For What Must We Suffer? An Analysis of Righteous Suffering in Soviet Socialist Realism from N.E.P. to High Stalinism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History

by

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Thesis Abstract:

Socialist Realism, as both a literary and historical phenomenon, has been a neglected subject within 20th century Soviet history. Although a handful of scholars have investigated the evolution of the genre, the majority of Western literary historians remain focused on anti-Soviet writings of the Thaw era. This thesis primarily discusses Socialist Realism in the 1930s, during the era of Stalin's reign. It argues that Socialist Realist novels of this decade shared a common literary theme: “righteous suffering.” To supplement this research, this thesis expands the historical scope of both the genre of Socialist Realism and the theme of suffering as far back as the pre-Revolutionary era and as far forward as the Thaw generation. This section combines literary analysis with a new methodology in Soviet studies known as the “emotional turn.” Maxim Gorky's 1907, *Mother*, created a literary formula for Socialist Realist authors during Stalin's reign by depicting the struggle for socialism as a battle for basic humanity. He places “righteous suffering” at the foreground of his prose, and reinforces both narrative description and character speech with highly emotional words and phrases. Although this mode of writing did not become a literary standard for Socialist Realism until the 1930s, righteous suffering as a theme became central to the genre during this decade. It was not until after Stalin's death that Soviet writers began to question whether or not suffering in the name of the Communist Party could actually be considered righteous. Finally, this thesis demonstrates the changes which took place in the world of literary production from 1907 to 1968. Specifically, it links these socio-political shifts to the alterations in “righteous suffering” and Socialist Realism as a whole.
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From the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Soviet authors and artists critical of the regime received a great deal of attention from historians, journalists, and other scholars living in the West. Authors such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and others have attracted particular notice due to their anti-Soviet stance. Such enthusiasm for “dissident” literature has, however, overshadowed the existence of other kinds of writing published in the Soviet Union. What about those works that did not criticize the utopian socialism? And what about those works which actually supported the actions of the Soviet government? While literary critics and literary historians have gradually come to appreciate these pro-Soviet forms of literature, generally they have continued to receive little attention. In many ways, this paints a rather inaccurate picture of early Soviet literary culture. Russian communists have, historically, placed a high premium on the relationship between art and society, with a particular focus on literature. Furthermore, Vladimir Lenin sought to educate and indoctrinate the populace by enabling mass literacy. It was not long before various authors wrote passionate pieces of fiction which glorified the cause of utopian socialism. Eventually, a patronage system developed in which the Soviet government gave financial support to authors whom they deemed the most talented and the most worthy. This support was institutionalized though the establishment of the Soviet Writers' Union in 1934.

The genre of literature which eventually became the Soviet Writers' Union's “official” medium of literary expression became known as Socialist Realism (or more
specifically, “"formulaic Socialist Realism," a term which this thesis will use to denote the literature of the 1930s). This style borrowed heavily from the Western Romantic movement which had been a phenomenon in Europe only about fifty years prior. Although the central theme of “formulaic Socialist Realism” revolved around the modernist principles of material progress, the tone of these novels was far from being rationalistic and devoid of human emotion. On the contrary, the literary appeal of “formulaic Socialist Realism” was its ability to take the principles of the determinist Marxism/Leninism philosophy and give them a true human face. Characters who band together to fight for a greater socialist society confide in one another not only for the sake of a common cause, but for a sense of friendship and belonging. Furthermore, these characters undergo struggles and hardship throughout these novels, and the authors bring their physical and mental suffering to the forefront of the story. Yet, Socialist Realism did not always conform to a rigid formula. In the years before Stalin's reign, “Socialist Realism” (hereafter referred to as "categorical Socialist Realism") simply denoted a genre of literary prose which engaged in a discussion about socialism based on real world events, both contemporary and historical events. This contrast is especially notable during the 1920's (The New Economic Policy era) when Soviet society practiced a higher degree of artistic freedom. In other words, Socialist Realism did not acquire an explicit political purpose until the thirties, after Soviet Writers' Union had established a rigid template for Soviet writers to follow if they had even the slightest hope of becoming published.

The primary focus of this thesis will be on the “formulaic Socialist Realist”
literature of the late 1920s and early-to-mid 1930s. The argument presented in these pages will be that these works, in spite of their individual differences, shared a common literary theme. This was the theme of “righteous suffering.” Socialist Realists created a world in which their protagonists suffered physical, mental, and psychological hardship for the greater good of the Communist Party. These authors made clear distinctions between the sort of suffering which carries a positive connotation, and that which carries a negative tone. Instances of bourgeois oppression, wanton violence, and “unproductive” personal struggles in the genre led to “unwarranted suffering,” in contrast to “righteous suffering.” Both “unwarranted” and “righteous suffering” are revealed through character speech, as well as are numerous instances where they instead use descriptive prose to show suffering through setting, plot, and physical action, as this thesis will demonstrate.

To reinforce this major theme of “righteous suffering,” these authors also include three specific literary sub-themes: militant and emotional prose, the depiction of socialism as a struggle between civilization and barbarism, and the notion of personal sacrifice.

While it was not until the Stalinist era that "formulaic Socialist Realism" became the de facto literature of the Communist Party, many of its narrative conventions had derived from authors of previous decades. The most critical of these authors was Maxim Gorky, who not only established the groundwork for the Soviet Writers' Union, but also provided a narrative structure for "righteous suffering" in his pinnacle work, Mother (1907), as this thesis will show. His contribution to Socialist Realism as a whole assumed both a literary and administrative significance. This thesis examines three novels which exemplify the use vivid, militant, and emotional language to support the
greater theme of "righteous suffering:" Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* (1925), Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How The Steel was Tempered* (1932), and finally Mikhail Sholokov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1935). In addition, this research discusses two important pieces of “categorical Socialist Realism” (a term I use to denote Socialist Realism from the 1920s) to demonstrate a literary and historical comparison: Valentin Kataev's *Embezzlers* (1923) and Leonid Leonov's *The Badgers* (1924). Finally, Fyodor Abramov's *Two Winters and Three Summers* illustrates the way that writers of the 1950s and 1960s period questioned and defied the Stalinist language of “righteous suffering.”

To assist with the examination of these primary sources from the perspective of "righteous suffering", this thesis employs a particular methodology known as the “history of emotion.” Although this relatively new approach has taken a variety of forms, a recent Summer 2009 special edition of the *Slavic Review* contains examples of scholars who have analyzed Russian literary texts with a focus on the use of emotional words and phrases. Such a method of analysis will prove to be a highly useful tool in finding the significance of "righteous suffering."\(^1\)

This thesis also includes a historiography of those few scholars who have investigated the development of Socialist Realism, and note their contributions to the study of the genre. Also included is the historical background which explains the shift from the relatively pluralistic Soviet society of the 1920s, to the much more authoritarian atmosphere of the 1930s. The first chapter investigates the socio-political-economic

\(^1\)To facilitate my examination of the language of emotion in these texts, I have scanned the original Russian texts into a computer program (Adobe Acrobat X Pro) which recognizes Cyrillic characters and Russian words. This has made the search for particular passages and words much more efficient.
differences between the New Economic Policy era and Stalinism, and focuses on the changes which took place in the world of literary production. While the 1920s saw an endless array of socialist cultural expression and the existence of several literary communities and circles, the following decade established a much more centralized apparatus. Writers of the 1930s found themselves forced to conform for the sake of membership in the Soviet Writers' Union, yet they also embraced many of the material rewards which came with loyalty to their patron, the Soviet government.
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Socialist Realism in Historiography

During the Cold War, Western historians and foreign experts linked most of their studies of Russia to a model of Communist totalitarianism. Typically, such experts considered the works of Socialist Realism to be a state-supported genre of literature forged by the intellectual vanguards of the Stalinist era. None of these early scholars acknowledged these literary works as nothing more than a form of propaganda. Despite the limitations of their approach, these works function as a starting point for the more in-depth studies on Socialist Realism which would emerge in following decades.

Perhaps the best example of these Cold War-era discussions on Socialist Realism is Zbigniew Folejewski's 1956 article “Frustrations of Socialist Realism” for the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. Folejewski does not describe Socialist Realism as a literary genre, but as “a formula of presenting reality not as it is but as it should be.”

