loves George, and she also loves her husband, which infuriates George. George admits that Elena speaks his own words when she rejects social laws, including the possibility of marriage to him. It is not enough for him just to have Elena in his life. He wants to possess her, to make her the actuality and the future, but, as Elena is a non-essence, this desire only pushes her farther away. Without understanding the impossibility of death for the unceasing entity that Elena represents, Elena's statements appear naïve and childish, especially amidst the revolutionary struggle: "tell me, why do you want to kill? Why? Isn't just lovely here? The spring has come. The birds are singing. [...] Why not live simply for life's sake?" (*The Pale Horse* 57). Elena is child-like in her primal nature: George describes her childish laughter and his desire to pick her up and kiss like a child (133). The generally cold-blooded and impenetrable George reverses to his adolescent state himself: he remains "timid, like a boy" who "turns red as a poppy" when Elena speaks to him (*Kon' Blednyi* 44, 39). The closer the day of the Governor-General's assassination comes, the harder it is for George to keep Elena's presence in his memory because revolutionary rationality and urgency weaken their connection: "Elena's image has gotten cloudy. I close my eyes and try to resurrect it.... But I don't see her" (55).¹⁷³ In the light of the rapidly moving revolution, Elena's perpetuity turns into lack of life: "I see a dead mask. And yet a secret hope lives in my soul that she will be mine again"

¹⁷³ Citation in the original: «Образ Елены заволокло туманом. Я закрываю глаза, я хочу его воскресить.... Но я не вижу её».

(55).¹⁷⁴ George starts seeing her as a slave who is unable to grasp the present, but he cannot let go of his love for her, because he feels that her strength comes not from the will to power but from the will to primordial unity with him: “But suppose she is not free and proud, but a slave. What does it matter? I want her, and there is none superior to her; none stronger or more joyous than she. My love for her gives her beauty and strength” (*The Pale Horse* 110). George’s desire to be united with Elena grows stronger as he finds in this love the right to kill her husband: “Vanya sought for Christ, Elena seeks for freedom. As for me, I am not seeking anything: let it be Christ, or the Antichrist, or Dionysus – I don’t care. I desire to possess her. And my desire is my right” (159-160). Savinkov draws an interesting parallel here between Vanya’s love, which is socially accepted as sacrificial, noble, and worthy of murder, and George’s personal love for Elena that is perceived as sinful and undignified. With the murder, George’s love for Elena dies too.

Erna functions as Elena’s counterpart in the novel and her rival for George’s attention. She is a caricature of a revolutionary woman: although Erna selflessly works for the sake of the combat unit and even eventually dies at work, she joined the organization because of her love for George and not for the cause. Erna reveals that side of revolutionary Russia which was often hidden under the self-sacrificial bravado and noble slogans. It was the revolutionary Russia that, like a woman of dubious morals, accepted everyone who was ready to spill blood for her, regardless of their reasons: “Some time ago she gave herself to me like a queen... Now she implores me for love like a beggar” (2). Savinkov had plenty of examples of female revolutionaries who chose the

¹⁷⁴ Citation in the original: «Я вижу мёртвую маску. И всё-таки в душе живёт тайная вера: она опять будет моею».

revolutionary path consciously and intentionally and who could have served as impressive models for his female character, but he created Erna because he wanted to show the raw inside of the Russian revolution and raise questions that often remained unanswered. The majority of his portraits in *The Pale Horse*, both male and female, are people who seem to be in the terrorist organization for all the wrong reasons (if there can even be right ones). Fyodor wants to take revenge for his killed wife; Erna dreams of a peaceful life with George; and Henrich believes in socialism, sees terrorism as effective and necessary, but does not grasp the moral implications and consequences of revolutionary violence. Romanticizing the Russian revolution was typical of Savinkov's contemporaries. These portraits expose Savinkov's skepticism about this tendency.

