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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

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

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

by
Ireneusz Szarycz

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NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION OF RUSSIAN

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

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

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

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

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

Kataev has written in many genres – poetry, drama, prose. His first poem was published in an Odessa newspaper in 1910¹ and since then his contribution to Soviet literature has been rather considerable.
Although he made certain concessions to the demands of the time (especially in his works of the war and post-war periods), he managed to retain his style with a specific romantic flavour, characteristic of the southern "Odessa School."

The post-Stalin period was for Kataev a time of difficult readjustment to political relaxation and creative freedom. It was a trying time for all writers of the older generation associated with the Stalinist orthodoxy. After about twenty years of stagnation and suppression it became possible, at least to some extent, to experiment with new artistic forms, to employ such formal innovations as to suit new content. The first to take advantage of a new situation were young authors (prose writers and poets) who, "untainted and untrammeled by the past, burst on the scene in the 'fifties and 'sixties."

They found in Kataev, who was not at that time publishing himself, a mentor and protector. As editor of 'junost', the monthly literary periodical, Kataev played an indirect but important part in the Thaw. Under his protection, such new talents as Vasilij Aksenov, Anatolij Gladilin, Evgenij Evtušenko, Bulat Okudžava, and Bella Axmadulina could publish in 'junost' at a time when it was difficult to publish elsewhere. Rather than compete with the young authors, Kataev devoted himself to theoretical reflections on the essence of literature and on the role and rights of the writer. In his articles on these subjects written in the 1950s Kataev points out the importance of the artist's personality in the literary creative process, and stresses his right to interpret reality in his own individual way: "an artist's consciousness must not be like a mirror, ... must not only reflect, but
also creatively transform the world.\textsuperscript{3}

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

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

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

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

*Maleń'kaia železnaja dver' v stene* marks a turning point in Kataev's career. It opens a new chapter in the creative biography of the writer who celebrated his eighty-ninth birthday in January 1986. The Lenin motif, his life on Capri and in Paris, may be viewed "as merely an excuse to make an experimental piece on personal themes more acceptable." Surprisingly (in view of the politically sensitive topic), Kataev's new book can be distinguished from other writers' works on the Lenin theme by its complexity and inward
focus. This feature of the book brought forth negative responses from certain Soviet critics who accused Kataev of letting his own personality dominate that of Lenin.

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

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

This latter category undoubtedly includes Kataev with his remarkably written books, who "re-emerged in his old age to produce a series of works which are provocatively modern in style and content." These works belong to a new genre of "lyrical prose" which, alongside the Lenin theme and so-called "young prose," appeared in the late 1950s to be further developed in the 1960s. Authors representative of this genre — such as Vladimir Soloukhin (Kapha rosy), Olga Berggolts (Dnevne zvezdy), Konstantin Paustovsky (Povesti) —
Mikhail Slonimski (Kniga vospominanii), Nikolaj Tixonov (Dvojnaya raduga), and many more - remain largely unnoticed by Western scholars.

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

The views expressed by these two prominent emigré writers must be applied not only to the writings of "dissidents" or so-called "villagers" (justifiably popular in the West), but also to those writers who, like Kataev, turned to self-rehabilitation and bold experiments with time dimensions in their search for the memory of their own youth, and in their "effort to evoke the Russian past."\(^{18}\) This statement of Brown's is quite valid, for the past is closely related to the future. The past is the memory, the lessons which help in one's endeavours to build the future. These lessons are also to be learnt from those negative phenomena which one has to reckon with and triumph over. The subject of literature is man, and the writer cannot help but be aware that the experience of the past is conveyed like the genetic information of generations to contemporary man.\(^{19}\)
In the genre of "lyrical prose" the authors deal not only with the past but, more importantly, with the artist's self, which becomes a primary object of investigation. This is evident also in non-Russian Soviet literatures which have an infinite wealth of sources and traditions to draw upon and exhibit diversity of styles and forms. The non-Russian prose writers immediately sensed the shift in the aesthetic thinking of the 1960s and, like the Russians, changed the imagery and the conventional norms of story composition and character drawing. By the accentuation of the lyrical element and the unfettering of personality, non-Russian Soviet writers have greatly contributed to the birth of "lyrical prose." 

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

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

Kataev was intensely interested in all aspects of man's life and the world around him (especially the difficult and puzzling). Moral exigency is one of the principal qualities Kataev inherited from Russian classical literature (Puškin, Gogol', Dostoevskij, Bunin). At the same time Kataev's entire work and life have been marked by an
endless quest for his own particular literary style, corresponding to the author's notions of time and its tasks.

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

The 1920s constituted a relatively free period in the history of Soviet literature. During its relaxed atmosphere when writers belonging to different literary groups with different orientations were allowed to experiment with the form and content, Kataev produced some of his best works, which as the author himself admits may be linked with his writing three decades later. Kataev's search for his own style is well characterized by Nikolai Smirnov who, in reviewing the book *Rastratčiki* in 1927, wrote: "The writer's path of V. Kataev is a path of incessant and persistent 'first steps in literature'. Having begun from simple, everyday, realistically profound stories, the writer quickly and abruptly turned to the side of phantasmagoria."
This feature of Kataev’s writing (called by Smirnov “phantasmagoria”) which characterized some of his stories of the 1920s (Opyt Branka — Krants’ Experiment; Železnoe kol’co — The Iron Ring; Sér Genri i čert — Sir Henry and the Devil), re-appeared with varying intensity in Kataev’s later works. This is only one of the many features that unify the writer’s work of the period under discussion. By his exploration of his private world, by his lack of concern for traditional chronological plot, by his subjective treatment of time dimensions, Kataev drastically departed from the typical “realist” narrative which prevails in contemporary Soviet prose.

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

It would be unjust, however, to say that Kataev’s prose published at this specific time lacked artistic quality. I think it would have been impossible for Kataev to re-emerge in his seventies and produce works of such high quality without being faithful, at least in some degree, to his own style and manner of writing of the NEP period. Although he changed his theme and portrayed Soviet reality in its revolutionary development, his sharp eye and precise descriptive language are still noticeable in everything he wrote during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.
The turning point in Kataev's creative work, according to Soviet critics, was the novel *Vremja, vpered!* But it was also the point at which Kataev's work began to show a lower quality, an inability to deal with new themes that were quite alien to him.

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

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

In the same year Kataev published his novel *Zimnjij vетер* (*Winter Wind*), which may be considered to be the author's next step in his attempt to "liberate" his writing from the restrictions imposed by the Party. In this novel Kataev managed to reconcile two diametrically opposed aspects of his creation — the personal and the ideo-
logical. The former is conveyed through the main character in the novel, Petja Bačej, whose dilemma—the necessity of making choices between sides—was clearly of great personal importance to Kataev. The extent to which Petja was dear to him is evident in the way Kataev portrays Petja’s inner world.

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


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

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

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

Although Kataev's "new prose" provoked responses from both Soviet and foreign critics (American, British, Polish, Nigerian), the number of articles is rather insufficient compared to the author's creative fruitfulness for the last two decades and the quality of his creation. Not only have some of Kataev's later works (Svjetov kolo
dec, Trava zabven'ja) received more critical attention than others, but it should also be noted that the majority of critics and reviewers tend to concentrate their attention on the ideological aspect of Kataev's writing. In an interview with Robert Daglish (the English translator of
Trave zabven'ja) Kataev, asked "if he thought his work had been understood in the West," predictably replied: "They will talk politics all the time."^28

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

Besides Poręba's article, the unusual treatment of the category of time is noted by almost every critic who has published on Kataev's "new" prose. But these are only general statements and the problem still remains open for more detailed analysis. Very much the same conclusion applies to such theoretical questions as narration (narrative point of view) and space, the category most closely related to the category of time. On the latter point Kataev writes in Svjatoj kolodéc: "Time is a strange substance which even in philosophical dictionaries has no separate heading but goes in the same harness with space...."^31
Because of the scarcity of criticism, especially on specific theoretical problems, everything that has been published or written on Kataev’s prose of the 1960s and 1970s—even the smallest findings or suggestions—are invaluable for the purposes of this study.

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

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

While these scholars concern themselves extensively with the problem of “point of view,” credit is due Wolf Schmid for his model of the semantic structure of a literary work. Schmid takes into account all the basic levels of expression (communication) of the work. He divides the levels of the narrative work into three basic categories: the concrete, the implied, and the fictional.
The *concrete* category consists of the concrete author (for example, Kataev) and the concrete reader, both of whom are *extrinsic* to the work of fiction.

The *implied* category consists of the implied-author\textsuperscript{36} (the *intrinsic* reflection of the concrete author) and the implied reader,\textsuperscript{37} the work-immanent counterpart of the implied author.

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

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

![Diagram of Schmid's model](image)

*Legend:* \textit{ca} = concrete author; \textit{ia} = implied author; \( (:) \) = originator of the creative act (in the case of implied categories the colon is given in parentheses); \textit{N} = narrator; \( C_1, C_2 \) = portrayed characters; \textit{fr} = fictional reader; \textit{ir} = implied reader; \textit{cr} = concrete reader; \( \rightarrow \) = direction of addressed communication (in the case of the implied categories the arrow appears in parentheses).
In the traditional narrative typologies a distinction is made between what is commonly called a first-person narrative and a third-person narrative. In the latter case the narrator remains outside the boundaries of the narrated world; in the former case the narrator may be the central character or a secondary character of the narrated world. However, the first-person narrator, according to Schmid, may be classified as either a "narrating I" (analogous to the third-person narrator) or an "experiencing I" (analogous to a *dramatis persona*).39

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

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

Although the structural method is employed in this study, in many instances it will be supplemented by the phenomenological methods of interpretation (Roman Ingarden, Michel Butor, Wolfgang Iser).40 The phenomenological approach to literature does not oppose other methods of interpretation. On the contrary, it aims at integrating the discoveries of other methods and incorporating what is learnt from these methods into a more comprehensive understanding of a text. The way in which the phenomenological method contrasts with
other critical attitudes is in the substitution of the intentional order for the objective order—which is primarily due to the phenomenologist's conception that a literary text is a human act within the world rather than a representation of the world. In his book *Phenomenology*, Joseph Kockelkons writes: "It is true to say that phenomenology is not a description of the 'real world,' but it is a description of the experience of the perceived world as the primary reality." 41 We may say, then, that Kataev's "new" prose describes the experience of perceiving the world; for the author himself this perception is the "primary reality."

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

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

*Valentin Kataev died 12 April 1986 in Peredelkino.*
NOTES

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


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

5 V. Kataev, “O novatorstvye”, in *Sobranie...,* vol. 8, p. 388.

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

I share Robert Russell’s point of view in his monograph on Kataev: “The work thought by most critics to have heralded the arrival of the ‘new’ Kataev was ‘The Holy Well,’ but many of the themes and devices which were to run through Kataev’s work for the rest of the 1960s and into the 1970s were introduced in a tale of 1964 about Lenin on Capri and in Paris, entitled ‘The Little Iron Door in the Wall.’” — *Valentin Kataev* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), p. 110.
The search for the image of the leader, which began during Lenin's lifetime, involved artists from different artistic disciplines — prose writers, poets, playwrights, sculptors, painters, graphic artists, workers in the cinema and theatre.

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

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

In addition to Malenkaja železnaja dver' v stene — Kataev's so-called "lyrical diary" — the Lenin theme appeared in the prose writings of Emmanuel Kazakevič (Sinjaja tetrad' ), Marietta Šaginjan (Semja Uļjanovyč, Pervaja vserossijskaja ) and Afanasiy Koptelov (Bojko začin and Volgortsija plamja ); in Andrej Voznesenskij's poem Lonžumo; in children's books by Zoja Voskresenskaja (Se, dce materi); Marija Priležaeva (Udivitel'nyj god, Tri nedeli pokoja ); Andrej Popov (Stranimy velykoi žizni ); and Arsenij Rut'ko (Detstvo na Volge ); as well as in dramas by Nikolaj Pogodin (Kremlevskie kuranti) and Dmitrij Zorin (Večnyj istočnik ).


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

An example is Kazakevič's Sinjaja tetrad', in which the author focuses his attention exclusively on the personality of Lenin.
11 R. Kaganova, “Еšće raz ob otvetstvennosti xudožnika,” Vo-

12 R. Russell, “Oberon’s Magic Horn: The Later Works of Valen-


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

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


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

18Brown, p. 18.