Fundamentally speaking, he is correct: the ideals of Socialist Realism are forged in Utopian idealism. The author proceeds by discussing various Russian periodicals which demonstrate a changing attitude from literary indoctrination to diversity; he lauds the event as a “second golden age” in Soviet literature. As he describes it, a informal meeting of members of the Soviet Writers' Union convened in 1953 and declared that the model of Soviet writing must change from the “dull” prose of traditional Socialist Realism. Folejewski's article addresses this issue only in an elementary sense; he

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3 Folejewski, “Frustrations of Socialist Realism,” 486.
describes Stalinist aesthetics and “thaw” literature in purely monolithic terms, and does not refer to any specific works. Yet this piece represents one of the earliest contextual discussions of Socialist Realism and the alternative styles of the 1950s. The Western discussion of Soviet literary aesthetics continued in the *American Slavic and East European Review* throughout the late fifties and early sixties. Another early article by Maurice Friedberg attempts to give the reader an idea of the literary culture surrounding Socialist Realism. He highlights the conflicts of pre-Stalinist and Stalinist era writing and the transition to the “thaw” generation. Friedberg offers another valuable perspective on the real world effects of the genre on the intellectual culture of the Soviet Union, even if his approach does not recognize the nuances of each genre.

It was not until the 1970s that Western scholars began to pay more attention Socialist Realism as a literary genre. C. Vaughan James' pivotal book, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, provides an in-depth investigation of Socialist Realism as a literary motif. He researches both the definition of Socialist Realism and its historical and literary roots. To this end, James' consults the writings of revolutionary figures that provide the most commentary on the subject. He starts with such iconic socialist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, as well as the literary hero of his youth, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, who believed that socialist art must derive not exclusively from the masses (folk art) but also not exclusively from the elites (bourgeois art). Instead, the roots of socialist art must be *synthetic*, combining the elements of popular art, but also providing the subtle representation and transcendence of higher art. Such a perspective coincides very closely

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with Lenin's fundamental views on the way to properly conduct a socialist revolution. Vladimir Lenin had a limited faith in the ability of the working-masses to succeed in creating and maintaining a socialist state. He believed that a Communist vanguard must serve to harness the “spontaneous” desire for revolution amongst the masses by giving them a proper socialist education, or “consciousness.” 5 This theme of spontaneity versus consciousness will become critical in later scholarly works on Socialist Realism.

James does not attribute the establishment of Socialist Realism merely to Marxist-Leninist theory; it remains much more complicated. The author sees this concept as containing three essential components: narodnost (people-ness) klassvost (class-ness or class consciousness) and, perhaps most importantly, partiinost (party-ness) The idea of narodnost reinforces importance of “spontaneity to consciousness” by focusing on the transformation of literature from a state of mass emotionalism to refined socialist art, but the additional notions of klassvost and partiinost expand the discussion of Socialist Realism considerably. James argues that klassvost emphasizes the Marxist creed that the history of the world is the history of class struggles. For art and literature, this translates to an unquestioned understand that “all art is class art.” Any piece of art, whether it be written or visual, makes a statement, either implicit or explicit, about social class. Because of this, the responsible socialist artist must always be aware of the klassvost that must be a focal point of the work. The true essence of Socialist Realism, however, lies with partiinost. James explains that it is this “party-ness” or “party loyalty” that connects socialist art to the desires of the Communist Party. In other words, it gives art a

specific function. James explains that *partiinost* "embodies, or 'demands from the artist', a threefold, conscious decision: (1) art must fulfill a specific social function; (2) that function is to further the interests of the masses; (3) to further the interests of the masses, art must become part of the activity of the Communist party." The concept of *partiinost* specifically negates the idea of *l'art pour l'art* [art for art's sake.] Socialist art must not only be representative, but it also must be useful to the Communist Party. This link, the artistic demand of *partiinost*, binds together artistic and political socialism.

Not only does *Soviet Socialist Realism* articulate the fundamental concepts of this artistic mode, it also discusses the historical circumstances which surrounded its formation. Naturally, the definition of socialist art did not simply come out of a peaceful consensus; it emerged during the reign of Joseph Stalin, when the Writer's Union of the USSR reigned supreme as the arbiter of literature and art in the Soviet Union. Divergent groups such as the Proletkult and the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) found themselves subsequently shut down in 1932, well after Joseph Stalin had assumed power over the USSR. James explains that this trend is, in many ways, reflective of Stalin's "socialism in one country" policy which rejects the Trotskyist notion of an international revolution. The dictator envisioned a single interpretation of socialism which revolved around labor, discipline, and sacrifice. In the same way, the Writers' Union of the USSR envisioned one central interpretation of Socialist Realism, and thus its narrative positivism became the criterion for all future publications within the country.

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7 James, *Soviet Socialist Realism*, 65.
The government would censor the publication of any writer who deviated from this norm.

C. Vaughan James brought the study of Socialist Realism to a new dimension by articulating the intellectual notion of Communist art. But what about the structure of the novel itself? Though James published his analysis of the subject in 1973, most Western scholars largely ignored Socialist Realism throughout the seventies; literary enthusiasts focused heavily on dissident novels such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*. It was not until the early eighties that Katerina Clark conducted the first important structural analysis. Her 1981 book, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, investigates the structure of the typical Socialist Realist novel. Examining classic examples of the genre such as Maxim Gorky’s *Mother*, Nikolai Ostrovsky’s *How Steel was Tempered*, and Fyodor Gladkov’s *Cement*, Clark identifies a “master plot” which the authors use to promote the cause of socialism in a romantic fashion. According to Clark, the most important component of the Soviet novel is the spontaneity-to-consciousness dialectic: the protagonist finds himself, or herself, in the midst of a personal revolutionary awakening (“spontaneity”) and then pursues it by seeking out an organization, activist group, or party which will ultimately teach the protagonist proper socialist ideology (“consciousness.”)⁹ Though Clark argues that the master plot is common among most pieces of Socialist Realism, she also contends that it is wrong to lump all of these novels together as constituting nothing more than literary

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⁸ James, *Soviet Socialist Realism*, 82.  
propaganda. Each piece of Socialist Realism promotes the cause of the Communist Party in a markedly different way, as the master plot can be formed through different narratives. It is Clark’s work that first applied textual analysis to Socialist Realist novels, and paved the way for the analysis of a genre of Soviet literature that had previously been neglected.

The eighties saw an increased fascination with Socialist Realism and early 20th century visions of Bolshevik utopianism in general. Richard Stites' book, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, explores the various visions of socialism that common people engaged in during the early era of the Russian Revolution (1917-1930). Stites argues that this brief period in Soviet history saw a “cultural outpouring” of numerous interpretations of socialism as a means of celebrating a new revolution and a new society in Russia. Throughout his book, the author emphasizes that this sprinkling of diverse and cult-ish revolutionary practices stood in stark contrast to the more monolithic approach pioneered by Stalin in the 1930s. The author investigates a variety of themes that emerged during this period: iconoclasm, atheism, free love, and deviations from traditional social norms. Several writers and artists during this period advocated true democracy and grassroots movements; something which Lenin admittedly despised. What would later become the cornerstone ideals of Socialist Realism was merely one set of visions in a sea of alternatives. Ultimately, the triumph of the Leninist-Stalinist view of literature had mainly to do with power: the works literary figures such as Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Mayakovsky

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caught the interests of political elites from 1917 onward. Stites reminds us, however, that other, more genuinely “proletarians” expressed themselves in literary form during the liberal NEP period. However, it was elite positivism that eventually won the cultural battle, and the various cults, deviant communes, and unorthodox rituals (Godbuilders, iconoclasts, Roboters, socialist cartographers) were rooted out and shut down.

Katerina Clark's successful effort to make Socialist Realism a relevant literary genre is expanded by Greg Carleton's 1994 *Russian Review* article: “Genre in Socialist Realism.” Carleton notes that those who have dismissed it as “dull prose” have often compared it to a lifeless neo-classism, when in reality these novels contain a particular use of human gestures, expressions, and body language in order to highlight the selective ideals of Socialism. He also states that this brand of literature is actually much closer to the kind of prose that was common in the Middle Ages. The author examines Maxim Gorky’s *History of the Factories* and *The White-Sea Baltic Canal*, pointing out passages in which the characters experience a particularly intense emotional reaction. He finds that the industrial workers and socialist revolutionaries feel a trembling sense of ecstasy when they complete a major industrial project, accompanied by symphony of fear and disgust when they see or hear about the “dreaded kulaks.” Triumphant urbanism and the idea of conquering nature are staples of the genre; images of wild animals who are tamed, and “backward” peasant villages that are built into thriving modern communities, are prevalent throughout many of the writings of Gladkov, Sholokov, and Ostrovsky. Though the premise of the article is to define Socialist Realism as a genre, Carleton’s work also

offers a considerable amount of literary analysis of the emotions expressed in the genre. In a way, he is arguing against the popular notion that the genre is totally devoid of any serious emotion and is merely manufactured prose. He reinforces the thesis brought forth by Katerina Clark that Socialist Realism did not simply constitute a form of Communist propaganda, but maintained a degree of literary and artistic autonomy.