In his relationship with Erna, we see what Gippius called a negative masochism in George: his contempt for Elena is felt in every conversation they have and in every diary entry he writes about her. He focuses on her ugliness, on her flaxen, curly hair and especially on her big hands that symbolize her awkward place in the revolutionary movement. "When will it all end, George?... I can't live for murder. I can't," she begs George (101). George has no pity for her, even though he says that he does. In a conversation with Henrich (who is in love with Erna and who asks why Erna is given such dangerous task of making bombs), George coldly replies: "She is an expert" (45). George unemotionally concludes that if Erna dies, then Vanya as another chemist will take her place to make bombs. When George and Erna are together, he cannot stop concentrating on all the details that annoy him in her: her smoking, her shawl, the tenderness in her voice, and her tears. "What does it matter who is right and who is wrong?" cries Erna (102). George does not understand her suffering and need for

consolation because they go against his own life-affirming principles. In his mind, only those who see terrorism as the only means should join terrorist units; all others should do more peaceful revolutionary work. Before the assassination attempt, Erna imploringly asks George: “George, dear... Shall we die together?” (120). In the same way that Elena is a living force who strives for ultimate freedom and joy, Erna is a force of death. Through death, her love for George will gain social meaning and be rendered eternal. George does not want to die with Erna; he wants to live with Elena, but cannot accept Elena’s conditions.

Erna represents the revolutionary Russia where rivers of blood have covered every “higher idea” that marked its significance and where, knowing the revolution’s true cost and true face, the main character asks himself, whether the revolution was worth it: “Was it wrong on my part to kiss Erna? But it might have been worse to have ignored her, to have repulsed her. A woman came to me and brought me love and affection. Why does affection create sorrow? Why does not love give joy, but pain?” (139). The questions that George raises here are the questions of the balance between the means and the ends: Was it worth it to start the revolution? Wouldn’t it have been worse to stay silent under tsarism knowing that the fight would bring blood and destruction? And if the revolution was the only right choice, why did it bring only loss, disillusionment, and sorrow? Savinkov knew that the answers lay with the “ideal terrorists” like Vanya who believed in redemption through their martyrdom and therefore, were able to turn the blood of the revolution into “a higher idea”: “Vanya used also to speak of love, but of what kind of love? Do I know love of any kind? I do not know, cannot know, and do not try to. Vanya knows, but he is no more with me” (139). In Vanya’s world, there are two

Russias that are meant to be united together as a result of the revolution “for the sake of God, for the sake of love”: peasant Russia – Marfa, and Christian Russia – Maria.

Resonating with Merezhkovsky’s ideas of uniting the two truths and Nietzschean concept of futurity, Vanya tells George that they, revolutionaries, have to “take up the sword” because of their weakness. But their mission is to clear the path for the “pure” and “strong” ones who will come next. They, the revolutionaries, have to die for the others to come (33). George wants to believe Vanya, but years later, during the Civil War, he still keeps asking himself: “are we the seed or only dung?” (*The Black Horse* 78).

In the second, unnamed part of the trilogy, Savinkov draws only one female portrait. It is an image of former revolutionary Matilda, or Maud (because it sounds more refined). Along with hundreds of Russian emigre, including George, Matilda lives in France. As George describes her, Matilda used to be beautiful, but now she “has gained weight and dyes her hair at the temples” (*Neizvestnaia rukopis’* 156). Maud represents the Russian émigré community, exhausted, disillusioned, and displaced. She is the Russia that has no place and no purpose anymore because the revolution is defeated. Maud still puts her best efforts into participating in cultural life: she “studies art, scolds Nekrasov’s works, recites Minsky, loves to discuss poetry and condescendingly declares that Pushkin has become obsolete” (156).¹⁷⁵ But along with other members of Russian intelligentsia, Maud has gotten stuck in the past and has fallen out of touch with Russian life back home. Abroad, according to George, she is forced to live a “limping life” (161). She tries to convince George to let her join a terrorist group, but he has nothing to offer her: he is not “a master of the red workshop” anymore. The terrorist organization is dismissed and

¹⁷⁵ Citation in the original: «изучает' искусство: бранит Некрасова, декламирует Минского, любит рассуждать о поэзии и снисходительно заявляет, что Пушкин отжил свой век».

he is a “humble slave” (161). George writes that Maud is now passed around with no one to protect her (164-165). He sees the old Russia in her that is insulted and humiliated and now needs to beg for attention. George’s feelings toward Maud resemble what he felt toward Erna: he is annoyed by her smoking, her idle talk about terrorism, and her wrinkled and tired face. “I will never love her,” he writes (156). Again, as before, even as George is hugging Maud, he is thinking about a different woman, the revolutionary Russia that is no more: “I will think about the one who died” (162).