21Compare, for example, the following writers: *Lithuanians* Mikolas Sluckis, Alfonsas Bieliauskas, Jonas Avyžius; *Latvians* Janis Lusis, Jeronims Stulpan, Ojar Vacietis; *Estonian* Paul-Erik Rummo; *Georgians* Nodar Dumbadze, Otar Čiladze, Šota Nišnianidze; *Armenians* Grant Matevosian, Aramais Saakian; *Ukrainians* Evhen Bičalo, Mykola Vinhranovs; and the relatively young but already nationally acclaimed *Belorussians* Ales’ Naurocki, Janka Bryl’, Barys Saceanka, Ryhor Baradulin, as well as the late Useevalod Kraucanka, who commit-
ted suicide during a visit to France in 1961. I have not yet mentioned here the **Kirgiz** writer Čingiz Aitmatov who is one of the best-known non-Russian authors in the West. A detailed analysis of his works may be found in Shneiderman, pp. 32–46. See also on Aitmatov: Nina Kolesnikoff, “The Child Narrator in the Novellas of Čingiz Aitmatov” in *Russian Literature and Criticism* (op cit.), pp. 101–110, and Constantin V. Ponomareff, “A Poetic Vision in Conflict: Čingiz Aitmatov’s Fiction” in *Russian Literature and Criticism*, pp. 158–166.


23A number of young writers who collaborated with *Gudok* had come, like Kataev, from Odessa and Kiev, among them Jurij Oleša (pseudonym “Zubilo”), Michail Bulgakov, Ilja Ilyich and Evgenij Petrov. See also note 4.

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

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


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

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


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


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


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

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

See Romberg, note 34.

See Schmid, p. 27.


CHAPTER 1

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

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

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

Тема Ленина давно привлекала меня... Всю свою сознательную жизнь я любил Ленина и всегда мечтал написать о нем книгу... если не роман и не повесть, то во всяком случае, его литературный портрет. (1)
In writing a book about Lenin, Kataev was responding to a question which arose in Soviet literature after Stalin’s death—namely, how to depict the Revolution and its leader. Up until this point it had been held that Lenin must be completely different from the crowds, that he must be above the masses. This is the way Lenin is portrayed in the works of Mariëtta Šaginjan, Marija Priležaeva, Dmitrij Zorin and many more (see Introduction, note 8).

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

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

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

Ленин — неисчерпаемая тема, которую один человек осилить не может. Поэтому я решил взять какой-
Kataev was, however, a colleague of Lenin’s wife Nadežda Krupskaja at “Glavpolitprosvet” at the beginning of the 1920s. She promised him in fact that Lenin would receive him after he recovered. But Lenin did not recover, and the meeting never took place. Nevertheless Kataev had a great deal of help from Krupskaja in his effort to understand Lenin’s personality. She was often telling him about the leader, about his life abroad in Geneva and Paris, about the Party-school he founded in Longjumeau, and many other things which Kataev included in his book.

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

Жестокую стужу костры сторожили,
Но падала температура
На градус в минуту, сползая по жиле
Стеклянной руки Реомюра…”

Over the years Kataev had been edging closer and closer to the Lenin theme (considered by Soviet critics the most important theme in Soviet literature), for everything he had previously written touched on it in one way or another. Lenin motifs are present in *Beleet parus odinokij* and in *Vremja, vpered!* Later they appeared in the novels of the Thaw period – *Xutorok v stepi* and *Zimniy veter*. Kataev continued to cherish his ambition of writing a book about
Lenin. For this purpose he travelled (as early as 1931) to Paris where he met French communists Marcel Cachin and Paul Vaillant-Couturier as well as the participants of the Paris Commune. His talks with them largely contributed to his final decision to write a book about Lenin's life in the city of the French Revolution, the city of Marx and Engels, Robespierre and Marat, Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.\textsuperscript{8}

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

Despite this scrupulous preparation Kataev did not intend to write something "monumental" (as he himself admitted in the previously quoted passage from his article \textit{Kak ja pisal knigu "Malen'-kaja železnaja dver' v stene"}), but rather, taking advantage of his newly-found dominion over time, he wandered in the Paris streets where Lenin seemed to have just ridden by on his bicycle, mingled with the crowds of workers in the tiny Bobino theatre listening to the chansonniers that Lenin used to like so much, and took notes of Lenin's lecture sitting in the far corner of the Bolshevik school in Longjumeau. With such power Kataev was able to be carried back half a century and see a postman whistling a tune walk along the narrow rue Marie Rose in Paris, enter house number 4 and climb to the first floor
to deliver a registered parcel from Russia. And not just to see but actually to "become" that postman, walk up the winding wooden staircase, pause in front of a door and ring the bell:

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

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

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

...эта книга не исторический очерк, не роман, даже не рассказ. Это размышления, страницы путевых тетрадей, воспоминання, точнее всего — лирический дневник, не больше. Но и не меньше. (12)
In this "lyrical diary" one can find that kind of subjectivity which enables the author to participate in some way in the actualized events. Historical facts here are mixed with pure fiction and the author's own experience and imagination. In one of his articles Kataev wrote that it is impossible for an artist not to use his imagination, that this is a tool of his trade. He arranges hundreds of facts in one episode, thousands of impressions in one artistic image.¹³

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

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

This specific blend of document and fiction, memoirs and imagination, determines to a considerable degree the structure of Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene, in which there is little regard for conventional connected narrative.¹⁴ This helps Kataev to focus the reader's attention on his personality, tastes, and memories—and, at the same time, to range as freely as he wishes, both in subject matter and in time, setting down incidents from various periods without regard to chronology.¹⁵

The author admits in his "diary" that the loss of a chronological
sense comes with advancing years ("Ni s čem ne sravnimoe sladkoe oščuščenie poteri vremeni, vernee, ego smesčenija.... Vse čašče i čašče ono presleduet menja teper', na sklone let")\textsuperscript{16} but this is only an excuse for his private reminiscences in the book, along with his anticipation of the reflections on the nature of time in most of his later works.

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

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

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

The personality of the implied author appears when he presents historical documents about Lenin, memoirs of his contemporaries, and when he refers to the implied reader and talks about his work on the book. In all other cases the narration in the first-person indicates the author as an object. Since the implied author deals with documents which are undoubtedly very objective sources of information, he presents (in contrast to the first-person narrator) a more objective point of view on the characters and the events in the presented world.
Another subject of presentation in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver’ v stene* is the third-person narrator, whose task is to present the events from the reconstructed past — the past within the limits of a historical time (1908–1911). He takes a rather objective position in his presentation, even though he is to some extent dependent on the first-person narrator and describes only those events which appear in the latter’s imagination.

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

Горький сидел рядом с Лениным, сувив глаза, и залуччиво подерживал кончики усов над бритым, солдатским подбородком. Выжидательно помалкивал. А Ленин уже овладел собой, был спокоен, холоден, на- смешлив и настроен далеко не мирно.

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

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

Недавно я побывал на Капри. Мы отправились разыскывать виллу и террасу, где выше полувека тому назад Ленин играл в шахматы. [21]

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

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

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

The above quotation may also serve to illustrate Kataev’s way of changing narrative perspectives. Information received from the third-person narrator (in the preceding paragraphs) evokes — in the first-person narrator’s mind — an association with similar events from his own experience. These events are described by the first-person narrator and commented on in the form of a digression by the implied author. (The words “когда в глазах созерцалось волшебство полета, превращение тела, бегущего по земле, в тело, летящее по воздуху” do not belong to either of the two narrators. These words can only belong to the implied author, who in this way links two similar events which happened in the past in two distant geographical places). In this way the “narrative triangle” is fulfilled. Also evident here is the author’s anticipation of his transformations of things and persons in his works of the 1960s and 1970s (“превращение тела, бегущего по земле, в тело, летящее по воздуху”).

At this point it is necessary to emphasize that Kataev introduces
the "narrative triangle" device in order to throw more light on the events in historical time and at the same time to disguise his own personality. Ironically, however, he only makes himself more visible.

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

One can see that in Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene two subjects of presentation (first- and third-person narrators) relate their stories from different temporal positions, and the worlds in which they act have different temporal extents (dimensions). The events in the reconstructed world, as one already knows, take place within the period of 1908–1944. The events in the world of the first-person narrator take place between 1908 and the 1960s.

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

Осторожно, держа за твердое седло, Ленин сводил по ступенькам лестницы подпрыгивающий велосипед, стараясь, чтобы педаль не задела за точёную балюсию. Внутри кожаной треугольной сумки на раме под седлом глухо погромыхивали велосипедные инструменты, аккуратно завернутые в полотняную трапочку. (23)

The narrator-reporter is able to see the things which cannot be
seen by an ordinary observer. He knows that the tools in the triangle bag are "akkuratno" wrapped into the cotton rug. His omniscience reaches Lenin's feelings and habits, too:

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

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

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

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

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

В мае 1871 года здесь, вдоль набережных на Сене, стояли канонерки Коммуны — целый лес высоких железных труб, извергавших густые клубы черного дыма и белого пара.
Между ними сновали лодки, подвоем снаряды, и время от времени с палуб канонерок стреляли пушки, полсылая шипящие гранаты в сторону Гренель, откуда наступали версальцы. (26)

The third-person narrator’s comments or thoughts are always directed to the past; the comments on the same situation from the position of the implied author are always directed to the future from the actual temporal point of the situation being commented on or, in other words, the implied author speaks from the position of the "present." This point may be better clarified by the following quotation from Trava zabvenja:
По отношению к прошлому будущее находится в настоящем. По отношению к будущему настоящее находится в прошлом. (27)

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

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

Гораздо чаще Ленин бывал в кафе «Ротонда»... Там происходили менее конспиративные встречи с французскими социалистами, впоследствии членами Французской компартии. Здесь между французскими социалистами и русскими социал-демократами велись оживленные дискуссии, в то время как за соседними столиками ораторствовали художники, покинувшие одряхлевшие улы Монмартра и теперь роящиеся на вошедшем в моду Монпарнас... Здесь можно было встретить множество интереснейших людей... (28)
This information offered by the third-person narrator now confirms the second "I" of the concrete author — the first-person narrator travelling in France and visiting the same places where Lenin lived and worked. He had visited Montparnasse and the famous café back in the early 1930s:

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

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

In the case of the third-person narrator who is a part of this world and relates directly to the reader, this distance is practically non-existent. In the case of the implied author, who does not belong to the reconstructed world but comments on one or another situation in this world from the contemporary position (from the point of view of the present, as has been stressed several times), the distance in time between the level of his narrative digressions and the level of the presented world is rather considerable. From such a distance he is not able to see the whole picture of this world and therefore he relies on information flowing from the "ambassador," limiting himself to sporadic comments on this information and to providing additional news from objective documentary sources (cf. for example the
photograph introduced in the passage quoted on page 34 above — note 20).

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

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

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

Каштановый парк, ронявший свои крупные рубчатые семипалые листва, резко пожелтевшие по краям, как будто от ожогов какой-то едкой кислоты, превратился вокруг нас в романтический лес, где в любую минуту мы могли встретить добrego короля Дагобера и усы-
Kataev's mention of Oberon and his magic horn is significant in that it explains the story's startling temporal and spatial interrelationships, for the legendary Oberon "possessed the ability to transport himself instantly to any place or time, a power that Kataev begins to claim more and more for himself in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s."