As the study of Socialist Realism advanced through the next decade, historians and social analysts began to pay attention to other forms of Socialist Realism outside of literature. John E. Bowlt discusses Socialist Realist painting and sculpture in his 2002 article “Stalin as Isis and Ra: Socialist Realism and the Art of Design” for the *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*. Citing a variety of famous visual works, Bowlt first outlines the development of this artistic movement, and then describes its characteristics. Like Carleton, Bowlt rejects the notion that Socialist Realist art is nothing more than a reinterpretation of neoclassicism. The author describes it as an eclectic style which “had to differ from any preceding feudal or capitalist artistic style” due to its allegedly unique economic and social philosophy. Bowlt notes that the genre often blended itself with a variety of different styles in different works. A consistent theme is the focus on visual brightness, which represents triumph over darkness. Paintings also used multiple images on one canvas to give the effect of combining the present and the future; the emphasis on progress is a fundamental trait of Socialist Realism.

One of the most recent entries in the study of Socialist Realism has expanded the

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14 Bowlt, “Stalin as Isis and Ra,” 38.
discussion to the realm of cinema. While nearly half of the films that movie theaters featured in Russia were actually movies made in the United States and Western Europe, there were Soviet-made films which fit the same format as a typical Socialist realist novel. In Lilya Kaganovsky’s 2008 book, *How the Soviet Made was Un-Made: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*, the author conducts a study of various “propagandist” films that were made during the era of Joseph Stalin. Referring several times to Katerina Clark’s book, Kaganovsky uses the formula of spontaneity and consciousness to explain some of the phenomena that are apparent in classic Soviet films such as *The Party Card* and *The Fighter Pilots*. The author offers a variety of new insights regarding this genre; she explains that the crafters of Socialist Realism created a dual-sided image of masculinity. On one hand, the genre depicts the male protagonists with classical attributes of virtue: strength, bravery, and decisiveness. Yet, for the Socialist Realist hero to become truly whole, he must also display physical and/or mental anguish and damage. Protagonists who died, became injured, or suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder were depicted as having undergone the “final” test for Soviet loyalty, as Kaganovsky demonstrates when discussing *The Fighter Pilots*. The author also applies her observations to Soviet novels which Clark had previously discussed; she focuses on the concept of martyrdom and points out examples of martyrdom in books such as *How Steel was Tempered* and *Cement*. Though it was Clark who first brought the subject of Socialist Realism, *How the Soviet Man was Un-Made* expands the discussion into the realms of theater and masculinity.
The early history of the Soviet Union was one of both civil unrest and political experimentation. In the year 1917, after nearly a decade of social turmoil, Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik Party—supporters of radical socialism—managed to take the reign of the Russian government, permanently abolishing the monarchy which had ruled the country for centuries. Even though Lenin and his colleagues nominally controlled the newly formed Soviet Union, this in fact only initiated a Civil War, one which would ravage the Russian countryside for nearly six years. Although the war consisted of many factions, the primary conflict took place between the Red Army (supporters of the Party of Lenin) and the White Army (the anti-Bolshevik) forces. Lenin's policy of War Communism enabled members of the Red Army to garner supplies and food from various towns and villages; something which caused a great deal of pain and suffering for many ordinary citizens in the newly formed Soviet Union. In addition to Lenin's harsh economic measures, he also constructed the institutions which would become the benchmark of Soviet propaganda. Through the use of newspapers, reading circles, educational reform and Communist youth groups, the new leader successfully crafted an ideological apparatus which would sustain itself for years to come.15

By 1921, however, it became clear that War Communism had created a calamitous economic situation throughout all of the country. Lenin and his associates decided to

initiate a change of policy, which would usher in the age of the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.). This new system allowed for a limited degree of privatization while the Soviet government maintained control of major manufacturing and industry. Economic liberalization also allowed for cultural pluralism; a concept which I will discuss in greater detail in the next section. After Lenin's death in 1924, the situation in the Central Committee quickly became fractious and highly volatile. The one man who emerged victorious was none other than the Party General Secretary, Joseph Stalin. In 1928, Stalin enacted his First Five-Year Plan, which brought the N.E.P. era to an end. His new policies called for forced farm collectivization, as well as mass mobilization towards the creation of an industrialized state. In addition, Stalin put in place a bureaucratic apparatus based on fear, suspicion, and denunciation. At the same time, unquestioning loyalty could result in material rewards and Party recognition.\footnote{For more detailed accounts on Stalin and the Stalinist system, see Isaac Deutscher's \textit{Stalin: A Political Biography} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) and Wendy Z. Goldman's \textit{Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).}

Countless historians have discussed this radical shift from the loosened economy of the N.E.P era to the highly centralized command structure of the Stalinist era. Yet, only a few have noted the \textit{cultural and literary} shift which took place as well. In the next section, I will be outlining some of the differences between the cultural atmosphere of the twenties and thirties. This will allow for a more through understanding of the shifts in the literary nuances within the works of Socialist Realism.

\textbf{Cultural Liberalization: The Soviet Literary World in the era of N.E.P.}
While it is likely that Lenin—a man who took a condescending view of both peasant and proletarian culture—did not intend for his adjusted economic policies to foster a cultural and literary polyglot, his policy of N.E.P. nevertheless marked a brief period during which a variety of views on how to properly integrate socialism into the new Soviet Union could be expressed. As Richard Stites notes in his book, *Revolutionary Dreams*, utopian practices and cult visions of socialism had existed in Russia centuries before the Revolution of 1917. Various groups, both rural and urban, had professed visions of a fairer society based on mutual cooperation and communal altruism since the 19th century. It was not until the 1920s, however, that these visions could actually be put into practice. Stites described the N.E.P. period as the “social laboratory” in which socialist pluralism could blossom. Throughout his book, Stites describes many different artistic, spiritual, and communal expressions which emerged during the 1920s, demonstrating the strength of artistic diversity in the Soviet Union before Stalin and the Five-Year Plan effectively put it to an end.\(^{17}\)

Stites' book documents an almost incalculable amount of “utopian groups” which emerged not only during the 1920s, but in the days before the Revolution as well. Many of these groups would take a common, traditional aspect of Russian life, and alter it so it would better fit the mold of socialism. Other groups were much more destructive: Stites' third chapter, “Revolutionary Iconoclasm”, describes those who wished to destroy traditional symbols of authority and society through violent acts. Most of these utopians

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took it upon themselves to embark on various “projects” which would encompass their ideals about socialism. For example, some of the newly emancipated peasants formed their own autonomous communes: villages which they believed did not belong to any kind of national state. Others expressed their vision of socialism through unorthodox practices of art and music. Stites also discusses groups which dealt with socialism in a spiritual manner. There were those groups which sought to denounce Christianity and religion altogether, and convince Russians that such behavior was nothing but primitive superstition. Conversely, other groups believed that Christianity and socialism could coexist as a single force which could bring true equality and harmony to the Soviet Union in accordance with the philosophy of Jesus Christ.18

However, although some groups managed to maintain themselves outside of the bounds of Soviet control, the Russian Civil War and Lenin's policies of War Communism had created a brutal legacy for the country in the early 20th century. Those artists who wished to survive during times of famine, property confiscation, and state terror often established systems of patronage and mutual support. At the same time, they wove a relationship with the Bolshevik regime in order to ensure their physical survival. Barbara Walker details the development of this system in her book, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times*. During the twenties, certain playwrights, writers, and painters, who possessed both artistic talent and social prowess, managed to earn the goodwill of the Soviet state in exchange for loyalty and a promise to aid the new-found state in helping to mold proletarian art and literature.

Walker's primary subject, the Symbolist Maximilian Voloshin, was one of many social and cultural leaders who created social and patronage networks in the early Soviet era that resembled the elite literary circles of the 19th century intelligentsia. The main difference between those earlier circles and the ones initiated by Voloshin—and others such as Maxim Gorky—in the 1920's was that while the former had oftentimes found support in wealthy landowners, merchants or members of the royal family, the networks of the 1920's relied on the patronage of the Soviet state itself. Desperate artists, deprived during the Civil War of food, shelter, and basic warmth, flocked to men such as Voloshin to seek both sustenance and artistic commonality, while patron figures like Voloshin and Gorky turned to the state for material aid for these artists and writers.\(^{19}\) This chain of patronage became a kind of cultural norm during the N.E.P. era; while the Bolshevik Party did not exact ideological conformity yet, it laid the institutional foundations for doing so in the future. Although Voloshin himself would die in 1932—the very year in which Stalin liquidated all other forms of literary organization, including the communitas—other prominent writers and artists who had become well-versed in the maintenance of literary circles found their way into the upper echelons of Soviet society under the Stalin's reign, including that master networker and administrator, Maxim Gorky.