Savinkov never could find his niche abroad. His dreams of bringing about change for the people through terrorism faded away, and he came to believe that the blood of the revolution would forever stay on his hands. He felt as if he had lost everything:

No homeland and everything around you is wrong,
No homeland and everything around you is worthless,
No homeland and faith is impossible,
No homeland and words are hypocritical,
No homeland and joy has no smile,
No homeland and sorrow has no name,
No homeland and life is like an elusive ghost,
No homeland and death is like fading away...
No homeland. The prison lock is hanging,
And everything around you is pointless or false... (*Kniga stikhov* 83)¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Citation in the original: “Нет родины – и всё вокруг неверно./ Нет родины – и всё кругом ничтожно./ Нет родины – и вера невозможна./ Нет родины – и слово лицемерно./ Нет родины – и радость без улыбки./ Нет родины – и горе без названья./ Нет родины – и жизнь, как призрак зыбкий./ Нет родины – и смерть, как увяданье... Нет родины. Замок висит острожный, И всё кругом ненужно или ложно...”

George laments that he misses Petersburg and Russian speech, calling the French language his step-mother when he needs a mother. The secret police keeps watching his every step, and he feels like a “fatigued wolf” (*Neizvestnaia rukopis'* 159-160). The Russian émigré community, former revolutionaries, are stripped even of their promethean nobility because “it is impossible to suffer in Nice” and “it is impossible to be saintly in starched collars” (163). They are caricatures of the heroic martyrs and fighters they used to be.

More clear and defined images of Russia appear again in Savinkov's *The Black Horse*. George is surrounded by two women, Olga and Grusha, two Russias in his life: Grusha is peasant Russia, while Olga is his former ideal, the Third Russia, now turned Communist. Grusha is the Russia that he had gotten to know and learned to love, not immediately, but step-by-step, by rejecting his preconception of her and accepting her true image. At the same time, he kept ideal Olga dear to his heart but lost her because she became Olga of his present, communist Russia, who loves him but sees him as a traitor. Although unfamiliar at first, she still has the shadows of his ideal Russia. Initially, Grusha is very new and even exotic to the urban terrorist George, now fighting under the pseudonym Yuri Nikolaevich against the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. George kisses Grusha but lives with his memories of Olga. Like the peasants who believed in and valued revolutionary sacrifices, Grusha believes in George because he is “destined by fate to fight” (*The Black Horse* 59). Only during the years of the Civil War does George truly get the chance to experience the Russian land and the Russian people. On the one hand, he indulges in romantic unity with the countryside that had remained unknown to him during his work in Moscow and St. Petersburg: “out here in the fields I feel with my

whole heart and soul that I am Russian, descendant of vagrant wanderers, son of the ploughshare and the soil, of this black soil that is watered by the sweat of a myriad toilers!" (7). George calls himself a servant of Russia, and in this idea he is one with the people. He equates Russia with his "very life" and "love" (50, 45). On the other hand, George is exposed to the peasants' worldview, in which both the Reds and the Whites are intruders in their lives, "demons" to be purged (Savinkov intentionally uses a reference to Dostoevsky here) (4). And *narod*'s famous faith and spirituality in the Civil War are demonstrated in their forcing the captured to cross themselves in a proper way, by facing the East, and promising heretics that they will "burn in everlasting fire" with no sins forgiven (9-10, 52-53). Unlike the members of intelligentsia, in Savinkov's telling the peasants have never suffered from a heightened sense of individual moral responsibility. When Egorov, an old believer from Pskov who fights in George's division, promises to blow up the coming Reds, George asks with a smile: "And wouldn't that be a sin?" "Sin? A sin to destroy demons? Why, where did you get such an idea, Colonel?" Egorov answers (130).

George is drawn to Grusha but Olga is "nothing but Life – blessed and eternal" (61). George's descriptions of Olga are strikingly similar to the ways he had described Elena, as something perpetual and of a higher order. In the Russian countryside, George finally experiences a waft of primordial unity, of being "one indivisible whole, a single closed-in and unknowable world," that he could never reach with Elena and this time, he connects it to Olga (8). For George, Russia is Olga and Olga is Russia. It is his cause and his redemption. But like Elena, Olga who could save George remains only in his past and his dreams, as a non-essence.