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

Note also how an old man at the museum is perceived as the same man who worked at the aerodrome near Longjumeau fifty years
earlier: how Luigi, a Capri boatman, becomes in the first-person narrator's imagination the same boatman who had ferried him and his brother and father to the Blue Grotto half-a-century ago, thereby instantly transforming the setting to the Capri of 1910; how a snowstorm in the Paris of the 1960s carries the hero back — again in his imagination — to Red Square in the Moscow of 1924:

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

Unlike the reconstructed world described from the third-person narrator's point of view, the events recounted by the first-person narrator are unverifiable. The reader receives the world as it is perceived by the subject. All the elements of this world are screened through the subject's consciousness and enriched by his imagination. The picture of the world presented by the first-person narrator becomes even more obscure when some of its elements are described from two different points of view — the first-person narrator as a child and the same narrator as a grown-up (the subject looks back and evokes the world of the child that he was). In such cases the grown-up narrator usually doubts the "authenticity" of such descriptions; his doubts, however, only emphasize the importance of the imagination in the process of presenting and depicting the world. Imaginary events and characters are often more intriguing than those one actually lives through. They not only fill the gaps in reality but also serve to elucidate certain aspects of reality.
Here is an example from Malen'kaja železnaja dver’ v ste-
ne which will illustrate what has been said above. Following a slight
accident with a crochet needle the young hero is taken to a hospital to
be seen by the famous French doctor Duboucher:

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

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

Возможно, что образ Дюбуше, сохранившийся в моей
памяти, был нарисован фантазией перепутанного на-
смерть мальчишки. Может быть, не было ни голубых
“эльзасских” глаз, грозно глядевших из-за стекол наи-
моднейшего парижского пенсне. Быть может, не было
dаже этого самого “пенсне — золотого с пружиной”. А
было только умное саркастическое лицо, показавшееся
мене в ту минуту ужасным, как лицо Петра Великого во
время Полтавской битвы. (38)

In the above instance one can notice an intentional discrepancy
between the two portraits drawn. The first-person narrator does not
refer to any authoritative source or opinion to prove the validity of
the event and character (in the case of the third-person narrator there
are many external means of confirmation — witnesses, memoirs,
pictures, photographs). The reader may wonder if the meeting be-
between the doctor and the little hero ever took place. The way in which the figure of Duboucher is described clearly suggests that this description is drawn exclusively from the position of the grown-up narrator. Frightened and full of pain, a child could not possibly notice so many details in the doctor's appearance, and it would be difficult to ascribe to a child such phrases as "modnyj zagranicnyj kostjum," "el' zasskie golubye glaza," "naimodneysee pariizskoe pensne" and so on. One should bear in mind as well the physical limitations of human memory, particularly in certain situations of emotional stress ("obraz Djubushe, soxranivshiya v moej pamjati, byl narisovan fantaziej perepugannogo nasmert' mal'chiki").

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

In the light of the above it may be said that even the first-person narrator's memory serves here only as a rhetorical device to give his retrospective knowledge a less rigid and definitive appearance and at the same time to link personal themes (even imaginary ones) with the Lenin motif. This also applies to the first-person nar-
ator's recollections of his journey with his father and brother to Capri in 1940 and his vivid description of the "miracle" of flight he witnessed near Odessa in the summer of 1911.

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

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

The figure of Lenin and the characters close to him are presented in a traditional way, typical for Kataev's prose of the "period of silence." It is evidently clear that the writer's intention was not to misrepresent Lenin's physical appearance, his character or actions, but rather to depict them faithfully, to show Lenin as a revolutionary, an intellectual, a politician. And that is why Kataev so frequently quotes others' remarks on Lenin – the words of the leader's contemporaries who knew him personally. In his article Mysli o tvorčestve, published in 1961, Kataev wrote:
Сейчас я ушел в другую работу, совсем не похожую на ту, что до сих пор делал. Я пытался написать о Ленине. Это не повест. Это воспоминания современников Ленина, рассуждения, домыслы и цитаты... У меня много воспоминаний о Ленине, в них масса интересных подробностей... Мне хотелось бы выбрать лучшее, прокомментировать и прокомментировать всё это своими рассуждениями. (41)

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

Чем глубже, писатель сумеет войти в жизнь своего героя, перевоплотиться в него, тем правдивей и жизненнее будет созданный им образ. Писатель на время должен как бы сделать героем своего произведения. Если же я просто умышленно представляю себе человека и заставляю его делать то, что я бы хотел, чтоб он делал, человек этот получится не объемной фигурой, а плоскостной. Я должен проникнуть в его психологию, как бы зажить его жизнь. Для этого мне нужно поверить в него, поверить в его необходимость, в необходими-
Kataev not only "becomes" his main hero in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene* and imaginatively participates in Lenin's everyday activities, but also (in the words of Nigerian critic P.O. Dada) takes "the reader with him in his 'rounds' of interviewing people and gathering information and opinion of people who either knew Lenin or heard about him...." Dada continues:

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

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

Consider, for example, how vividly the first-person narrator describes the spring on Capri, even though he never had an opportunity to see it with his own eyes. But the spring view on Capri appeared to be essential "to reveal Lenin's character multi-dimensionally, in his
relation to particular events and environments." The solution to the problem was found in Bunin's poem in which the author gives his poetic impression of this most romantic of the four seasons of the year. A fragment of the poem is quoted in *Malen'kaja železnaja dvarev stele*:

Вид на залив из садика таверны,
В простом вине, что вела я на обед,
Есть странный вкус — вкус синегренно-серый —
И розовый цвет.
Пью под дождем,— весна здесь приходит,
Миндаль цветет на Капри в холоде,—
И смути в синевой мгле залива
Далекие белок город со.

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

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

Again there follows the description of Gor’kij and Lenin from the point of view of the first-person narrator (imagination), the implied author (photograph), and the third-person narrator (eye-witness). These descriptions are not entirely new but are already anticipated in the narrative triangle device at the beginning of the chapter. In this way the reader is presented with a faithful image of the revolutionary leader and a clear picture of the Capri spring which the first-person narrator never saw in his life.
'Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene reflects the new tendencies of the later period of Kataev's writing and the author's engagement in a search for new forms and devices in order to keep pace with an ever-changing and increasingly complex world. It is evident that the inner structure of the book has undergone some major changes compared to Kataev's traditional socialist-realist prose. The traditional (third-person) form of the narrative and the traditional plot (factual accounts of Lenin's life in the West) are interwoven with fantasy, introspection, personal memories and thoughts.

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

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

Kataev's "lyrical diary" by no means should be interpreted as "a parody of Soviet Lenin hagiography" in which the writer "manages to contrive a dismal portrait of Lenin." There is no trace of "dismalness" in the portrait drawn by Kataev. On the contrary, Lenin is pictured as a gentle and understanding individual ("samýj čelovečnyj
человек" who has, as has every human being, his doubts and hesitations, who misses his homeland and tires of the hardships of exile.

Захотелось тишины, покоя, красоты природы, солнца.... Он не только устал от эмигрантской суеты, но также сильно столкнулся с Россией. В проливе между Корсикой и Сардинией вспомнил свою родную Волгу.

(51)

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

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

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

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


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

4Ibid.

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

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

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

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

9Vsevolod Sursanov, "Čerty sovremennoj literatury," Literaturyja Rossija, 2 (1965), p. 4. (My italics.)

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

12 Ibid., p. 7.

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


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

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

18 R. Russell's term, ibid.

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

20 Ibid., p. 15.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 101.

23 Ibid., p. 33.

24 Ibid., p. 34.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

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

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

29 Ibid.

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

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


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

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


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


45 Ibid.

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


48 Ibid., p. 111.


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

51 Ibid., p. 70.
CHAPTER II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In reading the "chronicle" an attentive reader will notice some inconsistency in the passage quoted in the "preface" to both diaries, supposedly written by one of the narrator's (i.e., Kataev's) aunts in 1911. Kataev quotes the "preface" twice (pp. 34, 148), so offering the opportunity to compare these two quotations from the same "source":
Воспоминания капитана Елисея Алексеевича Бачея
(1783–1848).

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

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

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

Воспоминания капитана Елисея Алексеевича Бачея
(1783–1848)

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

The underlined differences in the two passages quoted above—which, as Kataev wants his reader to believe, were taken from the same source—suggest rather that the so-called "preface" is only a literary device, the author's own creation, and further, that the
"diaries" of his ancestor's are the product of his imagination as well. It is possible to consider these "diaries" as the narrator's own "memoirs" about his previous life because of his strong feeling of the link between generations — in the book he even "becomes" his grandfather and great-grandfather. At one point the narrator clearly states:

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

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

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

...он мог быть мною, если бы я обладал силой воскресить себя того, давнего, молодого... Но так как у меня нет этой волшебной силы... я могу считать его лишь некоторым своим подобием, несовершенным воплощением моего теперешнего представления обо мне самом того времени.... (6)
But in *Svjatoj kolodec, Kubik, and Kladbišče v Skuljanar* this theoretical claim is put into practice, indeed it becomes the author's major concern and forms (as was noted before) part of his philosophy. This is only one of the features which unite these three works and make it possible to discuss them together in this chapter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Because of the presence of the implied reader to whom all such enunciations are addressed, Svjatoj kolodec, Kubik, and Kladbišče v Skuljanar can be regarded as a specific kind of uttered monologue — though having little or nothing in common with such literary techniques as the “stream of consciousness” or “interior mono-
logue" so widely used by Western writers like James Joyce, William Faulkner, or Marcel Proust. The latter was credited by some critics with having influenced Kataev's writing of the later period. Kataev, when asked "whether he is not merely imitating the techniques of Western writers," replied: "...these techniques began in Russian literature as far back as Gogol and Dostoevsky, long before they were tried out in the West." 

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

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

Kataev does not reconstruct his past, but, as was stressed at the beginning of the chapter, with the help of certain autobiographical fragments constructs a new model of the world enriched by the experience of the past and by his great creative imagination. And biographical elements do play a significant part in the process of constructing the literary world of Kataev's later prose. They constitute a continuous leitmotif, linking together all his works of this period
(Malen'kaja železnaja dver 'v stene, Svjatoj kolodec, Trava zabven'ja, Kubik, Razbitaja žizn', ili volšebnyj rog Oberona, kladbišče v Skuljanax, Almaznyj moj venec, and even to some extent the short story Fialka), and creating thereby an impression of artistic unity.

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

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

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

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

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

In *Svjatoj kolodec* the first-person narrator looks at that world (the United States) from outside as a casual observer, but he is nonetheless a perspicacious observer, trying to understand the very essence of that world and the laws that govern it. Very helpful in this
connection is the hero’s “magical ability” to turn for a moment into the object he is looking at:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Среди полей, лугов и лесов угадывались химические
заводы, космодромы и клетчатые рогатки высоковольт-
ных передач, шагающих во все стороны единственной в
мире, неповторимой, трижды благословенной страны
моей души, которая дала мне столько восторгов, столько
волнений, столько радости, высоких мыслей, великих и малых дел, любви
и ненависти, иногда отчаяния, необъяснимых, чужого
опьянения и божественно утонченных цветных снови-
The narrator's "projection" into things while travelling in America may also be viewed as the impossibility of his adjustment to the new world, were he to emigrate there in search of a personal independence and creative freedom. For the artist to be able to create, he needs more than freedom — he needs his roots, his "soul" ("triemy blagoslovennoj strany moej dušy"). The hero's decision to remain in the Soviet Union appears to be the right one, as is evident also from the narrator's meeting with an émigrée Russian lady whom he loved as a young boy. The narrator is quite struck by the old widow's admission that despite the fact that she can live here quite comfortably, she still feels lost and alone:

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

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

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

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

However, while turning into different characters, the primary narrator (the first-person narrator) nevertheless preserves his original personality, his original point of view. He continues to refer to himself in the first person but he acts as the third-person narrator while depicting his own consecutive impersonations (his other personae) and the events in which these personae take part. In this
way he becomes the central authoritative source of information about the characters and events. He sees the world from the point of view of an eye-witness who, rather than participating in the events, is content merely to describe and comment on them (a role similar to that played by the third-person narrator in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*).

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

Если не вполне, то, во всяком случае, отчасти. Не исключено, что это тот же милый моему сердцу Пчелин, только совсем маленький, лет восемн. (30)

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

The same process of change affects another character in *Kubik* - the girl San'ka who turns into Madame the Former Girl.
In the opening part of *Kubik* the girl San'ka dies of diphtheria, and the boy Pčelkin moves to his grandmother's in Ekaterinoslav. In their place another girl and another boy turn up; the latter boy soon drowns. And the chain of "replacements" continues:

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

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

During the narrator's journey to Roumania (he follows Monsieur the Former Boy and Madame the Former Girl wherever they go — again the technique used in *Malen'kaja železnaja dver' v stene*),
he suddenly discovers something that saves him from making the same mistake made by an old Russian widow in *Svjatoj kolodec* (and by Bunin in *Trava zabven'ja*, one may add). It is *love*—love for his country, his homeland.