Though it was not until 1934 that Gorky declared that Soviet literature would adhere to the principles of Socialist Realism, he had built his career as both a writer and literary organizer for nearly twenty-five years. Gorky established himself as an enthusiastic supporter of the socialist cause since the late 19th century. He attained many

of his ideas about writing from iconic 19th century socialist writers, such as Nikolai Chernyshevsky, George Plekhanov, Alexander Herzen, and of course Karl Marx. In addition to his literary interests, Gorky also became extremely politically active in the days before the Russian Revolution, supporting those who sought to fight the tsarist state. Ironically, Gorky preferred the ideology and company of Julius Martov, the leader of the Mensheviks and ultimately Lenin's rival. This would not be the first time that Gorky would align himself with figures that Soviet rulers did not support. During the 1920s, the iconic poet found himself clashing with both Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky: a battle which would eventually lead to his exile from Russia.

Before his exile, however, Maxim Gorky emerged as one of the most successful state-based patron of the 1920s. As a deeply compassionate and humanitarian figure, Gorky quickly established himself not only as a writer of note, but also a greater promoter of artistic and literary excellence within the Soviet Union. Along with a series of institutional projects, Gorky assisted those artists who found themselves in dire situations after the Russian Civil War: “Gorky was … concerned to organize material support for Russian intellectuals within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire. He was a founding chairman of TsKUBU, whose earliest meetings took place (like the meetings of many other such institutions during this period) in Gorky's Petrograd apartment in January of 1920, and at least one such meeting was graced by the presence of Anatoly Lunacharsky himself. TsKUBU, under Gorky's leadership, became an organizational point for accumulating material support for the Russian educated elite as a whole, beginning with such basic needs as food and wood for heating, for example, as
well as access to medical care and sanatoriums for the sick." It would seem odd that Gorky—a man who had a genuine concern for the well-being of his fellow Russians—would later so actively enlist in the murderous enterprise of Stalinism. Yet, we must remember that, during the thirties, Gorky simply used the same social skills of other state-based patrons in order to secure their own safety and recognition and those of their clients. Furthermore, although Gorky would embrace the promotion of "formulaic Socialist Realism," the prolific writer would not live to see the full extent of Stalin's terror.

Prior to this consolidation of the organization of literary life—and prior to Gorky's rise to literary supremacy—the relatively loose control over writers exerted primarily through only patronage permitted a considerable diversity of approaches. While Richard Stites focuses on some of the more radical and outlandish expressions of utopian socialism, Edward J. Brown focuses on some of the more institutional diversity which occurred in the realm of literature. His book, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928-1932*, details the rise and fall of the Russian Association for Proletarian Writers. Along with discussing the importance of this organization, Brown's first chapter reveals much about the literary situation that had developed within Russia by 1928: a year which marked the end of N.E.P. A handful of major literary organizations had formed by this time, each with their own interpretation on the question of socialist literature. How could literature properly represent the desires and culture of the proletariat? More importantly, what function could literature serve to improve socialism

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for the nation as a whole? These questions baffled many members of literary community for nearly a decade, and the division of opinions on the subject made the discussion highly controversial. Brown acknowledges that there existed a countless number of different literary groups during the 1920s, yet he highlights the select few that became part of a national dialogue.

The first important literary group that Brown discusses is the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organization, more commonly known as the Proletkult. The leaders of the Proletkult, Alexander Bogdanov, Anatoly Lunacharsky, and Nikolai Bukharin, would later become major figures in Soviet history, both as foes and friends of the Soviet government. In 1928, however, these men stood behind the principles of Proletkult, whose mission was to develop a proletarian body of literature through literacy, education, and ideological training. Those who were part of the Proletkult believed that, in this early stage of Communism, a true socialist proletarian culture had not yet been developed. Therefore, it was the duty of the intellectual class to help guide the proletariat to cultural enlightenment. While this may appear to coincide with Lenin's philosophy on the socialist revolution in general, it is important to note that the Proletkult called for a fully independent development of proletarian literature, meaning specifically that the Communist Party and the Soviet government could not extend any direct control over the Proletkult: “The cultural work of the proletariat—'the organization of its experience as a class'—must develop, he believed, free of interference from bodies concerned with the political and economic struggle. Such bodies (the state apparatus specifically), moreover, were not purely proletarian, he said, but were mixed with 'bourgeois' elements. Toward
the end of the civil war the leaders of the Party betrayed a distinct distrust of the proletarian cultural movement as fostered by the Proletkult.”

If we consider that, in 1928, Joseph Stalin had been working to consolidate his personal power and extend it over the entire Soviet state, this attitude of the Proletkult seems incredibly bold. Not only did they call for an organization which was independent from the Party, they reasoned that the Soviet government had become corrupted by bourgeois elements. To further complicate this literary anti-government attitude, Brown notes that another group actually seceded from the Proletkult, believing that they approached literature with an overemphasis on prose, and an underappreciation of poetry. A splinter group known as the Kuznitsa, or The Smiths, championed the metaphysical notions of socialism, believing that the proper communist society could appreciate the spiritual symbolism of an altruistic society. In general, the Smiths focused less on the “realistic” aspects of socialism and more on the emotional and subjective aspects.

The Proletkult and the Smiths did not constitute the only groups that had a “problematic” relationship the Soviet government. As Richard Stites has demonstrated, there existed countless groups who held much more radical beliefs than the groups that Brown discusses. It was quite clear that there was no general “consensus” on how to define the function of socialist literature, as there existed so many disparate interpretations. This diversity, in many ways, was the cultural hallmark of N.E.P. By 1928, the government had begun to adopt a more centralizing attitude towards the

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administration of art and literature, and thus gave the impetus for the formation of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP). This organization, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next section, sought originally to “sort out” the various literary groups and allow the Soviet government to exercise more control over the blossoming cultural scene in Russia. Though RAPP never managed to attain the kind of direct influence that the Soviet government desired, it still represents a curious shift from the literary polyglot of N.E.P. to the homogenized cultural apparatus of the Stalin era.

Even as late as 1928, the term “Socialist Realism” had not become a part of the Soviet lexicon, even among literary elites. In fact, the proper term did not truly come into being until 1932, when Stalin had decided that RAPP must be replaced with a more centralized organization. Yet, despite the lack of nomenclature, the characteristics of Socialist Realism existed in a much more abstract form. In the next section, I will discuss how RAPP actually began to lay out the parameters for Soviet Socialist Realist literature. These guidelines dictated that literary socialism must have some foundation in reality; stories which took place on fantasy worlds or distant planets such as Bogandov's *Red Star*, did not appear particularly useful to the leaders of RAPP. Furthermore, it was important for writers to adopt a positive attitude about socialism in general, yet simultaneously maintain their own artistic independence. In many ways, the books which followed these models served as the defining characteristics of “categorical Socialist Realism.” Yet, as we will see, the “Stalinist turn” in literature had the effect of removing much of the independent element in this process. It was at this point that Socialist Realism became a concretely structured and explicitly defined genre.
Joseph Stalin's social and economic policies sent ripples throughout the Soviet Union, and the state of the Russian literary world was no exception. Stalin's rise power saw the end of pluralism in Soviet literature, leading to a much more monolithic approach to the publication and distribution of Soviet fiction. Like the industrial Five-Year Plan in the city and the farm collectivization of the countryside, the purging of multi-lateral literature was not instantaneous.

As Brown's book demonstrates, the issues surrounding the RAPP (formerly VAPP) were largely theoretical and, in some cases, mind-numbingly complex. It is clear, however, that the original intent of RAPP was a means to manage the numerous writing organizations throughout the Soviet Union with a single, government-sponsored establishment. By 1928, it was clear that the Soviet government saw RAPP as the most valuable asset that the Party had in the literary front. Lunacharsky himself remarked that he admired the organization for its “hundred percent willingness” to carry out party directives.\(^{23}\) It is not coincidental that the first year of Stalin's Five-Year Plan also brought along these changes to the attitude of the Soviet government towards socialist literature. Yet, the centralization of literary power did not take place overnight. The leaders of RAPP quickly came into conflict when they argued over the definition of “proletarian literature.” Brown stresses that near the end of 1930, the organization had

come to some kind of contradictory consensus. On one hand, RAPP had decided that “proper” proletarian literature would focus on real historical and contemporary events surrounding socialism instead of fantastical utopian speculations. Furthermore, the organization agreed that they would encourage prose, and discourage verse. This decision essentially put “categorical Socialist Realism” in the forefront of the Soviet literary world. Those authors discuss socialism in the context of major historical events would receive the most praise, and RAPP administrators would hold these books as the standard for others to follow. On the other hand, RAPP also stressed the need for creative autonomy, actively resisting the attempts of the Soviet government to interfere with the literary discussion. Naturally, such aversion to Party edicts contradicted the Stalinist ethos of centralization and conformity. Perhaps it was because RAPP members wished to continue the discussion of the “true” definition of proletarian literature, or perhaps the writers simply did not want to live under fear of doctrinal oppression. Either way, RAPP’s insistence on allowing a moderate amount of parliamentary debate and individualism eventually would lead to its demise.