The episode in which Grusha finds Olga's portrait and makes a jealous scene ("To love me, a cow-girl, but to marry a lady, your equal, that's your idea!") exposes the conflict in Savinkov during the Civil War years (69). He realized that his ideas of the Third Russia would never come to life and that the real peasant Russia was uneducated, self-willed, and even cruel, but unlike the Third Russia, it was real and it was there. There is a Dionysian force dormant in the barefoot Grusha who wades through the forest paths to see George at night. George is infatuated by her raw sexuality, her young body, shining eyes, and "an insatiable, almost animal, thirst" (54). Similarly to the situation with Elena, George does not intend to share Grusha with anyone, even though he is not ready to commit to her. Fedya likes Grusha but George does not let her go ("Grusha... I do not love her...But I will not share her with anybody") (83).

When George returns to Moscow and finds Olga, he hardly recognizes her: she has changed the snow-white dress he remembered for a black, all-covered dress, which again recalls Elena who always appears either in a white or black dress. This is how Savinkov and his brothers in arms first perceived communism: in their eyes, communism vandalized and dehumanized the ideas of Russia for which Kalyaev and Sozonov died. But Olga, a new Russia, is not an "easy" enemy like tsarism was: it is hard to hate her because Olga vocalizes all the silent accusations that George already made towards himself: "What do people's tears and blood mean to you? What is justice to you? You love homeland for yourself. You value only your own freedom... And you don't see that the old world is in ruins... No... You've betrayed the revolution... You've betrayed

Russia... You are our enemies... ” (*Kon' Voronoi* 200).¹⁷⁷ George also admits that like communists, they rob, kill innocent people, betray, and lack faith (*The Black Horse* 119-121). Later, George realizes that both social-revolutionaries and communists have their own *pravda* (“truth”). They all came out of the same generation of revolutionaries but had different visions of Russia. This is why Olga for him is “a stranger, but a stranger only because she is ours” (123). George thinks about Olga’s happiness and realizes that her happiness, as happiness of Russia under the Soviets for Savinkov, is his misery because there is no place for him in this new world. Olga’s victory, along with the victory of communist Russia, is George’s, and ultimately Savinkov’s, “shameful death” (131). He could not help build a better Russia, thus, losing his chance for salvation. “Of course, I returned to her,” writes George. In the same way, Savinkov felt that he had to come back to Russia in August 1924. Whether he was lured into Russia by the promises of emerging underground work or he let the secret police, OGPU, set a trap for him under the name of the Operation Syndicat-2, Savinkov could not stay away even from this new, strange Russia that came to replace the one that he cherished in his dreams. But George cannot stay in Moscow being chased by communists, and when Olga asks him to take her with him, he refuses: “... ‘I don’t love you.’ I spoke - and did not believe myself” (141). This might be the reason why Savinkov made a decision to jump out of the window of the Lubyanka jail on May 7, 1925. He did not stop loving Russia but could not take it with him anymore.

Like his character George, after the Civil War and again in exile, Savinkov felt drained and useless. He wanted to work but found himself misplaced and left behind. For

¹⁷⁷ Citation in the original: «Что для вас народные слёзы и кровь? Что для вас справедливость? Вы родину любите для себя. Вы свободу цените только вашу... И вы не видите, что рушится старый мир... Нет... Вы предали революцию... Вы изменили России... Вы враги...».

Savinkov, Russia meant life, cause, and meaning. He had devoted his life to fighting for Russia's salvation because, in his eyes, then the blood that he spilled could be redeemed as well. Savinkov never swore an oath to parties or leaders. He was accused of political hypocrisy and volatility but, in fact, in his every decision and every life turn, he regarded Russia as paramount: "I believe in no 'programmes' and still less in 'leaders.' I, too, am fighting for life and for the right to exist on earth. I fight like a wild beast, with claws, teeth, and blood. I said, 'on earth.' I don't mean 'on earth,' I mean in Russia and only in Russia" (*The Black Horse* 105).