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

...и так хотелось получить легкое, — о, совсем, совсем легкое! — ранение и получить Георгиевский крест и героем возвратиться домой — в страну ОВ, — в вновь город, где на бульваре вокруг черноголового Пушкина уже начали желеть клены и платаны, в цветниках горели винно-красные канды с чугунно-синими толстыми листьями, а на горизонте весь день сонно мачили серые паруса вахтилявших дубков с арбузами из Голой Пристани, и сердце мое — а может быть, это был уже не я, а ты — Мой Друг и Мой Двойник — но это не имеет значения, — и сердце Мое — или Твое — изнановало в ожидании вечера, предчувствуя свидание, которое на конец успокоит душу, забудораженнную жаждой любви, которая одна могла нас всех спастися от смерти, но так и не спасла; вернее сказать, спасла одного из нас.... (34)

The love to which the narrator is referring may be understood as the narrator's love for a woman who is awaiting his return from the war as a hero (such an interpretation is implied by the phrases — "в ожидании вечера," "предчувствуя свидание" — which follow the two capitalized personal pronouns "Мое" and "Твое"). But the personal
pronoun “nas” together with the definite pronoun “vsex,” both in the plural, contradict such an interpretation. It is not only “ja” and “ty” (“Moe,” “Tvoe”) but somebody else as well — it also implies “on,” “ona,” and even “oni.” Thus, the word “love” must be understood in its broader meaning and not just as love for a woman. In the context of the passage just quoted the narrator’s love is directed to his country (“vozvratit’sja domoj — v stranu OV”). But that is not all, as has been noted above: other recipients are also indicated and here one is reminded again of the lonely Russian widow (in Svjatoj kolodec), Bunin (in Trava zabven’ja), and many more35 who had the same dilemma to solve, to decide which path to choose shortly after the Revolution and during the turbulent years of the Civil War.

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

But who is the one who has been saved (“[ljubov’] spasla odnogo iz nas”)? Is it the narrating “I” or his other self — Monsieur the Former Boy? The answer to this question is to be found in the section of Kubik where the narrator turns into a poodle named Kubik (reminiscent of the “talking cat” in Svjatoj kolodec, whose master was Stalin). Kubik then assumes the role of the narrator and proceeds to give an account of future events from the first-person narrator’s point of view (“Pover’te mne. Ja sam odnaždy byl izbalovannoj sobakoj, pravda nedolgo”).36
Like the narrator, the dog Kubik sees the world from the outside, from a greater distance than his Master, Monsieur the Former Boy, who views the world from the inside — i.e. from a closer distance which considerably restricts his vision. It is a perspective of a man living in luxury, knowing and enjoying the power of money, preoccupied with himself and his own affairs, incapable of foreseeing imminent disaster — bankruptcy. In this way he fails to perceive what is perfectly obvious to the neutral observer (the primary narrator), or in this case to the narrator's impersonation — the dog Kubik:

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

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

It is significant that the reader learns about the Master's failure ("krax") from the dog Kubik and not from the primary narrator who, as is evident from the last part of the sentence quoted above, appears to be the author of the book as well ("moja duša snova vernulas' v telo avtora etix strok"). This identification of the narrator with both the dog Kubik and the concrete author may be viewed as Kataev's way of conveying to the reader some idea of the price he had to pay in the Stalin era for his decision to remain in Russia, for his loyalty to his country and his support of its political system.
This double identification also provides the answer to the question asked earlier — who is the one who has been saved by the power of love? It is the author (and narrator of *Kubik*), who, looking back and recalling past events, regrets the fact of becoming subservient to communist authority, but does not regret his decision to remain in Russia, the "country of his soul" (to use the expression from *Svjatoj kolodec*).

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

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

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

"...a я [пудель], к несчастью, как был, так и остался довольно глупым и дурно воспитанным пуделем, и мой ум постепенно померел, как испорченный телевизор, и уже не способен больше ни на какие обобщения и абстракции." (41)
Of quite a different type is the interrelationship between the primary narrator and his successive re-incarnations in *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*—who at the same time act as supplementary story-tellers (in relation to the primary narrator)—not only because the primary narrator uses their diaries written in the first person, but also because they appear as hero/story-tellers outside the diaries. The primary narrator and the secondary story-tellers (as I shall describe them hereafter) are not opposed to each other; on the contrary, they co-exist in mutually complementary roles. One could even say that they form a unique kind of symbiosis, as suggested by the passages quoted on page 61 above (note 4), including the pronouncement by the secondary narrator, the great-grandfather Elisej Bačej: "Ja prevratilja v nego, a on v menja, i oba myštali nekotorym edinym sučestvom."42

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

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

Иногда мне даже кажется, что в меня вошла душа моего прадеда и что все это происходило со мной... (43)

In view of this kind of spiritual link between the narrator and his forebears, it is not surprising to note (as I indicated at the beginning of this chapter) that the grandfather's and great-grandfather's diaries can be considered to be personal "reminiscences" of the primary narrator about his former life, or rather the life of the soul
which has implanted itself in him and his memory, accompanied by invading fragments of his former experience in the mortal, material body of his great-grandfather. This "memory of the soul" leaves its imprint on the way the narrator perceives the world around him. Unfamiliar places, people, or names, remind him of something very familiar and near to him, though long forgotten — as, for example, the name of the historical site "Skuljany."

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

All the places associated with his forebears (for example, Skuljany, where his great-grandfather and grandfather lived), all the historical events they witnessed and which were described in documents or literary works, seem to be perceived by the narrator from a double viewpoint — from the viewpoint of his present life and from that of his former life. These two diametrically opposite points of perception result from the distance in time between the observations of a given historical event. As an example, we might look at the historical fact of the battle at Skuljany between the Greek rebels and the Turks — an event Puškin describes in his story of the Bulgarian brigand Kirdzhalii. Note how this event (or rather Puškin's description of it) is perceived from the point of view of the grandson-narrator (the primary narrator) and the secondary story-teller, the great-grandfather Bašej.
Будучи правнуку своего прадеда, очевидца этих событий, я с особым удовольствием читал «Кирджали», беря на веру все, что написал Пушкин. (45)

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

Однако в качестве прадеда своего внука — то есть меня, что в сущности, по сравнению с вечностью одно и то же, — я не считал картину написанную Пушкиным, вполне достоверной. Вряд ли картина могла передать через очень широкую пойму Прута и вряд ли начинальных карантина мог слышать ее жужжание. Сомневался также, чтобы старичок, сорок лет служивший в армии, отроду не слышал свиста пуль, — даже если предположить, что они залетели на наш берег. Время было военное, Россия вела несколько войн; все ее офицеры были люди обстрелянные... В остальном Пушкин был верен истории. (46)

But the problem here goes beyond the discrepancies in the perception of a few details which are essentially insignificant in view of the fact that Puškin’s story is a literary masterpiece. Here, almost unnoticed by the reader, Kataev is touching on a much more substantive question, namely an author’s right to literary invention and fantasy — the right to portray a phenomenon or event from his individual point of view, to enrich it with his literary imagination and let it pass
through the prism of his personal feelings and experiences. Kataev considers imagination and reality to be inseparable "elements." In *Svjatoj Kolodec*, arguing with the French writer André Maurois, he writes:

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

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

The role of imagination is also emphasized in *Kladbišče v Skuljanar*. The grandson-narrator often begins his story with the words "voobražaju," "vižu," "predstavljuju sebe." This of course reminds us of the device already used by the author in *Malek kaja žeznaja dver' v stene*, only with the difference that in the latter work, after such an introduction, the narrative continues in the third person, from the point of view of a story-teller who does not take part in the events described, even though he remains inside the intimate circle of the book’s hero (Lenin). He is simply an objective reporter of all the events of the past world; the only commentaries are given from the point of view of the first-person narrator. In *Kladbišče v Skuljanar*, on the other hand, the form of the narrative does not change following the introductory words noted above. The subject continues narrating in the first person and simultaneously acts as both
a participant in and commentator on the events described. Here there is no separation of time between the narrator and the events he portrays, as there is in the case of the "lyrical diary" about Lenin. The very fact that in Lenin's "diary" all the verbs following the words "vižu," "voobražaju," "predstavljujaju," are in the past tense, indicates that the events themselves precede the story about them, whereas in the "family chronicle" of Skujany these words are followed by verbs in the present tense, thereby underscoring the simultaneity of the situation and the story. Here is an illustrative example from each of the books:

...Вижу, как Ленин нес туго затянутым ремням дорожный портфель с подушкой, который пытались выхватить из его короткой, крепкой руки местные фанаты - носильщики, а он не давал. (48)

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

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

In the latter example taken from Kladbišče v Skujanah, the story-teller (or primary narrator) is not talking so much about his grandfather, Ivan Bačej — the secondary narrator of this "family chronicle" — as he is about himself re-incarnated in his nine-year-old ancestor. This explains the present tense of the verbs, the lack of a temporal distance between the events and the narrator, and finally the continuation of the narrative in the first person.
And again, just as with his great-grandfather Elisej Bačej, so too with his grandfather Ivan, he perceives the world from two different positions, although in the latter case the difference in perception of the world around the main character is principally a factor of the age of the perceiving subject. The countryside along the frontier river Prut which seemed to the adult grandson-narrator "a boring flat plain" is seen through the eyes of the boy-grandfather as "a romantic locale, full of beauty and mystery." 50

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

"Увидев со спардека туристского теплохода забытый берег своей бывшей родины, очень взболтались, глава их наполнились слезами — может быть, впрочем, лишь потому, что в их воспоминаниях это море... и этот берег были совсем другими: неизмеримо более прекрасными, почти сказочными, полны прелестных подробностей и поразительно прозрачных, почти светящихся красок, на самом деле все оказалось гораздо беднее и некрасивее: кубано-рассийская степь, которую они видели в своих снах когда-то дорогимого, ametистового цвета, в лучах заходящего солнца, и редко очерченные высокие глиняные обрывы, сотни верст
In this example from Kubik, the discrepancy between the scene remembered from youth and the one seen through adult eyes is even more exaggerated by the longing of the emigrant heroes for their native land. Throughout the years of emigrant life the images of the sea, the seacoast, the cities where they had spent their childhood were preserved in the heroes' memory just as their child-eyes had seen them. In Kubik this concept of memory which is subject to neither time nor space is symbolized by the mysterious letters OV, which, as we have seen, are to lead the young heroes — the boy Pčelkin and the girl San'ka — to the treasures. Having discovered neither the treasure-trove nor the mystery of the letters they are transformed into wealthy French people.

As it turns out, however, memory is stronger than wealth. The mysterious letters OV, which simply stand for "Odesskij vodoprovod" (as Monsieur and Madame find out during their tourist trip to the land of their childhood), haunt the heroes throughout their wealthy emigrant life, "vremja ot vremeni vdrug voznikaja v voobraženii, inogda bez vsakoj priciny." Monsieur sees them in his "inner sight" as he ascends an old Paris staircase leading to the apartment of his "secret girlfriend" Nicole, as well as in the basement of his wealthy house,
reached by an "interminably long back staircase."53 behind the bottles of mineral water and fine red wine:

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

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

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

Я умер от холеры на берегу реки Прут, в Скулянах... Но так как смерть оказалась всего лишь одной из форм жизни, то мое существование продолжалось и дальше, только в другом виде... Время окончательно потеряло надо мной свою власть. Оно потекло в разные стороны,
иногда даже в противоположном направлении, в про-
шлом из будущего, откуда однажды появился родной
внук моего сына Вани, то есть мой собственный пра-
внук, гораздо более старший меня по летам. (56)

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

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

and he further continues:

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

В нем, в этом странном нечеловеческом сознании, за-
ключалось неисчислимое прошлое, настоящее и неисчис-
ляемое будущее. В этом мире я продолжал свое бы
чем не сравнимое, вечное существование.... (58)

The differences in the narrative situation that can be found in
the three works under discussion (one first-person narrator in }Svja-
toj kolodec, two first-person narrators in }Kubik — i.e., the primary
narrator and for a short time the dog Kubik —, four first-person narrators in }Kladbišče v Skuljanax) do not affect the way in which the
elements of the presented worlds in these books are depicted. In
}Svja
toj kolodec, however, description prevails over narrative, while
in }Kubik and }Kladbišče v Skuljanax the narrative is the dominant
form of presentation. This leads to the conclusion that in }Svja
toj
kolodec space constitutes the basic tool in creating the presented world, whereas in Kubik and Kladbišče v Skuljanar it is time. That, however, does not preclude the presence of both these categories at once in either of the works. All that is meant here is the fact of the predominance of one category over the other.

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

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

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

So it is the dream-state that forms the basic situation making up the presented world in the book where, in spite of the absence of a definite plot, it is possible to distinguish several spatio-temporal planes. The first plane is the one which provides the compositional framework for the book, that is, the narrator-hero’s stay in hospital—or the plane of objectively existing time and space. The second plane is represented by a vision of life beyond the grave, triggered off by
the narcotic ingredient in the drug (in *Svijatoj kolodec* Kataev still needed a kind of excuse for his "journey" into the subconscious, while in *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* he demonstrates absolute creative freedom). Here, time and space acquire some qualities that are peculiar to fantasy fiction or even to fairy tales. The next or third plane (the one most extensively developed) consists of memories from the past as re-lived in the dream-state. The fourth plane might be defined as a dreams-within-a-dream plane included in the third plane (for example: Osip Mandel'stam, the southern city covered in snow, the woodpecker-man, the talking cat).