The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers retains a paradoxical role in Soviet literary history. The Soviet government praised RAPP as the literary bearers of the Party line, yet the organization itself consistently acted on its own accord in regards to literary theory and establishing a solid definition of “proletarian literature.” One could argue that RAPP contained both the centralizing spirit of the Stalinist era as well as the pluralistic, multi-faceted impulses of N.E.P. The organization served symbolically as the transition

from a relatively democratic society to a much more authoritarian one. The Central Committee formally sealed the fate of RAPP in the on April 23, 1932, when they decided to liquidate RAPP once and for all. In spite of its dissolution, and in spite of the firm centralization of Soviet literature afterward, the organization did lead the way for some of the more lasting conventions associated with Socialist Realism. The Soviet government continued to respect a certain degree of individual autonomy in literary production. Even though many of the formulaic Socialist Realist novels revolved around similar themes and used similar language, authors still exercised their own discretion by treating characters, settings, and various plot developments in ways which differed from official Soviet propaganda. RAPP writers also stressed the need for literature to be “true to life” and not overly fantastical. Such artistic conventions persisted into the Stalinist era.

John and Carol Garrard's 1990 monograph, *Inside the Soviet Writer's Union*, covers this particular subject in great detail. Stalin, at least to a certain degree had finally realized how to integrate literature into his vision of Soviet society. He decreed that writers in the Soviet Union must serve to improve society, and more specifically, serve the Communist Party. It was also at this point where Maxim Gorky took a leading role in shaping the literature of the thirties. By combining both his administrative and literary skills, Gorky managed to usher in a new age for Soviet writing. The Soviet Writers' Union adopted many of the same characteristics of the patronage networks and circles of the previous decade: it provided material incentives in exchange for artistic production. Yet, Gorky's staunch insistence that members of the Union follow the tenets of Socialist

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Realism represented a deviation from the pluralism of the twenties: aspiring writers would need to adhere to Party doctrine in their choice of literary, or else, at the very least, they would not receive publication.

Gorky, in 1934, officially formed the Soviet Writer's Union: a single organization which would dominate the literary apparatus of the Communist Party, as well as the entire Soviet literary world. Garrard and Garrard stress that both Stalin and Gorky believed they were simply following the intellectual tradition of their predecessor, Vladimir Lenin. The Bolsheviks of the previous generation had rejected the notion of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, or rule by peasants and urban workers. Instead, Lenin and his followers believed that an elite group of enlightened socialists must not only lead the proletarian revolution, but oversee the transition of a feudalistic, monarchical state into a modern communist order. In other words, Lenin did not trust the masses to make this journey on their own: they needed the coercive guidance of the Communist vanguard. Stalin co-opted this very approach in dealing with the issue of Soviet literature: he believed that the Communist Party should sponsor a “literary elite” that would create a new socialist genre; one which would portray the Party as a benevolent, guiding force for the movement. Thus, the First Congress of the Writer's Union formally declared that Socialist Realism would be the “basic method of Soviet literature and criticism.”

Garrard and Garrard both describe the First Congress of the Soviet Writer's Union as having a rather different tone than the assemblies of RAPP. Maxim Gorky argued that

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this new form of Socialist Realism was, in fact, nothing actually new at all. Gorky envisioned himself as following the literary tradition of such 19th century socialism-enthusiasts such as Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Vissarion Belinsky. He believed that this “new literary direction” needed an emotional message, an optimistic bent, and above all, a demonstration of adherence and loyalty to the Communist Party. One major point of contrast between Gorky and his RAPP counterparts was that the new chairman chastised the works of famous 19th century authors—above all, Fyodor Dostoyevsky—for standing against the fundamental principles of socialist literature. To those who attended the First Congress, this new tone appeared to be much more militant than the one established by RAPP, yet the audience responded to Maxim Gorky and his follow-up speakers with jubilation and praise.28

What is also striking is Gorky's use of Stalinist language during his tenure as President of the Writers' Union, declaring that the writers of the new regime should think of themselves as “engineers of the the human soul.”29 In a follow-up speech, Gorky specifically encouraged his writers to “cast aside old bourgeois habits. Their task was not to follow their own individual paths, but to work together—in groups if necessary—to portray the 'new reality' according to a single unified method.”30 It is clear that Gorky was directly advocated a governing literary formula which would govern Socialist Realism. In addition, the new President also encouraged writers not to approach the subject of literary socialism from a purely materialistic, rational-based view, but instead

28 Garrard and Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 32-35.
29 Garrard and Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 41.
30 Garrard and Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 41.
that “they describe the workers' thoughts, feelings, and heroic deeds 'in simple language and in truthful images.'”\textsuperscript{31} In other words, Gorky endorsed an \textit{emotional} approach to Soviet writing; one which would focus on the sentimental cause of socialism instead of merely describing it as the end product of Marxist history. Such an approach would lay the foundation, this thesis argues, for the narrative trope of "righteous suffering."

\textit{Inside the Soviet Writer's Union} does not merely discuss the codification of "formulaic Socialist Realism" in the 1930s. It also describes the process by which the Soviet Writer's Union became an instrument of the Communist Party. The organization did not merely provide an ideological template for would-be Russian writers; it also acted to purge and discredit those authors whom Party leaders declared were unfit to call themselves cultural representatives of the Soviet Union. The true “cleansing” of the Writer's Union did not occur until after Maxim Gorky had perished, and his successors, Vladimir Stavsky and Alexander Fadeyev, had taken control of the Union. The second chapter of \textit{Inside the Soviet Writer's Union} details the highly volatile atmosphere that characterized the Soviet Union throughout most of Stalin's rule. It becomes clear that the Central Committee gave the leaders of the Writer's Union unlimited power in excluding writers who did not adapt to the mold of Socialist Realism: “It is almost certain that from 1935 to 1938 more people were expelled from the [Writer's] Union than were admitted to its ranks. New members had to be sponsored; what if the proposed member should then be arrested as a 'Trotskyite wrecker'? Stalin operated on guilt by association, and the crime of having nominated a 'traitor' to Writers' Union membership meant not only

\textsuperscript{31} Garrard and Garrard, \textit{Inside the Soviet Writers' Union}, 42.
dooming oneself, but one's whole family, as well as friends and associates. Even if a
writer was proposed and admitted to the Union, it was no guarantee of safety.”32

The consequences for a writer of not adhering to the standards of the Socialist
Realist formula were indeed severe, yet there were also considerable benefits for
submitting to this formula. Being a member of the Writers' Union carried a high degree
of prestige, and in some cases yielded significant material benefits. Unlike in Western
countries where both amateur and professional writers often find themselves battling
dismissal and condescension from ordinary citizens, those who lived in the Soviet Union
viewed writers with a sense of adulation and even jealousy. In many ways, professional
and published Soviet writers saw themselves on the same level as government
bureaucrats and functionaries. Gorky, who had established himself as competent
organizer of the state-based patronage organizations during the Civil War, found that he
could easily craft the Writers' Union into a consolidated and larger version of those
smaller literary circles from the previous decade. The fourth chapter of Inside the Soviet
Writers' Union details the array of material benefits that members of the Union could
enjoy as soon as they joined: “Once admitted to the Writers' Union, the new member has
access to an impressive array of fringe benefits and special privileges, most of them
having little to do with the profession of writing, but a great deal to do with making life
easier in the peculiar circumstances of Soviet life.”33 These benefits included access to
“restricted” material appliances and certain types of food, as well as comparatively
spacious apartments and office space. Although the threat of punishment did loom over

32 Garrard and Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 47-48.
33 Garrard and Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writer's Union, 114.
the heads of writers during the Stalinist era, there certainly were advantages to joining the organization. Members could live better than the majority of Soviet citizens as long as they adhered to the emotional literary formula which Maxim Gorky had established in 1934.