CONCLUSION

In 2004, Mosfilm released Karen Shakhnazarov's film "A Rider Named Death," based on Boris Savinkov's novel *The Pale Horse* and labeled as "drama, historical film." The box office success of the film demonstrated the Russian public's unfading interest in revolutionary Russia, as well as the legendary terrorist and his literary works. Shakhnazarov allowed his director's vision to go beyond the pages of the novel and merged the story of the main character, George, with Savinkov's own: in fact, George narrates the last few minutes of the film while lying on the pavement in his own blood after jumping out of a Lubyanka window. Shakhnazarov's film arrived in timely fashion: on the one hand, it became another building block in reconstructing the Russian patriotic past, and on the other hand, it reflected on the phenomenon of modern terrorism in a Russian context from a "safer," historical perspective.

Attempting to commemorate "The Russia That We Lost," many contemporary filmmakers tend to historicize violence that happened in the Russian past.¹⁷⁸ The final scene of George's/Savinkov's suicide not only functions as an effective ending to the film, but also symbolizes both the era of fin-de-siecle Russia's era of terrorist destruction and of the Silver age explosion of artistic creation. As Shakhnazarov points out, he wanted "'to use some facts from Savinkov's biography in order to intensify the artistic impact' of what Savinkov's life meant for Russian history" (Norris 61). Elena Monastireva-Ansdell, meanwhile, draws a strong connection between Shakhnazarov's

¹⁷⁸ Stanislav's Govorukhin's documentary film "Russia That We Lost," idealizing pre-revolutionary Russia, was released in 1992.

film and the national rhetoric of Putin's Russia. She argues that through the de-romantization of terror as a fight for freedom on the screen, the director upheld the values of a strong, stable, centralized state in both the imperial and the modern contexts (65). In fact, Putin even visited the studio set recreating Moscow of 1904 during the shooting process. The director and the president talked only cinema, not terrorism during the visit. When asked about his possible disapproval of Putin's anti-terrorist campaign for not bringing up the topic of terrorism, Shakhnazarov replied: "That's the problem of the special forces, not film directors" (66-67). In fact, mostly likely, for Putin, Sakhnazarov's contribution to the re-birth of Russian cinema carried a bigger national and economic importance than political relevance of the message delivered in the film.

While this film undoubtedly creates a historical version of the Russian past, it does not necessarily fit into the category of pretentiously patriotic cinema because the director's main focus remains on the psychological tension in a terrorist's mind. The aesthetic plane of Shakhnazarov's film is expressly theatrical, filled with cabaret dancers and carnival masks, because this is the way in which George sees his life – as a puppet theater. The emphasis on the psychology of terrorism at the expense of political commentary resulted into some film critics' opinions that "The Rider named Death" has very little to do with today's phenomenon of terrorism. For example, Ekaterina Barabash of *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (Independent Newspaper) argues that Savinkov's "colleagues in bombing one hundred years later" would never experience the same kind of "Dostoevskian doubts" (as qtd. in Norris 65).

However, Shakhnazarov has clearly demonstrated his intentions of initiating a dialogue about the ideological basis of terrorism, both revolutionary and contemporary.

He argues that “the intellectual level of Russian terror at the beginning of the past century was incomparably higher than that of the present” (as qtd. in Norris 62). Indeed, behind Russian revolutionary terrorist acts were Orthodox metaphysical conflicts, an apocalyptic tradition of disunity and suffering, and the historically developed consciousness of a Christian paradox. However, the ideology of terrorist martyrdom and victimhood is quite familiar to today’s terrorism. The savior complex developed from religious convictions and a sense of personal social responsibility also come into play in the contemporary war on terror. Shakhnazarov himself makes a parallel between Savinkov and Osama Bin Laden if the latter wrote a novel about terrorism: “Savinkov is the Bin Laden of the last century, only behind him also stood the whole culture of the nineteenth century”¹⁷⁹ (Kichin, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*). Denouncing the accusations against “humanizing terrorists” through literary depictions, we can argue, along with Robin Morgan, that terrorists as fiction writers “reveal what remains a mystery to terrorism experts,” which is “the sexuality of terror and of terrorism” and “the sensualization of cruelty and death” (119). Through Savinkov, we read Russian revolutionary terrorism not only as the systematic use of violence against tsarism, but also as a cultural and philosophical network founded on centuries of literary and theological traditions.