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

By immersing the narrator in a dream-state, Kataev creates unlimited possibilities for taking full advantage of the categories of time and space. There is no need for the narrator to justify any of the changes of place or time in the narrative. (This also applies to *Kubik* and *Kladbišče v Skuljanax* where, as one remembers, the notion of the immortal human soul plays an important role in respect to both time and space.) These changes occur as a result of association — the
current mood of the narrator plunged deep in his dreams. Within the
dream-awareness, the two worlds of reality and dream interpenetrate each other to form (quite outside the dreamer's will) yet another,
third world, where the waking reality and the dream exist side by side and where things that had a real existence appear to him as
dreams, while the dream-stuff acquires a semblance of reality:

Собственно говоря, все это мне вовсе не сдалось, а было на самом деле, но так мучительно давно, что те-
перь предстало передо мной в виде давного, время от времени повторяющегося сновидения.... И то, что рань-
ше не было вполне сном, а скорее воспоминанием, те-
перь уже превратилось в подлинный сон, удивительный
ихим сходством с действительностью. (60).

In this way the reader receives pictures which are detached
from real space and time. Everything is reduced (as it was in Ma-
len'kaja železnaja dver' v stene) to the here and now of the
dreaming narrator-hero. Whereas space is presented according to
the plane in which the narrator happens to find himself, time, on the
other hand, loses its fundamental qualities and again, as in the "lyrical
diary" about Lenin, has no present, past, or future in the usual
sense of the words. There is only the "actual now"61 (to borrow a term
from the phenomenologist Kockelmans), irrespective of when the par-
ticular episodes happen to be taking place in objective reality. That
could equally well be the 1920s as the 1960s. The hero seems to be
present at different points simultaneously in the stream of time. That
accounts for the restricted role played by the category of time in
Svjatoj kolodéc. It is closely bound with the category of space,
without constituting an independent plane. The passage of time may
be observed only as it accompanies the hero’s passing from one space
to another, or when time itself becomes the focus of his attention:

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

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

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

The narrator-hero in Svjatoj kolodec is afraid of space that is
crammed, closed-in. Closed places are always associated with immi-
nent danger or trouble. For example, on the first, or real plane, the
narrator finds himself in an isolation ward, within the four walls of a
closed hospital room, waiting for an operation (life-threatening). This
association of closed space with the sense of imminent danger is
transferred from the real plane to other planes where it assumes
various forms.
Thus, on the plane of dreams within-a-dream, where most of the action takes place in a closed room (the drawing-room), the narrator is haunted by the nightmare of the woodpecker-man, who—in the hero’s own words—is but a prelude to the still more frightful dream of the talking cat. Similarly, a troubled feeling steals over him as he approaches the goal of his wanderings (the plane of dream memories), a vast but closed-in area with a maze of streets leading to a trap:

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

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

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

Возле дома, как и подобает в цветных сновидениях, росло также несколько кустов породистой сирени, цветущей поразительно щедро, крупно и красиво. Мы не уставая восхищались оттенками её кистей: густо-
-волнегами, почти синими, лилово-розовыми, воздушными и вместе с тем такими грубо материальными, осязаемыми, плотными, что их хотелось взять в руку и подержать, как проедь винограда или даже, может быть, как кусок какого-то удивительного строительного материала. (66)

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

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

Descriptions of this kind are imbued with the joy of life, reflecting the narrator-hero's own inner need of life full of peace and beauty
and free of the hardships typical of earthly life. Liberated from those passions the hero feels his long-lost days have now returned to him, letting him re-live the same moments once again – this time, however, more calmly, without the earthly rush:

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

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

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

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

Since time as the “strange substance” is not materialistic, palpable substance and hence not perceptible to man, it sends out warning signals from the future by means of road signs, i.e., spatial figures. To illustrate the phenomenon, here is a concrete example from the text:
The concept of time flowing backward is a characteristic feature of all of Kataev’s later prose. Perhaps it can be better comprehended from the following diagram:

![Diagram showing circular structure of time]

This circular structure of time clearly noticeable in Kataev’s works of the 1960s and 1970s (in this case, Svjatoj kolodec) once again shows that the category of time is reduced to the ever-present now, for time flowing in opposite directions (from past to future and from future to past) “collides” at the temporal point of the present which, in the case of Svjatoj kolodec, is a real situation in a hospital. But at this point the question arises: just what is “the present”? — is it a second, a minute, an hour, a day, or an unmeasured moment?
It is to the indivisible moment that Stanisław Poręba reducetzt the concept of time in *Svjatoj kolodec*. He bases his opinion on the fact that the story begins and ends with one particular scene at a little water-spring, where the story-teller first thought of the book and reminisced about his life. In my opinion the setting which frames the story is not the scene at the well, which relates only to the dream-world, but rather the real situation in the hospital. Thus time in the narrative is not a "moment;" it is equivalent to the objective time the hero spends under the influence of the narcotic.

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

In real earthly life, time, in its inexorable forward flight, constitutes a form of a threat to man, a threat to his existence. Here in the plane beyond the grave, on the other hand, it serves as a kind of protective shield, protecting him from impending surprises of a more or less unpleasant nature. What still remains inexorable, even in this
"paradise" beyond the grave, is human memory (one recalls the letters OV, symbol of memory, in Kublic, and the "memory of the soul" in Kladbišče v Skuljanar). Memories triggered off by the sight of his children (daughter Giena and son Šakal) and granddaughter translate the narrator into a different plane, that of dreams-within-a-dream, to the legendary city of carpets where the nice militiamen stand at the crossroads directing the disorderly fall of snowflakes resembling huge wads of cotton-wool — in other words, to a closed space wherein the narrator, deprived of the shield of protective signals from the future, is being pushed mercilessly forward by his importunate companion, the woodpecker-man:

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

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

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

Under the impact of the narrator's memories and dream hallucinations, the peaceful serenity of the world around him on the plane of eternity is lost. Everything has drastically changed. There is no more
fairy-tale garden with its “free” pine, lonely and beautiful in its independence, with its blossoming lilacs. There is only the dark garden, the broken fence beyond which "sprava nalevo tjanulsja kanal, po kotoromu bes'umno, na urovne ploskoy zemli, s pogashennymi signalami, kak by tekli nizkie motornye bar'zi, napolnennye ochen' va'znym i ochen' tja'zelym gruzom;" there is also a square which is engulfed "moroznym tumanom, tak chto nel'zja bylo ponjat' – chto eto za ploshad".

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

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

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

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

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

...Я увидел двух молчаливых пассажиров в противоположных концах пустого салона первого класса. Один был черный, другой белый.... Эти два гражданина Соединенных Штатов, столь чуждые друг другу по всему...
своему человеческому облику и вместе с тем скован- 
ные между собой нерасторжимыми узами древнего пре-
ступления, в котором ни один из них не был повинен, 
были соединены всей мощью американской государ-
ственности еще более прочно, чем дни земных суток, 
когда на нашей планете одновременно существуют, 
преследуя друг друга по пятам, белый день и черная 
ночь со всеми ее безумными сновидениями и подавлен-
ными желаниями. (83)

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

The same may be said about all Kataev’s works under discus-
sion in this study. While they indeed seem to be pessimistic about the 
world of adults, they are saturated with the younger generation’s 
optimism for the world of tomorrow. The passages dedicated to chil-
dren and young people are the brightest spots not only in Kataev’s 
later prose but in his writings of the previous decades as well. Three 
of his later works in particular — Travá zabven’ja; Razbitaja 
žizn’, ili volšebnyj rog Oberona; and Almaznyj moj venec — 
deal mainly with the world of the young, and these will be discussed 
in the following chapter.
NOTES

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

2 Ibid., p. 34.

3 Ibid., p. 148.

4 Ibid., p. 33.


6 Trava zabven'ja, p. 341.

7 Svjatoj kolodec, p. 163.

8 Ibid., p. 212.

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

10 Ibid., p. 454.

11 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 60.

12 Ibid., p. 41.


Ibid.

*Kubik*, p. 469.

*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 218.

Ibid., pp. 219, 220.

Ibid., p. 227.


*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 201.

Ibid., p. 235.

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

*Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 241.
27 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 170.

28 Kubik, p. 449.


30 Ibid.

31 Trava zabvenja, p. 344.

32 Kubik, pp. 468, 469.

33 Ibid., p. 484.

34 Ibid.

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

36 Kubik, p. 506.

37 Ibid., p. 507.

38 Ibid.


40 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 91.

41 Kubik, pp. 507-508.

42 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 33.

43 Ibid., p. 157.
44 Ibid., p. 36.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. 37.

47 Svjatoj kolodec, p. 204.


49 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 43.

50 Ibid.

51 Kubik, p. 469.

52 Ibid., p. 473.

53 Ibid., p. 535.

54 Ibid.


56 Kladbišče v Skuljanax, pp. 30, 32–33.

57 Ibid., p. 139.

58 Ibid.

59 Svjatoj kolodec, p. 145.

60 Ibid., p. 161.

62 Svjatoj kolodec, p. 179.

63 Ibid., p. 181.

64 Ibid., p. 180.

65 Ibid., p. 184.

66 Ibid., p. 148.

67 Ibid., p. 150.

68 Ibid., p. 147.

69 Ibid., p. 150.

70 Ibid., pp. 149, 150.


72 Svjatoj kolodec, p. 169.

73 Ibid., p. 162.

74 Ibid., p. 169.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., p. 175.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., p. 232.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

82 Ibid., p. 240.

83 Ibid., p. 198.
CHAPTER III

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

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

While many events, facts, and details of Kataev’s own biography co-incide with those described in his novels (especially in Malen’ka- ja železnaja dver’ v stene, Svjatoj kolodec, Kubík, and Kladbišče v Skuljanar), the three works now under consideration are far less biographical than they may seem at first glance. It may seem that the writer is creating “novels” from his own life and putting himself in the place of his lyric heroes, but it is not the writer himself (even though in each of his lyric heroes there is a “part of the author’s
heart and soul.\textsuperscript{2}} And this is much more significant than the co-
-incidence of the novels' events, facts and biographical details with
those of the concrete author's own-life. While the lyric heroes who
simultaneously act as narrators in \textit{Trava zabven'ja, Razbitaja
žizn'}, and \textit{Almaznyj moj venec}, appear under the name of Va-
lenin Kataev, the "biographical" aspect of these books is more artistic
and literary than it is factual. In \textit{Almaznyj moj venec} Kataev
writes:

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

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

Kataev writes down his reminiscences, following Lev. Tolstoj,
"bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja"\textsuperscript{4} ("with no [particular] order, but as
they come [to mind]") disregarding not only chronology, but even
physical time. Kataev had already noted in *Kubik* that chronology "only harms true art," and that time is "the artist's chief enemy." In *Razbitaja Žizn* the writer once again points to this characteristic quality of his later works:

Попробую заняться воспоминаниями именно так, как советует Толстой: без порядка, а как придется, как вспомнится, не забывая при этом, что искусство не терпит сообразительности.
Пускай мною руководит отныне воображение и чувство. (6)

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

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

Note that it is not a "novel," but "something like a novel." Such a rough description of the genre of *Razbitaja Žizn* is not surprising if
one takes into account the writer's later remark on this point in *Al-
maznyj moj venec*, where he notes, among other things, his refusal
to recognize the "division of prose into genres." In the same book
the author offers a simple acknowledgement that *Almaznyj moj
venec* is

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

This acknowledgement in *Almaznyj moj venec* reminds one
of a similar passage in *Trava zahvenja*:

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

By not lending themselves to classification by genre, Kataev's
books demonstrate that artistic freedom of the writer he was striving
for in his articles of the 1950s (see Introduction) — the freedom char-
acterizing the genre of "lyric prose" to which Kataev's later works may
be said to belong. This genre has its own kind of life. Not only does it
reflect surrounding reality, but one of the objects it directly portrays
is the inner, spiritual world of the narrator himself, his consciousness.
The artistic interpretation of this world requires a different structural
pattern, in which plot, chronology, and objective causal relationships
become an obstacle for the creative freedom of the artist. Here the
foreground is taken over by association, mood, feelings, lack of contin-
uity in the development of thought, fantasy, and imagination.
The above-mentioned characteristics (as we already know from the two preceding chapters) also belong to Kataev's new style of writing, which the writer himself called "mauvism" (movizm) — from the French word mauvais (bad) — in order to distinguish it from his "good" prose of socialist realism. I will not dwell at length on this problem for two reasons: first, I do not believe this term is worth treating seriously (as some critics have done in discussing Kataev's "new" prose), and second, the characteristics of this new "literary school" which the writer "invented" become self-explanatory as one analyses Kataev's works of the 1960s and 1970s.