**Chapter One Summary**

Though the time which separated N.E.P. from the Stalinist era was less than ten years, historians have documented a dramatic shift in the socioeconomic situation in the Soviet Union which occurred between the two periods. The New Economic Policy allowed for a certain degree of economic and cultural freedom. This resulted in a tsunami of differing socialist literary groups, each with their own interpretation of utopian socialism and proletarian literature. The formation of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers served as an attempt to unify these groups, as well as to discover the “true” nature of socialist writing through debate and pluralism. The rise of Joseph Stalin and his Five-Year Plan effectively ended the heterogeneous nature of the 1920s. Along with the implementation of collectivization and mass industrialization, Stalin eventually brought his vision of “socialism in one country” to the forefront of the literary world. After Stalin brought RAPP to a swift end, Maxim Gorky created the Soviet Writers' Union, which acted as an administrative organization answering directly to the Central Committee and the Soviet government. Gorky professed a singular definition of Socialist Realism, one which could be enforced rigidly through a system of rewards and
punishments. The “face of literature” in the Soviet Union became permanently altered, and even when the literary world of Russia accepted pluralism again during the Khrushchev Thaw, the influence of literary Stalinism still persisted.

Ultimately, as Chapter II will demonstrate, it was this shift in the politics of literature which caused the change from “categorical” to "formulaic” Socialist Realism to occur. The literature of the 1920s which most closely fit into this genre represented a variety of approaches. The authors would often use subtle language, humorous situations, and the complexities of human emotion to demonstrate their point. Moreover, these same writers implemented the display of suffering in varying degrees: it was an important, but not a constant theme. Most importantly, “categorical Socialist Realism” did not always adhere to the principles of the Communist party: in many instances it would question or outright criticize their policies. Such literature stands in stark contrast to the novels of the Stalinist era. These narratives reflect the establishment of the Soviet Writers' Union and the homogenization of Socialist Realism. After Maxim Gorky had established the basic parameters of Socialist Realism, many writers began to emulate his style and his definition of partinost'. "Formulaic Socialist Realism" was devoid of humor, criticism, and complexity. Writers such as Sholokov, Ostrovsky, and Gladkov composed literary works which fit the increasingly narrow definition of the genre. These novels took on the optimistic tone that Gorky decreed in the First Congress of the Writers' Union; they were highly emotional, and glorified the Communist Party. Most importantly, the novels of the thirties relied on the them of "righteous suffering” to romanticize the supplemental themes of Socialist Realism. In Chapter II, I will
investigate several “categorical” and “formulaic” works of Socialist Realism, comparing their use of language, the structure of their prose, and most importantly, their approach to suffering. Ultimately, these changes within the definition of Socialist Realism reflected the greater national socio-economic changes which occurred once Joseph Stalin took control of the Soviet Union.
CHAPTER II: EXAMINING THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIALIST REALISM THROUGH LITERARY ANALYSIS

Methodology: The History of Emotion

Traces of the study of emotion in history have appeared throughout 20th century discourse, yet scholars had not established a centralized and established methodology until relatively recently. Interestingly enough, history of emotion is a discipline that is actually derived from the life-sciences. William H. Reddy's *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* serves as a bulwark for studying the past through biological and neurological principles. The first major works that used this methodology approached texts on a large scale, mapping the use of emotion in literature and historical documents from different eras. Daniel M. Gross' *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science* and Joanna Bourke's *Fear: A Cultural History* serve as foundations of the history of emotion. In these studies, textual analysis combined with biological studies is used to explore human reactions to situations. Though this cannot be described as an exact science, the combined study of humanities and natural sciences makes the history of emotion a unique approach.

Once scholars had established the history of emotion as a functional methodology, regional historians began to apply the discipline to texts of their own specialties. In the

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35 Plamper, “Emotional Turn”, 234.
case of Russian history, several experts have written books and articles discussing emotion in all sorts of written media: books, newspaper articles, letters, and political statements. A section of Mark Steinberg’s *Proletarian Imagination* focuses on the emotional references of the writings of proletarian writers of the early 20th century. He also explains how the expression of feelings distinguished these writers from the vanguard of Socialist Realism. Irina Paperno, who has become one of the foremost scholars of Soviet cultural history, has written three important works in regard to the history of emotion. The first, *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, investigates the philosophies of the Russian Symbolists: a group of intellectuals in the early 20th century who were united by the idea that one could “create” life from art. The second book, *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky’s Russia*, analysis the phenomenon of suicide which took place in the late 19th century. Paperno tries to determine the cause by looking at suicide notes and journal entries, indicating evidence of hopelessness and despair. Finally, Paperno has also published *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in Semiotics of Behavior*, which discusses both the famous and obscure writings of the radical thinker, Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Paperno shows how the emotional state of Chernyshchevsky at various points in his life had an impact on his political and social philosophy, as well as on his motivations for revolutionary change.

The Summer 2009 edition of the *Slavic Review*; which dedicated itself to applying the “emotional turn” to various pieces of Russian literature, such as Olga Matich's “Poetics of Disgust: To Eat and Die in Andrei Belyi’s Petersburg.” The first
notable aspect of the article is that Matich is not simply searching for any passage and claiming that it is emotional: she has a specific emotion in mind. Matich approaches the novel *Petersburg* by defining the term “disgust” both within the context of the story, and in a more general psychological sense. Her thesis is that, as human beings, we feel a sense of disgust when we witness the dissolving of form, as such a process is closely linked with death. The living body does not disgust us because it maintains its form naturally, yet in death a body becomes a corpse, which will do nothing but continuously rot. Matich enforces her point by referencing famous pieces of art which display characteristics of material decay, as well as the quotations of observers who were said to react with disgust upon viewing them. In this sense, disgust becomes a metaphor for life and death; though living matter may die and rot, it ultimately provides the material needed to bring about new life. How does this explanation of disgust relate to Belyi’s *Petersburg*? Matich asserts that the author specifically constructs images of disgust to repulse readers, but also to compel them. Belyi describes particular cities, food, weather and even people with adjectives like “oozing”, “morphing” and “decaying.” The author goes as far to describe mankind as “a little glob of slime.” In the end, Matich concludes that Belyi's fascination with disgust represents the author's anxiety about mortality, sexuality and the contemporary state of modern Russia. The images that Belyi uses are not random; rather specific phenomena are delineated through symptoms of decay and dissolution. For Matich, “disgust” is not a positive emotion like triumph, or a negative


one like suffering. It is an ambiguous sentiment, reflecting both repulsion and fascination.

Another article in this special edition of the *Slavic Review* is Konstantine Klioutchkine's “Between Ideology and Desire of the Self in the works of Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobroiliubov.” Taking a cue from Irina Paperno, Klioutchkine investigates the private written works, rather than the more famous public ones, of two prominent revolutionary figures of the late 19th century for the purpose of uncovering a certain set of emotions. Both Chernyshevsky and Dobroiliubov saw themselves not only as the leaders of a new social and political system, but also as the arbiters of a new kind of “progressive man.” If Russia was to move forward, the people must do away with old habits, and embrace a new, more disciplined model of living. For both Chernyshevsky and Dobroiliubov, the best place to start with the journey of reform is to re-make the self. A primary theme which Klioutchkine observes in these two revolutionaries private works is a determined resistance to the pleasures of the flesh. In particular, these men view the act of masturbation as a display of degeneracy, and thus they document their own personal struggle of resisting the use of masturbation to gratify themselves. They believe that the mundane desires of the body interfere with ideological goals; only a strong and determined proletariat has the power to build a socialist paradise.

What we see in Klioutchkine is a bit different from what we saw in Matich's article. While Matich searches Belyi's *Petersburg* for the *affirmation* of a specific emotion, Klioutchkine cites instances in which Chernyshevsky and Dobroiliubov *deny or negate* an emotion. It is as if the two men view desire as a trap which they must carefully avoid.

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Additionally, Klioutchkine relies much more on observational textual analysis than does Matich, who brings in some of the life-science aspects that have been cornerstones of the emotional turn. Still, “Between Ideology and Desire” functions as a valuable example of history of emotion: the author formulates a thesis that revolves around a specific state of feeling, and examines specific passages which confirm these observations. Both of these studies have served as inspiration and model for the research of this thesis.

**Maxim Gorky and the Importance of Mother**

To examine the use of suffering Socialist Realism, one may begin with Maxim Gorky's *Mother*. Even though Gorky had actually written a handful of other works, including *Three of Them*, *A Confession* and *Okurov City*, it was *Mother* which received the most recognition from Stalin and the Central Committee, as they touted the work as a model for Socialist Realism. The novel itself did espouse some of the principles that RAPP had put forward years before, namely the emphasis on real people and events, and not on a sort of fantastical existence. At the same time, *Mother* places a high premium on the emotional impact of socialism. Instead of merely using characters as representations of certain ideologies, Gorky made an effort to present the protagonists as much more complex, and thus much more human. He was not merely concerned with the physical and social struggle for a more just society; Gorky wanted his reader to establish a sort of relationship with individuals who suffered for the great cause. Through dialogue, action,

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and language, we see how *Mother* establishes the norm for Socialist Realism: Soviet literature would focus on real events, yet it would also establish a romantic aspect which would demonstrate that "righteous suffering" proved to be the ultimate form of dedication to the mission of socialism.