In fact, Bin Laden also was a poet and took pride in being one. In the June 8 & 15 issue from 2015, *The New Yorker* published an article by Robyn Creswell and Bernard Haykel titled “Battle Lines” that discusses the role of poetry in the jihad movement. Creswell and Haykel argue that unlike the beheading videos targeting mainly foreign audiences, poetry gives us an insight into the dialogues inside the movement (102). They

¹⁷⁹ Citation in the original: «Савинков и есть бен Ладен начала прошлого века, только за ним стояла еще и вся культура XIX столетия».

explain the importance of analyzing jihadist poetry as a performative act of self-expression and self-identification. Creswell and Haykel discuss videos in which members of a jihadi groups recite poems to each other, thus turning poetry into “a social act rather than a specialized profession” (104). However, the public is not quite ready for the fact that the ISIL militants express themselves through literature. Facebook comments about the article reveal that the idea of connecting terrorism and art often causes anxiety about humanizing terrorists because it ties together two methods of bringing political change: the power of a bomb and the power of language. Facebook user Dan Kiefer had a strongly negative reaction to the subject: “Really New Yorker? There’s a terrorist attack and you want to show that the proponents of this evil ideology have a sympathetic soft side? Distasteful and unbecoming of a top western publication.” When asked if he actually read the article, Kiefer replied: “No. I don’t give a fuck about poetry from terrorists” and “You go read some haji love poems if you want...Go marry one too if you love them that much” (Comment to Creswell and Haykel). This reader viewed the mere process of reading terrorist poetry as humanization because he saw literature directly referring to universal morality and human connection. Similarly, another Facebook user, Shahrooz Tehrani, questioned the origins of jihadist poetry by equating the concepts of poetry, art, and love. Angela King briefly stated: “Do not glorify mass murder.” Mara De Matteo went even further accusing *The New Yorker* of being “one of them.” Joanna Paraszczuk’s article in *The Atlantic* from September 18, 2015, discussing Chechen jihadist poems, caused very similar reaction among its readers, inquiring “You mean jihadists can no longer be simply killed? Now we have to read their effing poetry?” (Comment from the user “spudwhisperer”).

Why does reading terrorists' poetry make many of us so uncomfortable? Is it because a pen is mightier than a bomb, and to accept the existence of terrorist literature makes jihadists more powerful and us more scared? Is it because accepting the existence of literary ideological traditions among the ISIL militants means that an idea can truly be fought only with another, stronger idea, and that neither an AK-47 nor an M-16 can completely eradicate this violence? Does it turn the phenomenon of terrorism from barbaric insanity into a conscious social choice?

Russian revolutionary terrorism died as a movement not only because it was suppressed politically and militarily, but also because its ideology failed. Like today's global terrorism, Russian revolutionary terrorism was both a social product and an expression of performative violence. Steven Marks argues that the nineteenth century Russian radicals shaped the modern world by introducing "terrorist practices that have been in use ever since" (37). Claudia Verhoeven looks at Russian terrorism "not simply [as] a strategy...but rather a paradigmatic way of becoming a modern political subject" (4). As Marks mentions, fleeing from prosecution, thousands of Russian radicals left Russia and settled in Europe, Asia, and the United States. A number of revolutionaries, including the founder of the SR Combat Organization, Grigory Gershuni, and the future Polish leader Josef Pilsudski, passed through the established colony of Russian radicals in Nagasaki, Japan, which contributed to the development of the Japanese revolutionary movement (18). The oxymoronic combination of violence and virginity that accompanied Spiridonova's myth at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia found its new life in the modern world of terrorism in the face of the South Korean female Kim Hyon-hui, the so-called "virgin terrorist," who set up a bomb on a jet, killing 115 people in 1987. The

media dubbed her as “token terrorist” while emphasizing her “beauty, humility, alleged virginity, and unquestioning obedience appeal to Korean males” (Morgan xxvi). Because of the historical rivalry for geographical territories between Russia and England, the British supported the Russian radicals fighting against the oppressive tsarist regime. So did the Indian nationalists who eventually used “the Russian method” to stand up to the Raj and Western ideology (Marks 18-19). Chinese fiction and non-fiction writers were fascinated by female revolutionaries, particularly by Sophia Perovskaya. Their literature inspired Chinese revolutionaries and “helped to prepare public opinion to accept the attitude that violence could produce positive political change in China as well as remain morally pure” (21).