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

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

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

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

The focal point of the story — a story rather disorganized, and written “bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja” — is none other than the reader-listener, the direct addressee of the narrator’s story. As indicated, in Razbitaja žizn’ the narrator shares his reminiscences with his granddaughter:

Итак, дорогая внучка, хочешь, я расскажу тебе без порядка, а как придется про одного маленького мальчика с круглым простодушным лицом, узкими глазками, одетого, как девочка, в платьице с широко налага-женными плоенными складками...
Самое удивительное, что этот мальчик был не кто иной, как я сам, твой старый-престарый дедушка с су-хими руками, покрытыми коричневыми пятнами, так называемой гречкой... (14)

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

Сейчас я вам, синьоры, расскажу, каким образом по-явился на свет этот роман. (15)

In England:

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

In France:

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

The presence of listeners in the writer's "novels," especially active listeners like those in Almaznyj moj venec who ask questions
and demand clarifications from the narrator, or supplementary information, or simply a continuation of the topic, help pave the way for a freer structure of these works, a freer transition from one topic to another, and even for frequent repetitions of the same topic or successive descriptions of the same character from different angles, in different lights.

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

A good example of these constant returnings for such a purpose is his story *Zolotoe pero* (The Gold Nib) written in 1920, in which Kataev draws a satiric portrait of the academician Ševel'ev — a character representing Bunin. Bunin is seen altogether differently by the lyrical hero of *Trava zabven'ja*, a book written some fifty years later. A similar example may be found in the character of Pčelkin, the implied author's hero-protagonist who appears in *Kubik, Trava za-
bven'ja, and in the 1980s work *junošeski roman*. Examples are endless.

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

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

The world portrayed in *Trava zabven'ja, Razbitaja žizn'* and *Almaznyj moj venec* is a world re-constructed in the memory of the implied author. This re-construction of events of the past as well as of the participants in these events is brought about largely
through the device of retrospection. A particular period in the narrator's life is illuminated twice, as it were — both at the moment the event actually occurs and from the perspective of years gone by. Writing from the point of view of the "present," the narrator reflects on his experience of the past and gazes intently into the future. It is as if he is subjecting himself to a peculiar kind of "split personality:" on the pages of these three books (as earlier in *Maleńkaja železnaja dver' v stene*) he appears as both hero and an ordinary character as well as in the role of implied author.

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

The most vivid example of this dichotomy is the title of one of the three books under consideration (or rather the first part of its title), namely *Razbitaja žiz' ili volšebnyj rog Oberona.* And not only the title. In two of the stories which make up this rather unique "novel in stories" the implied author returns to this problem in his lyrical digressions, emphasizing the interrelatedness of man, time, and their role in artistic creation:
Comparing his life with a Byzantine mozaic, which he describes as a "collection of skilfully laid out fragments of smalt" (nabog iskusno vyložennyx kubikov, nakolotyx iz smalt'yu), he notes:

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

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

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

As was already mentioned above, the fragmentation or mosaic-like quality of the described world is also characteristic of the other two books of the "trilogy" — Trava zabven'ja and Almaznyj moj
venec. These books present a unique kind of challenge to the reader:
the challenge to re-construct the narrator's "shattered life" (razbitaya žizn'),
to gather it together into a unified whole — like the multi-
coloured mosaic, in which the individual "fragments" (oskolkı) may
be laid out in various combinations without detriment to the final
over-all picture. This is what permits the multiplicity of pictures,
whose final effect will depend on the particular approach of individual
readers, on their power of imagination and their skill in using that
imagination — an imagination which (as is shown by the works under
consideration) can replace the magic power of Oberon's horn. 26

In talking about the fragmentation of the narrator's life, how-
ever, we must consider not only the physical and spatial dimension
but also the temporal. Each individual "fragment" (oskolok) of this
life has a different position in the flow of time. Like the whole de-
scribed world in these three books, time is obedient to memory, to the
imagination of the narrator. It does not flow by hours and days; ra-
ther it is an interlacing of various points of time brought together by
the personality of the narrator, telling his story from the point of view
of the present. Points of time in the past and future are all joined to
and interwoven with the present. What is important to the narrator
of these books is the "moment at hand" (dannyj mig) — the moment
at which he finds himself and from which he directs his story to his
readers and listeners. Note the narrator's own words in the form of a
lyrical digression following his presentation in front of the English
students' class in Almaznyj moj venec:
Я говорю довольно свободно, повторяя уже много раз говоренное, а в это же самое время, как бы пересекая друг друга по разным направлениям и в разных плоскостях, передо мной появляются цветные изображения, таинственным образом военикающие из прошлого, из настоящего, даже из будущего, — порождение еще не разгаданный работы множества механизмов моего сознания...

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

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

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

The centre of this "galaxy" in the works under consideration is none other than the narrator himself, situated in the fixed present, around which revolve the novels' other heroes — father, mother, brother Ženja in Razbitaja Eizn'; Bunin and Majakovskij in Trava za-
bven'ja, and a whole gallery of characters in Almaznyj moj venec — characters who appear not under their own names but rather nick-
names: ključik (Oleša), konarmer (Babel'), pticelov (Bagrickij), Komandor (Majakovskij — note the capitalization of the nickname), ščelkunčik (Mandelštam), soratnik (Aseev), korolevič (Esenin), mulat (Pasternak), kolčenogij (Narbut), sineglazyj (Bulgakov),
drug (II'f), brat (Petrov), budetlijanin (Xlebnikov), arlekin (Gumilev), štabs-kapitan (Zoščenko).

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

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

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

An example of this kind of superimposition or interweaving of different temporal planes may be observed right in the first story of Razbitaja žizn', entitled Skvoz' son. Reminiscences from little
three- or four-year-old Valjuša’s trip to Ekaterinoslav are interwoven with the implied author’s commentary. What was not understood by the child becomes clear for the adult: “Togda ja ne ponimal, čto èto takoe, a teper’ ponimaju.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

It may be seen that everything is permeated with a subjectivity of time-perception. To the hero's sense time is either drawn out, slowing down, or rushing along. It manifests itself at different paces.
depending on the child's psychological state. A sleepy, static state makes time slow down, while action (dynamism), on the other hand, speeds it up. This latter phenomenon is indicated by such words and expressions as "тут же," "сразу," "не теряй вре‌меня," "тут-то." The objective time of the adult narrator, situated in the fixed present, is interwoven with the subjective time of the child. The adult feels the need of explaining to the reader (or, in this case, to his granddaughter-listener) whatever might be, in his opinion, difficult to understand. Thus, before the departure from Ekaterinoslav to Odessa, the toy-horse present must be sewn into the hopsack. But in the child's understanding the horse had to be fed and watered along the way:

— Мамочка! Бабушка! Как же я его буду по дороге кормить овсом и сеном и попт-ключевою водою? Не зашивайте его всего. Пусть хоть морда черчит! (35)

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

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

It is interesting to note that while the present remains fixed, the past is movable. It can move forward and backward, all the time however obeying the narrator's memory, who recalls everything "bez porjadka, a kak pridetsja." The flexibility of the point of time labelled
*Togda* (the past) is occasioned by the memory of the narrator, situated at the point in time of *teper* (the present). *Togda* may move backwards as far as the narrator's memory will allow; the story begins when he is three or four years old. His memory, apparently, is not capable of grasping events earlier than this. The movement of *togda* forward is not limited, except by the point of contact with the present *teper*. This peculiar quality of *togda* permits the narrator to combine and intersperse references to the distant past — times of childhood or youth — with the present experience of the adult.

A movable third point which may be distinguished in *Razbita-\*\*ja žizn* as lying somewhere between the past and present is designated *potom* ("then"), which is aimed in only one direction, toward the present. This means that a movement from *togda* into *teper* forms the point *potom*, but not in the other direction. A movement from *teper* into the past forms only *togda* points. The following graphic illustration may give us a better understanding:
In this example we see a combination of the three points of time indicated above. The expression "I don't know" (не знаю) suggests that the narrator, from his position in the present, is incapable of determining the precise time of the events arising in his memory, and thus uses more general terms such as тóгда, потоm, which obviate this necessity.

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

Time is structured along similar lines in the other two books of the trilogy — Trava zabven'ja and Almaznyj moj venec, only with the difference that here the points of time тóгда and потоm are located in a more specifically defined past — a past we can call, following Grinberg (see page 106 above), at least partly historical. While Grinberg writes only about Trava zabven'ja, his remarks can also apply to Almaznyj moj venec. In both these works the "past" is subjected to a kind of selection process. That not all the possible facts and events are broken down through the prism of the narrator's subjectivity is indicated by the narrator's remark in Trava zabven'ja: "Ne sleduet zabyvat', što ja zapisyvaju zdes' liš to, što soxranila mne pamjat'..."38 — as well as by the admission in Almaznyj moj venec: "Verojatno, očen' mnogo vypalo iz moej pamjati."39
In other words, not all the points of time in the past (тогда and, потом) can be illuminated from the point of view of the present, but this is of little concern to the narrator, for whom the past and present merge into a single teper'. Turning to the reader as if in expectation of a confirming response, he asks:

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

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

— Ну так что я, е. с. сказал теперь Маяковский, усаживаясь на диван. — Вы хозяин. Я гость. Занимайте (41)

In each of the sections mentioned events are structured (as in all of Kataev's "new" prose) not along lines of cause-and-effect but rather according to the principle of association. All of these sections are unified not just by the narrator's personality but also by historical time specifically mentioned. In the view of the Polish critic Poręba, recollections of Bunin are placed within the time-frame of 1914–1918:
the action of the Pělkin story takes place in 1922, the Majakovskij section in 1922–1930.\footnote{42}

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

Раз уже я заговорила о птице, то не могу не вспомнить тот день, когда я познакомила его с королевичем.
Москва. Двадцатые годы. Тверская. (43)

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

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

or:

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

The fragmentary nature of the later works of Kataev, the associative quality of the narration, the significant intervals in time (sometimes quite objective, as is evident from the dialogue quoted above
between the narrator-hero of *Trava zabven'ja* and Bunin), their premeditated subjectivity — all of these exerted a significant influence on his techniques of portraying the world around him, both nature and people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The charm of this description among other things lies in the magical power of the writer to create the entire scene in just a stroke or two of his pen. The ermine-like decoration of the city, the comparison of the trees with "artifacts of Russian lace" or "fragile clumps of lime corals"—these are sources of exceptional aesthetic effect. There
must be a certain magical feeling in this description to hold the reader's attention so forcefully. It is not simply an objective description of what is there to be seen, or, for that matter, an "imagined" landscape (to use the hero's own word), but a poetic description, filtered through the prism of his own personal feelings and experiences. In descriptions like these which may be encountered throughout all of Kataev's "new" prose, there is evident, according to Vladimir Gusev, "živopisnaja sila, smak i vkus k žiznennym sokam, k:askam," as well as "nравственность" xudožnika, nesmotrja ni na čto proslavljajuščego žizn'."\textsuperscript{50}

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

У них у обоих учился я видеть мир — у Бунина у Маяковского... Но мир-то был разный. (51)

On the pages of Trava zabven'ja the names of the hero's literary mentors constantly meet, collide, and criss-cross each other. They are like two poles, two extremes of a single historical period. Two different artists so unlike each other in their lives, their careers, their destinies. But while Bunin and Majakovskij perceived and described two different worlds (each of them had his own distinctly
expressed artistic and political individuality), they both helped Kata-
ev's hero formulate his own unique pattern of thinking.