The plot of Gorky's *Mother* itself is generally straight-forward, and not quite as complex as some of the Socialist Realist novels of the 1930s. Since it takes place in 1907, the “enemy of socialism” consists of the tsarist state itself. The protagonist, Pavel, is a young but intelligent laborer who has endured poverty, state oppression, and a horrific family life. He takes an interest in socialism, and establishes himself as a local revolutionary activist. Pavel's mother, who shows reluctance and concern towards her son throughout the first half of the novel, finds herself embroiled in the radical movement as well after her son gets arrested for his actions defying the state. As the story progresses, “The Mother” establishes personal relationships for the various revolutionaries she interacts with, and becomes a maternal symbol for the movement. Ultimately, the novel reveals two critical aspects of “formulaic Socialist Realism:” first, that struggle for revolution must be achieved through personal sacrifice, transformation, and a considerable amount of suffering. Secondly, that socialism *cannot* be achieved through the acts of a single man or woman. Not only does the proletariat need to work together to overcome the oppressive power of the bourgeoisie, but socialist patriots also need to count on one another for emotional support. This constitutes a form of camaraderie in Socialist Realism: one which "The Mother" exemplifies throughout this novel.
As mentioned in the introduction, the primary vehicle which Gorky and his followers used to put forth their ideology was the specific—and explicit—theme of human suffering. We see suffering weaved into *Mother* in two distinguishable ways. The first comes in the form of narrative description, in which the author uses colorful language to highlight the physical, mental, and moral hardships the characters must endure throughout the novel. This expression of suffering manifests itself in a variety of ways in Gorky's narrative: from the frightful tale of a police raid to the consistently uneasy body language of "The Mother." It is the *author's voice* which dominates these scenes: the characters in this story never express this form of suffering explicitly.

The second vehicle for displaying suffering takes the form of monologues and character speech. This constitutes a vital part of the story, as this gives a chance for Gorky's characters to voice not only their grievances, but also their resolve to overcome those who oppress them. While at times characters will use speech to describe their own suffering, often characters will speak as a means to *question* why they must suffer in the first place. Throughout the novel, we see "The Mother", Pavel, and his comrades constantly engage in conversations which revolve around the very idea of suffering. Ultimately, the characters determine that their suffering derives from tsarist regime; they believe that their economic misery, their fear of state power, and their lack of willingness to live is due to the oppression of the State. Even though the direction of blame remains relatively one dimensional, the characters also focus on the significance of human relationships.

The most vital of Gorky's literary innovations, however, is not his use of
emotional language in both description and dialogue. Rather, it is the way in which he makes certain kinds of suffering appear to be *just, fruitful, and righteous* while others appear *unjust, savage and offensive to human decency*. Gorky frames these concepts in a simple binary: abuses of power by the tsarist state cause "unwarranted suffering", and proletarian acts directed towards the resistance of state authority usually "righteous suffering." Although "righteous suffering" is ultimately more vital to "formulaic Socialist Realism" as a whole, its counterpart proves useful in demonstrating to the reader the difference between violence leading toward the betterment of mankind, and that which oppresses him. The later writers who followed in the footsteps of Maxim Gorky made sure to include in their stories vivid examples of both “righteous” and "unwarranted suffering."

Gorky engages in emotional narrative from the first few pages of *Mother*. After introducing the reader to a grim scene of workers exiting a factory at the end of the day, the author's disdain for this very real scene comes to the forefront:

Вечером, когда садилось солнце и на стеклах домов устало блестели его · красные лучи,- фабрика выкидывала людей из своих каменных недр, словно отработанный ЖЛак, и они снова шли
по улицам, закопченные, с черными лицами, распространяя в воздухе липкий запах машинного масла, блестя голодными зубами.
Теперь в их голосах звучало оживление и даже радость, на сегодня кончилась каторга труда, дома ждал ужин и отдых. День проглощен фабрикой, машины высосали из мускулов людействительно силы, сколько им было нужно. День бесследно вычеркнут из жизни, человек сделал еще шаг к своей могиле, но он видел близко перед собой наслаждение отдыха, радости дымного кабака и - был доволен.  

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In the evening, when the sun was setting, and red rays languidly glimmered upon the windows of the houses, the factory ejected its people like burned-out ashes, and again they walked through the streets, with black, smoke-covered faces, radiating the sticky odor of machine oil, and showing the gleam of hungry teeth. But now there was animation in their voices, and even gladness. The servitude of hard toil was over for the day. Supper awaited them at home, and respite. The day was swallowed up by the factory; the machine sucked out of men's muscles as much vigor as it needed. The day was blotted out from life, not a trace of it left. Man made another imperceptible step toward his grave; but he saw close before him the delights of rest, the joys of the odorous tavern, and he was satisfied.\footnote{Maxim Gorky. \textit{Mother}, trans. D. Appleton. (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1921), 3-4.}

Without even introducing the novel's main characters, this powerful passage encapsulates many of the fundamental aspects of Socialist Realism. In particular, Gorky creates an almost perfect picture of pre-Revolutionary oppression using industrial imagery. Although later authors would depict factory towns and industrial labor as a positive activity for the great socialist cause, it is clear that Gorky believes that daily factory labor (\textit{katorga truda}) portrayed in this scene has no particular purpose. By comparing the factory workers to ashes that are “ejected” from the complex, Gorky not-to-subtly suggests that the capitalist bourgeois has drained the proletariat of its humanity. For the socialist revolutionaries who were active at the turn of the century, it was the oppressive nature of factory life that became their foremost concern. Gorky's mention of alcohol indicates one of the major problems which early Bolshevik attempted to eradicate: the epidemic of drunkenness among the poorer classes of Russia. We see this concern strongly manifested in Stalinist-era novels, where drunkenness among the protagonists is notably absent. This passage also uses specific Russian words which strongly indicate the presence of suffering. The image of workers being “burned-out” as they emerge from the factory displays a negative connotation of “fire” (\textit{ognon}). The
notion of burning, fire and intense heat stands as a sign of emotional despair, agony, and suffering in many of the Socialist Realist novels which followed Mother. More obvious is Gorky's description of the hungry masses. Hunger becomes an extremely important indicator of suffering in nearly all forms of Socialist Realism. In the case of Mother, being deprived of food and basic health is useless; the “unwarranted suffering” of the workers only serves to feed the profits of the greedy bourgeoisie.

In 1907, Maxim Gorky believed that the promise of a better future could only be achieved by defeating the capitalist apparatus and overthrowing the tsarist state. Such an outcome could not come casually and peacefully; it would only come with a firm commitment to a principled ideology. Those who called themselves proud communists would have to accept the fact that resistance sometimes comes in the form of violence, and that the only way to survive the onslaught of the bourgeoisie would be to join together. In these scenes, we see Gorky's use of meticulously romantic language to promote his notion of "righteous suffering." He illustrates the “purposeful” struggle of both of the main characters, Pavel Mikhailovich, and his mother, Pelagea Nilovna. Pavel—who represents the archetype of Katerina Clark's “positive hero”—undergoes a political and spiritual transformation by forming a socialist literary group, and eventually emerges as a local underground hero. Gorky gives his reader a concrete example of "righteous suffering" when Pavel and his comrades confront the tsarist gendarmes at the May Day celebration in Sormovo:

Все заглядывали вперед, где качалось и реяло в воздухе красное
знамя. И, видимо, чувствуя что-то большое, чего не мог выразить обычными словами, человек ругался крепкой руганью. Но и злоба, темная, слепая злоба раба, шипела змеей, извиваясь в злых словах, встревоженная светом, упавшим на нее. Мимо матери мелькали смятенные лица, подпрыгивая, пробегали мужчины, женщины, лился народ темной лавой, влекомый этой песней, которая напором звуков, казалось, опрокидывала перед собой все, расчищая дорогу. Глядя на красное знамя вдали, она - не видя - видела лицо сына, его бронзовый лоб и глаза, горевшие ярким огнем веры.  