Even though modern terrorists are undoubtedly better equipped, financed, and globally connected, the basic organizational structures and ontological concepts function in a very similar manner. The ideas of martyrdom and suffering lie at the core of the jihadist movement. Creswell and Haykel examine one of Bin Laden’s poems, in which Bin Laden’s son Hamza, a voice of innocence and purity, asks his father why their life is filled with suffering and why they never stay in one place. Bin Laden explains to his son that this hardship is necessary “not only because injustice is everywhere, but, more significantly, because adversity is the sign of election” (105). Both Dostoevskian and general revolutionary terrorist rhetoric resonate with this belief. Dostoevsky believed that suffering purifies people and makes them better human beings. Russian revolutionary terrorists thought of suffering as their cross to bear, not necessarily as the elect ones, but more as those who were meant to leave a better Russia for the next, purer generation. It is

through their permanent status of exile and hardship that jihadists nourish their “sense of righteousness” (105-106).

The need to commemorate heroes is another parallel that can be drawn between the Russian radicals and contemporary radical Islamists. Heroic narratives of Maria Spiridonova, Ivan Kalyaev, Egor Sozonov and many other social-revolutionary martyrs were carefully documented and distributed both as a means of propaganda and simply because people wanted to hear their stories. As Creswell and Haykel point out, elegies and laments about “fallen warriors” serve as “a way of both memorializing significant events and giving the militants a common calendar.” “For the jihadists,” they continue, “acts of martyrdom are the building blocks of communal history” (106). Indeed, for both Islamist militants and Russian revolutionary radicals, each act of martyrdom carried a weight of continuity: to repay the debt, to continue the common cause, and to add value to each sacrifice. Because of the element of sacrifice, the fact of murder for the Russian revolutionaries retreated into the shadows, whereas for the Islamists it steps into the light as a glorified deed, hence the difference in rhetoric: Bin Laden calls the 9/11 hijackers “knights of glory,” while Kalyaev calls the Russian terrorists “knights of spirit” (Creswell and Haykel 106; Pomortsev 8).

Russian radicals committed terrorist acts in order to accelerate political and social reforms. They believed that the Russian revolution would purify Russia of its past sins and Russia would be reborn as a beacon of renewed Christianity for the rest of the world. Despite rejecting the idea of nation-states, contemporary jihadists’ goals include building a caliphate - a supposed paradise on earth that will take on a leadership role in the Islamic world. However, Russian revolutionary terrorists dreamed about a reborn Russia of the

future, whereas the Islamist militants strive to create “a pure resurrection of the past,” where believers would be reborn “into the old, authentic faith” (108).

Another interesting similarity between the Russian social-revolutionary terrorist units and the ISIL militant groups can be found in their membership. The Social-Revolutionary Party became a channel for female individual empowerment and professional engagement: women who had been confined to the household responsibilities for centuries received an opportunity to fight for an idea side by side with men. As Creswell and Haykel argue, despite ISIL’s notorious reputation for sexual slavery, they have been quite successful in recruiting women and even making them the faces of the propaganda war (108). As I argued in Chapter 1, young Russian women sought opportunities in terrorist organizations because, due to the marginalized position of these organizations, their status within them was not rooted in cultural tradition or defined by legal norms. What is even more provocative in the modern context is that even in the ultra-conservative culture of ISIL, the allowed behavioral patterns for women can fluctuate based on political necessity. Creswell and Haykel write about a female writer’s piece in *Dabiq*, ISIL’s English-language publication, that “encourages women to emigrate to ‘the lands of the Islamic State’ even if it means travelling without a male companion, a shocking breach of traditional Islamic law” (108).

Claudia Verhoeven believes that Dmitri Karakozov’s assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander II on April 4, 1866, was the exact date when modern terrorism was born, because Karakozov, acting “in a historically meaningful manner,” targeted not necessarily the tsar, but rather the whole autocratic institution of power. Of course, we cannot argue that modern terrorism repeats all the patterns that Russian revolutionary

terrorism established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The globalized world has significantly changed the players, along with technological capabilities and economic factors. However, even today, the shadows of Russian radicals still loom in the merciless face of the Islamic terrorism.

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