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

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

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

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

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

It was Majakovskij that suggested to the hero the topic and title of the latter's forthcoming book Vrem'ja, vpered! - a book about industrial construction in Magnitogorsk:
Bunin in turn taught the young poet-hero (Valentin Kataev) to describe the material world around him, to notice its minutest details and to define them with a single stroke:

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

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

Just as with his descriptions of nature, Kataev fleshes out his human portraits with neat and precise details. Again he presents a subjective evaluation, a subjective attitude to the characters he de-
scribes. Benedikt Sarnov, writing about *Svjatoj kolodec* and *Trava zabvenja*, offers the following comment:

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

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

This kind of subjectivity is apparent not only in the portrayal of the characters of these books (see list on pp. 118–119 above) but also in the description of the narrator himself. This is especially evident in *Trava zabvenja*, where – as was already noted in Chapter II in connection with the various transformations of the narrator in *Svjatoj kolodec*, *Kubik*, and *Kladibišče v Skuljanax* (see page 71 above) – the hero/story-teller is re-incarnated in the character of Rjurik Pčelkin and tells about him in the third person. Even though the form of narration changes from the first to the third person, Pčelkin is still identical with the narrator, the narrator's lyrical self. Pčelkin is an Odessa high-school student, a poet young and industrious (as is suggested by his last name), who travels for days on end through
the remote corners of the Odessa district recruiting rural correspondents for the revolutionary committee; not only does he lose track of time, but also finds himself changed by time. His life is not a simple one. Nor is his world view a simple or unambiguous construction, formulated as it is under the influence of two such mutually exclusive poets as Bunin and Majakovskij.

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

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

Only Majakovskij remains on equal footing in both books. In Trava zabven'ja Majakovskij is portrayed on the eve of the poet's suicide (14 April 1930). In Almaznyj moj venec new details be-
come apparent — or, as N. Krymova notes, "dobyvoe akcenty" from an earlier period of Majakovskij’s acquaintanceship with the story’s hero. But these “additional accents” (I again wish to emphasize) pertain not so much to Majakovskij himself as to the relationship of the hero to Majakovskij-Komandor. And nowhere could this relationship be more strikingly expressed (even with the most vivid verbal portrait) than by the simple spelling of the poet’s alias with a capital letter:

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

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

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

На Маяковском было темное-серое, зимнее, короткое, до колен, полупальто с черным карандашным воротником и такая же черная — но не шапка, а скорее
This is one of the fragments in Kataev’s work which bears re-reading a number of times — which can be looked at like one of Serov’s portraits. Here Kataev, like Serov, shuns bright colours — his colour is restrained, composed of combinations of black and grey — but the conciseness and precision of the description gives the picture fulness and vitality.

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

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

Kataev’s extraordinary capacity for detail in human portraiture is very evident in this description: The reader is immediately reminded of Majakovskij’s eyes — “po-ukrainski temno-karie... ženskie,” his “energetic lips” and “strong boxer’s chin.” But all of these are merely the poet’s outward features, without any reference to his inner world. Kataev himself asks the question: what is the essence of Majakovskij? His response:
This whole "complex and contradictory" character is revealed in Majakovskij’s works (since "stixi poeta est’ nekotoroe podobie ego duši"), as quoted in the pages of *Trava zabven'ja*:

«Вот иду я, заморский страус... Я не твой, снежная уродина. Глубже в перья, душа, уложилась! И иная окажется родина, вижу — выжжена юная жизнь. Остров зной. В пальмы овасился... Ржут этажия. Улицы пляются. Обдают водой холода. Весь истыканный в дымы и в пальцы, переваливаю года» (68)

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


5. Kubik, p. 481.


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

*Almaznyj moj venec*, p. 158.

A page earlier Kataev explains his use of the word “gamil’tóny” instead of “džentl’meny” (*ibid.*, p. 164):

— Леди и гамильтоны, — торжественно сказала я словами известного нашего вратаря, который будучи на приеме в Англии, обратился к собравшимся со спичем и вместо традиционного “Леди и джентльмены” начал его восклицанием “Леди и гамильтоны”, будучи введен в заблуждение нашумевшей картиной “Леди Гамильтон”...

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


*Razbitaja žizn'; ili volšebnyj rog Oberona*, p. 295.
23 Ibid., p. 296.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 477

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

27 Almaznyj moj venec, p. 152.

28 Ibid., p. 159.

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

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p. 7.

33 Ibid., p. 8.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 9.

38 Trava zabven'ja, p. 313.

39 Almaznyj moj venec, p. 42.

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

41 Ibid. "Teper" in italics.

43 *Almaznyj moj venec*, pp. 28–29.

44 *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 273.


51 *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 433.


55 *Trava zabven'ja*, p. 412.


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

*Almaznyj moj venc*, p. 18.

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

*Trava zabvenja*, p. 401.


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


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

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

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

It appears as though Kataev deliberately avoided contemporary Soviet themes and problems connected with modern Soviet life. For him the modern world was, as it were, simply a reflection in the mirror of the past and was the direct result of past experience. Without a deep historical and personal knowledge of the past, the writer seems to be saying, man cannot truly evaluate the present, let alone avoid mistakes in the future. It is only in a roundabout way that he speaks about contemporary reality, the world around him.
A good example of this is Kladbišče v Skuljanar, a book which basically talks about the past but at the same time contains many hints of the contemporary world and the analogical character of situations and destinies.

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

ПОДЛИННАЯ УЖАСНАЯ ВОЙНА, ГРАБИТЕЛЬСКАЯ, КОЛОНИ-ALьНАЯ ВОЙНА. УДИВИТЕЛЬНО, КАК ХЛАДНОКРОВНО ПИШЕТ ОБ ЭТОМ ДЕДУШКА....
УЖАСНО, УЖАСНО! (3)

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

НО КТО ЗНАЕТ, КАКОВА БЫЛА БЫ СУДЬБА РОССИИ, КАКОВЫ БЫЛИ БЫ ГРАНИЦЫ СОВЕТСКОГО СОЮЗа, ЕСЛИ БЫ ТОГДАШНИЯ РОССИЯ НЕ ПОБЕДИЛА В ЭТОЙ ВОЙНЕ С ВОССТАВШИМИ ПЛЕМЕ-НАМИ, РУКОВОДИМЫМИ ЗНАМЕНИТЫМ ШАМИЛЕМ. (4)

The reference to the present-day borders of the Soviet Union here cannot by any means be considered accidental, especially in view of the epithets "predatory" and "colonial" introduced just a few lines earlier to describe the war in the Caucasus. This is a clear hint at the contemporary policy of the Soviet Union. Equally deliberate was the reference in Kladbišče v Skuljanar to the 1863 Polish uprising, particularly as the narrator himself relates it to the revolt of the Caucasian mountain-dwellers:
In speaking about both the "colonial" war in the Caucasus and the cruel oppression of the Polish insurrectionists (which naturally served "colonial" purposes), Kataev was likely thinking of the present day, in which "colonialism" had given way to "neo-colonialism." This latter word was not entirely new in Kataev's prose of the 1960s and 1970s. In *Svjatoj kolodéc* it causes the death of the talking cat, which could say the word "mama" in perfect Russian as well as "maman" in perfect French, but was unable to pronounce the word "neo-colonialism."6

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

This deliberate subjectivity, this probing into the depths of the
human soul, disappears in the story entitled *Fialka*, in which Kataev unexpectedly returns to a more traditional writing style, as well as to an objective description of reality—a reality perceptible to the human eye as well as the ear without resorting to the “little sound-sensors” ("mаленькие звукоуловители") or transformations so indispensable in his subjective prose.

*Fialka* is characterized not only by a traditional style but also by a traditional plot and positive hero (Ekaterina Gerasimovna Novoselova), as well as an opposing “negative” (“black”) counter-hero (Ivan Nikolaevich Novoselov, her husband). The history of marital love, disaffection and hatred is told by a third-person narrator whose identity remains a secret throughout the story. He not only narrates, but offers evaluation and judgement. In Kardin’s words, “*здесь соблудена традиция, предписываемая неизбежным карат’ зло и возвеличивать добродетель*.” Such a quality is completely lacking in Kataev's works described in the preceding three chapters. In *Trava zabven’ja*, for example, the narrating "I" utters the following words about Bunin, who had refused to recognize the Revolution and had emigrated to France:

Я понял: Вунин променял две самые дорогоценные вещи — Родину и Революцию — на нечестивую похлебку так называемой свободы и так называемой независимости, которых он всю жизнь добивался, в чем я убедился, получив от него уже после войны, в 1946 году, одну из лучших его книг — “Аню”, где прочел следующие, глубоко меня потрясшие места: (11)

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

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

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

By the "chronology of events" I mean the events occurring from the moment Novoselov arrives at the retirement home to ask his wife's forgiveness before his death up to the day of his funeral, which
his insulted and betrayed wife refuses to attend. Interspersed with these events (described by the narrator in the third person) are the heroes' (Novoselov's and his wife's) reminiscences about their past which help the reader understand the reasons for the disaffection between them. It is in these reminiscences interwoven with the main plot that we perceive the interdependence of the past and present which we have already noted as a characteristic feature of Kataev's subjective prose.

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

This is particularly true of Novoselov, whose conduct and attitude to his environment keeps shifting in accord with his changing position in society. The character of his wife Ekaterina, by contrast, remains constant throughout the story: she is steadfast and proud, passionate and strong — embodying, in a word, all the qualities of the
positive hero so typical of the prose of socialist realism. She sees only the positive side of people, and upon discovering something out of line with her ideas and her view of the world, she declines to condemn, attributing the anomaly instead to “the inheritance of the cursed past.”

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

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

Ekaterina Novoselova’s dramatic interest lies in her initial failure to discern her husband’s true nature: he uses her position in the party, her naivete and trust in him, to move quickly and resolutely up the party hierarchy step by step and gain a position which does not rightfully belong to him. Not right at the top of the party ladder, perhaps, but fairly high up, he looks only to his own benefit and not to that of society at large, thus severely damaging the cause for which Ekaterina has struggled all her life. Finally she sees her mistake and
realizes that she herself was a party to the rise of this "country lad," that she was the one who helped him reach his lofty position and satisfy his lower impulses. Ekaterina Gerasimovna is now forced to pay for her past mistakes, her temporary character weakness. Even after the break with her husband she is unable to release herself from the thought of her own role in promoting the career of the man who deceived her, slandered her, and betrayed their marriage:

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

Klavdija puts her service to society's cause ahead of her personal happiness: she is an active and conscious party to the arrest and
execution of her lover, Petja Solov'ev, by the Čeka as a White Guard and counter-revolutionary. In this case her personal feelings give way to her duty to her country. Her inner torments notwithstanding, her conscience remains clean before the Revolution and before herself— as she acknowledges in a letter she writes to the narrator hero of *Trava zabven'ja*:

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

In Ekaterina’s case, on the other hand, it is her personal feelings that win out. The social cause — the Revolution — virtually fades into a shadow. She consciously aids a man who in the final analysis turns out to be just another opportunist and to whom concepts such as revolution, the common good, and the sacred cause, are not only foreign but utterly incomprehensible. And how could he understand, when Ekaterina’s own theoretical doctrines of her study sessions were at such variance with their practical realization? Not only did he need her help to graduate from the institute, but even the speeches he made were written by her. He only had to hold out his hand and take everything that was handed to him in order to benefit from all the opportunities that government service brought his way. And, clever administrator that he was, he knew how to use these opportunities for his personal ends. Not satisfied with the directorship of the institute,
he knew how to "pridat' sebe takžê nekotoryj čisto akademicheskij blesk."21 even without the necessary qualifications:

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

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

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

From this quotation it seems as if the cause of the disaffection and hatred — indeed, enmity — between the husband and wife is ideological disagreement. Such an interpretation, however, would contradict everything said earlier; indeed, it is not supported by a reading of the earlier part of the text, which suggests rather that the direct cause of Ekaterina's disaffection is her husband's marital betrayal and not the
ideological argument, the damage he does to the "sacred cause." The
damage is done by the heroine herself — she is the one personally res-
ponsible for her husband's "successes." Her eyes are opened only
when she recognizes that another woman, much younger and prettier
than she, has stepped into her husband's life. When she decided to
break with her husband, she knew nothing of his false report on her:

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

And here the reader is confronted by a "psychological para-
dox" in that Ekaterina accuses her husband of the very thing she
herself is a party to, but the accusations come only after she is beset
by a personal misfortune (her husband's betrayal). Up to this point
she either did not notice or quietly tolerated all her husband's short-
comings. Furthermore, it is difficult to find any consistency in Ekate-
rina's reasonings about her marital life. On the one hand she sees (as
she saw earlier) how Novoselov behaved himself, the means he used
to achieve his ends, how he treated both his subordinates and the au-
thorities. In a word she sees, as Kardin writes in his article; "назойливо
бившие в глаза симптомы хамства, грубого подхалима, кар'еризма." On the other hand, as if to justify herself before herself, she says:

Он был хитер. Рассказать его было не так-то легко.
Но ведь Ленин еще в самом начале революции неодно-
kратно предупреждал, что партии, ставшей у власти,
партies государственной, нужно всячески опасаться
примывавшихся. (27)
This sort of justification or explanation does not convince the reader. On the contrary, it simply casts doubt on Ekaterina Gerasimova's sincerity. Why call Novoselov a “hanger-on” (“primazavišija”) if he is simply the result of her own creation? It was she who created out of this “country lad” (“derevenskij paren” — in other words, out of one of the people in whose name the revolution was staged) a “monster of the latest style” (“monstr novejšej formacii”), to use Violetta Iverni’s term.28

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

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

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

The past is associated to a significant extent with the person of Ivan Novoselov. One can even say that he is a symbol of the negative aspects of the past. The present, associated with Ekaterina Gerasimovna Novoselova, is characterized by the interweaving of both positive and negative traits (which may help explain the narrator's ambiguous and confused attitude toward her), but with a distinct emphasis on the positive. Hence one may draw the simple conclusion: the personality cult, a phenomenon of the past, is seen by the narrator as a nightmare, a disease or tumour which must be eradicated (the unsuccessful operation performed on Ivan Novoselov may even be considered an attempt to restore the laws of the Stalin period), while the present in turn is portrayed as a dynamic, changing, and developing world.
And this changing world is seen through the eyes of Ekaterina Gerasimovna, who unites, as it were, two different worlds in Fialka—the old and the new—but greets the new life unfolding around her with ecstasy and does not regret the passing of the old. Her walk about the grounds of the retirement home on the day of her former husband’s funeral is significant in this regard. On her walk she notices nature springing into new life after the long winter; she sees new apartment blocks apparently growing right out of the ground, she watches new gas pipelines being laid, and before her very eyes "izmenjaetsja forma obščestvennoj žizni." But along with this she beholds the image of her late husband (a symbol of the past):

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

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

Она видела в нем представителя того нового поколения, которое со славой завершит дело, начатое его отцами и дедами. Она полюбила в нем человека будущего. (32)
But in the case of Ivan Novoselov she suffered a defeat, because of her inability to look deeper not only into the future, but also into her own soul and that of her husband. Now, under the influence of eternally living nature, she categorically breaks with the past (cf. her unwillingness to go to Novoselov’s funeral) and looks with eager eyes at the new life seething all around her — present-day life, in which the old continually gives place to the new. The description of her view of the brook is interesting in this regard — the brook winding its way among the collective-farm fields and the thickets of cherry trees and pussy-willows. The picture first described is the one appearing in the heroine’s imagination — a picture from the distant, indeterminate past. This indeterminacy is underscored by the adverb nekogda:

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

Then the mentally drawn picture gives way to a picture of the objective present — teper’:

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

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

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

As is evident in *Fialka*, Kataev often resorts to the devices of contrast and symbolism, which enable him to give a fuller expression to the basic idea of this brief, twenty-page work — the idea of the constant struggle of the old with the new, the good with the bad, the personal with the social — as has already been detailed in the current chapter.
One more important image-symbol must be mentioned, one closely connected with the underlying motif of the story and one that contributes to the full revelation of Ivan Novoselov’s character, which until now has been discussed only in connection with the destiny of his wife Ekaterina. The image-symbol I have in mind is the replacement of the old wooden railway ties by new concrete ones. This is introduced right at the beginning of the story — significantly so, for the image sums up the motif of the whole story: it is further associated with the character of Ivan Novoselov described earlier as a symbol of the past. The wooden ties, like Novoselov, are shown here as a symbol of the old and fleeting, yielding to the new and more solid (the concrete ties):

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

I have introduced this citation not only as an illustration of what I said above, but also to draw attention to the colour yellow, which plays a significant role in the development of Ivan Novoselov’s character. The colour yellow accompanies Ivan Novoselov at almost every step, from the moment of his first appearance on the station platform (note here again the reference to “novaja vysokaja betonnaja platforma”38 to his last scene in the main plot at the same station, where “jarko žéliteli signal'nye specovki devčat, ukladyvajuščix novye betonnye špaly.”39
When the luminous overalls were first mentioned in the text, they were not yellow, just orange, but now they have "yellowed brightly." Thus all the hues of yellow, or rather, all the colours in the yellow family, are given the same symbolic significance — along with the yellow signal flag, the yellow acacia bushes, yellow boots, a yellow building, we find the bright orange colour of the luminous vests, the oranges Novoselov brings as a gift to his wife, the gilt of the bronze candlesticks, the copper door handles. Such an accumulation of reference to yellow and its various hues on just two pages cannot be accidental, especially since it is here associated with the description of Novoselov's appearance and the circumstances he currently finds himself in.

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

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

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

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

Bearing in mind certain facts — that by the 1930s Ivan the Ter-
rible was being re-habilitated as a precursor of Stalin; that official
propaganda ranked Stalin with the tsar Ivan (note that Novoselov's
first name is also Ivan), and that even after the denunciation of the
personality cult Stalinism was still regarded by some as a brutal but
necessary phase of Soviet socialist development — one must inevitably
conclude that the passage quoted above indeed refers to Stalin, who like his precursor Ivan the Terrible left a bloody imprint on his "reign." Note also the telling phrase in the story set off by triple dots:

...Никого не щадил царь Иван... (44)

which plays a not insignificant role in developing the connection between Novoselov and Stalin, along with his Stalin-era "opričniki." It is, as it were, a continuation of Ekaterina Gerasimovna's thought about the sixteen Kolyčev boyars executed by Ivan the Terrible. This sentence takes on added significance in connection with Ekaterina Novoselova spared not her own husband, Ivan, who resorted to a false report to get her out of the way — a not uncommon and effective device of the period of the Stalin era.

In his later-period prose Kataev often resorts to image-symbols to express his attitude toward the Stalin era. In Fialka he uses the symbol of Ivan Novoselov whose conduct and character bring to mind one of the heroes of Svjatoj kolodec — namely, the woodpecker-man with the strange "vaudevillian" name of Prozindejkin. The woodpecker-man, like Novoselov, dreams of a scholarly career, dreams of becoming a "doktorom nauk gonoris kljauze," but not through honest labour or his own academic achievements. He intends to reach this goal using others' achievements, through grovelling, reporting, treachery — in other words by the same means Novoselov uses to achieve his own selfish ends.
Just as Novoselov is the embodiment of all the negative aspects of the period of the personality cult, so Proxindejkin (as R. Russell points out) may "represent a writer turned informer for the secret police" or even "conformism of terrified writers during the Stalin era." The suggestion is quite legitimate, since in the words of the narrator-hero of *Svjatoj kolodéc*, his "tjagostnyj sputnik" is none other than a "modifikacija Faddeya Bulegarina," the latter being a well-known informer and traitor in Puškin’s time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was mentioned during the discussion of the autobiographical narrator-hero in the preceding chapter that Kataev often returns in his works to old topics, characters, and motifs. The same is true here. With an almost maniacal stubbornness Kataev turns again and again to the motif of the Stalin personality cult in works which do not seem to be thematically connected with this particular problem concerning
him (such as Kubik or Kladbišče v Skuljanar). This deliberate insistence on the personality motif not only helps Kataev more fully express his hatred of Stalin but also serves as a warning against any possible resurrection of the ideas or spirit of Stalinism. The latter purpose is particularly evident in Fialka, where the main focus is on the present day, the new reality – but a reality over which still hovers the shadow of the past, embodied in the person of Ivan Novoselov.

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

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

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

3Kladbišče v Skuljanax, p. 66.

4Ibid.

5Ibid., p. 121.

6See Svjatoj kolodec, p. 171.

7Trava zabven'ja, p. 243.

8Ibid.

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


11Trava zabven'ja, p. 431.

12Kardin's words in "Sjužet dlja nebol'soj stat'i," op. cit., p. 73.
Bunin took more than a decade to write Žizn' Arsen'eva which contains five books. The first four books were written from 1927 to 1929 and the fifth ("Lika") in 1938. The first four books were published in English in a volume entitled The Well of Days — translated by G. Struve and H. Miles (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934.)

See Svjatoj kolodec, p. 225.

See Chapter III, note 5.

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

Ibid., pp. 81—82.

Ibid., p. 82.

Ibid.

Trava zabvep'ja, p. 441.

Fialka, p. 83.

Ibid., p. 85.

Ibid., p. 94.

Ibid., p. 78.

Kardin's words, "Sjužet díja nebol'soj stat'í," op. cit., p. 89.

Ibid., p. 90.

Fialka, p. 94.


Ibid.
30 *Fialka*, p. 92.


36 *Ibid.*, p. 75. (My italics.)


41 *Fialka*, p. 74.

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

43 *Fialka*, p. 83.


45 *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 169.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 168. Note the play on words: In the Russian rendering of the phrase *honoris causae*, the word *kljauze* (a form of the Russian word for "slander") is substituted for Latin *causae*.


48 *Svjatoj kolodec*, p. 169.

49 *Kubik*, p. 497.

50 *Ibid*.


52 *Ibid*.


54 *Kladbišče v Skuljanax*, p. 54.

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

It is apparent from this later prose that for Kataev himself nothing could be more boring than a strict adherence to chronology. He deliberately ignored the bounds of time and space to give freer
rein to his fantasy and so attain a greater depth of thought and inner penetration of his subject: This meant he would simply start telling about himself in any possible way — so launching a new chapter, story, paragraph, or sentence. It also meant starting a story of himself at any moment in time — today, yesterday or a hundred years ago — and the story of himself would be the story of his hero, for the writer made no real distinction between the two.

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

For Kataev at this period the most retentive and faithful memory was the memory of the soul, which easily controls time and space, rather than being controlled by them. Such a concept enabled the writer to assume the identity of the objects he described, both human and non-human — a facility accessible only to writers endowed with an extremely precise perception of the world around them. And Valentin Kataev is such a writer. That is why he was able to "become" not only an old American car (in *Sijatoj kolodej*) or the little boy Pčelkin (*Kubik*), but even his own great-grandfather (*Kladbišče v Skufjanax*). This important feature of Kataev's later works is not only a literary device; it is a fundamental artistic position. For Kataev the only possible reality is a work of art — not a mere reproduction of the objective world, but rather the artistic reality of a work screened through the "soul" of the writer.
"I am the founder of a new literary school of Mauvistes, from the French word mauvais (bad)." Kataev writes in Svjatoy kolodec, "the essence of which is that since everyone today writes very well, it is necessary to do it badly, as badly as possible, and then people will sit up and take notice of you." This surprising statement of Kataev's is not, of course, without purpose. His works discussed in this study (even the objective Fialka) have in many ways violated accustomed canonical conceptions of socialist-realist writing, proving that the author was persistently seeking new artistic forms capable of conveying more fully both the world of an increasingly complex reality and the inner world of the artist.

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

Another distinctive feature of Kataev's later works is what might be termed their "lofty independence," as seen in their subjective treatment of time and space — a far cry indeed from typical socialist-realist prose with its linear plot progression. For Kataev, independence — i.e., personal and creative freedom — was one of the most fun-
damental aspects of creativity; hence his pre-occupation with wide open spaces and his rejection of those which are cramped or closed-in. This feeling was inherited, no doubt, from Russian cultural traditions (manifest in folklore, chronicles, paintings, etc.) which regarded freedom of movement and open spaces as one of the greatest aesthetic and ethical endowments of mankind. The greatest form of oppression for his heroes was to be deprived of space.

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

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

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

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

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GENERAL CRITICAL AND THEORETICAL WORKS


Ryan-Hayes, K. "The Figure of Isaac Babel in Twentieth-Century Memoirs." *KLJ.* 129/130 (1984), 143–158


ABSTRACT

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

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

Literary devices, which were subsequently to appear in more developed forms, were first introduced in a “lyrical diary” about Lenin entitled Malen’kaia veleznaja dye v stevi (1964)—a turning point in Kataev’s career as a writer, discussed in the first chapter of the thesis. It was indeed a novel approach to the Lenin theme, mixing historical facts with pure fiction challenging both traditional Soviet Leniniana and fossilized principles of socialist realism.

The latter challenge is even more evident in three of Kataev’s works discussed in the second chapter—Svjator kolodec (1966), Kubik (1967), and Kladbišće v Skuljanar (1975)—where the main features are the narrator’s self-exploration, associations, fantasy, imagination, and lack of chronology. Here the reader finds a model of the world only indirectly related to objective reality, one expressing
the author's specific viewpoint on life, death, and the place of an individual in the world (a world which controls time and not vice-versa).

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

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