The people looked ahead, where the red banner was swinging and streaming in the air. All were saying something and shouting; but the individual voice lost in the song—the new song, in which the old note of mournful meditation was absent. It was not the utterance of a soul wandering in solitude along the dark paths of melancholy perplexity, of a soul beaten down by want, burdened with fear, deprived of individuality, and colorless. It breathed no sighs of a strength hungering for space; it shouted no provoking cries of irritated courage ready to crush both the good and the bad indiscriminately. It did not voice the elemental instinct of the animal to snatch freedom for freedom's sake, nor the feeling of wrong or vengeance capable of destroying everything and powerless to build up anything. In this song there was nothing from the old, slavish world. It floated along directly, evenly; it proclaimed an iron virility, a calm threat.

Like the previous passage, this scene uses the language of suffering (zloba “malice,” tyomnaya “dark,” slepaya zloba “blind malice of the slave,”) to evoke an emotional response from the reader. Yet, unlike the opening of Mother, in this passage the workers have achieved a type of consciousness; they are willing to confront those authorities who they claim are responsible for their misery. In this respect, the crowd stands behind positive principles; ones which will eventually direct them away from needless pain and oppression. Gorky highlights the unity behind their movement, and the strength of their conviction (yarkim ogyem vyery, literally “bright fire of faith”)

42 Gorky, Polnoye Sobraniye sochiyenii, 262.
43 Gorky, Mother, 222-223.
Yet, perhaps the most important theme from this passage is the concept of freedom or *svoboda*. We see that Gorky's characters constantly fight for the idea of freedom, specifically the freedom from “unwarranted suffering.” Gorky uses the language of *emotional* suffering and combines it with the *emotional* language of hope, stressing that revolutionaries must fight not only for their ideological goals, but also must fight to be recognized as human beings. To endure the wrath of the *gendarmes* does involve a degree of suffering, but unlike the dehumanizing factory life that Gorky describes in his first chapter, this act of rebellion against the state police contains a purpose, thus making this type of suffering both righteous and necessary.

So far, we have seen how Maxim Gorky uses his own voice to promote socialism as a kind of humanitarian cause. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who wrote about the proletarian revolution through the lens of materialist determinism, Gorky's *Mother* portrays this struggle as matter of human dignity and freedom (*svoboda*). Yet the language of emotion does not only affect the central *political* struggle of the novel. This story also contains an extensive sub-plot which focuses not on Pavel, the positive hero, but rather his mother. After Pavel is incarcerated by the local police for inciting violence against the state, the main narrative shifts to the more *personal* emotional struggle of Pelagea Nilovna (hereafter referred to as “The Mother”). Pavel's arrest has a two-fold effect on this character: first, she becomes emotionally devastated, losing what remains of her family. At the same time, the arrest starts a new chapter in her life. Previously, "The Mother" had only had a vicarious relationship with the socialist cause, providing food and shelter to Pavel and his radical friends. After the arrest, she actively becomes
involved in the local struggle, not only offering moral support to its various members, but also appreciating the purpose of the movement itself.

The initial shock of Pavel's arrest creates a powerful, debilitating effect on "The Mother." The natural course and direction of her life, she realizes, has changed completely. Through Gorky's vivid descriptions of body language, the reader can actually detect and visualize this angst:

Она встала и, не умываясь, не молясь богу, начала прибирать комнату. В кухне на глаза ей попалась палка с куском кумача, она неприязненно взяла ее в руки и хотела сунуть под печку, но, вздохнув, сняла с нее обрывок знамени, тщательно сложила красный лоскут и спрятала его в карман, а палку переломила о колено и бросила на шесток. Потом вымыла окна и пол холодной водой, поставила самовар, оделась. Села в кухне у окна, и снова перед нею встал вопрос: <<Что же теперь делать?>> Вспомнив, что еще не молилась, она встала перед образами и, постояв несколько секунд, снова села - в сердце было пусто.

She arose, and without washing or praying began to set the room in order. In the kitchen she caught sight of the stick with the piece of red cloth. She seized it angrily, and was about to throw it away under the oven, but instead, with a sigh, removed the remnant of the flag from the pole, folded it carefully, and put in her pocket. Then she began to wash the windows with cold water, next to the floor, and finally herself; then dressed herself and prepared the samovar. She sat down at the window in the kitchen, and once more the question came to her: 'What now? What am I to do now?' Recollecting that she had not yet said her prayers, she walked up to the images, and after standing before them for a few seconds, she sat down again. Her heart was empty.

This transformative scene represents a somewhat ambiguous of suffering which is not directly related to the socialist struggle: it is a highly subjective kind of agony that one endures when one loses someone that is close to them. For the moment, this sadness

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45 Gorky, *Mother*, 244.
trumps any kind of sympathy which "The Mother" has for the socialist movement, as her
treatment of the red banner shows. We see that the new protagonist quickly goes from
rage to despair, as she asks herself how she can go on with her own life without a
husband and without a son. Her usual method of personal comfort—prayer—proves to
be ineffective, much to her own surprise. Gorky's use of the word *pustota* ("emptiness")
sets a grim tone for this passage. In the lexicon of socialism, to be without purpose is
akin to blasphemy. This notion of usefulness would dominate Soviet culture during the
reign of Stalin, in which all Soviet citizens were expected to be obedient and productive.
It is at this moment that "The Mother" feels as though her life is *devoid of meaning*. By
itself, emptiness represents a significant form of "unwarranted suffering", but "The
Mother" also suffers when she takes steps to re-capture a sense of self-purpose. Part II of
the novel depicts her journey to socialist enlightenment: participating in general strikes,
helping with the distribution of socialist literature and pamphlets, and perhaps most
importantly, acting as a maternal figure for many of the displaced and impoverished
soldiers of the great cause. Through her actions, the *gendarmes* and the guardians of the
tsarist regime view "The Mother" as a threat to society, resulting in physical beatings and
social alienation. Yet, despite these persecutions, "The Mother's” outlook on her own life
actually improves significantly. After forming a personal bond with the socialist rebels,
she no longer suffers from an affliction of *pustota*, but instead suffers for a righteous
cause.

*Character Speech in Mother*
The voice of Maxim Gorky resonates fervently through his emotional use of narrative description in *Mother*. The language which the author employs is both direct and highly emotional, avoiding the pitfalls of typical materialist Communist prose. Instead, Gorky frames socialism as a tale of personal and spiritual liberation (*svoboda*). Although Gorky creates a powerful presence throughout the novel with his effective descriptions, the voices of the characters themselves also lend weight to the notion of both “righteous” and “unwarranted” suffering. The power of speech—specifically grand declarations for the great socialist cause—would later become a common convention of “formulaic Socialist Realism.” In *Mother*, characters frequently question why it is they must toil under the heels of the bourgeoisie, why some Russians live in luxury while the rest grind out a meaningless existence, and why no one has had the discipline or courage to challenge the existing system. The revolutionaries—and especially the protagonists—answer these questions proudly with dissident rhetoric, and a promise of a better tomorrow. Ultimately, through both monologue and dialogue, Gorky’s characters strive to give their suffering a sense of meaning through the struggle for social and economic justice.

Nearly half of the prose in *Mother* comes in the form of long speeches. The message of hope, revolution, and humanitarianism is certainly not a subtle one. However, despite the plethora of speeches in this novel, there are a few that truly demonstrate Gorky’s vision of suffering and redemption. Many of the minor characters do have their great rhetorical moments, yet it is Pavel and "The Mother" who give the
best examples of “righteous suffering” through rhetoric.

The first major speech occurs in the opening chapters of the book, when Pavel first begins to take an interest in socialist literature and starts consorting with socialist sympathizers. The second takes place during a May Day demonstration, in which "The Mother" verbally represents herself as the maternal, humane symbol of the movement; an iconic figure whose main concern is the welfare of her children. Finally, the conclusion of the novel features vital speeches from both "The Mother" and Pavel. Pavel gives a roaring battle cry for socialism during his trial, and "The Mother" confronts a mob of gendarmes and delivers a passionate, yet pugnacious, message of hope and justice. All of these speeches signify the desire to end human suffering and political injustice, as well as create a world where workers can treat each other as equals.

In the third chapter of *Mother*, Pavel, a young man with a broken family life and an exhausting, low-paying factory job, garners an interest in revolutionary socialism. "The Mother" originally objects to this, fearing for her own son's safety and well-being. Once Pavel begins to invite other sympathizers to his home, "The Mother" becomes even more concerned about the ramifications of such libelous activity. When one of Pavel's comrades asks about the primary goal of their movement, the protagonist replies that their aims must not only be focused on material justice, but the right to be treated as human beings:

"Нет! - сам себе ответил он, твердо глядя в сторону троих. -- Мы должны показать тем кто сидит на наших шеях и закрывает нам глаза, что мы все видим,- мы не глупы, не звери, не только есть хотим,мы хотим жить, как достойно людей! Мы должны показать..."
врагам, что наша каторжная жизнь, которую они нам навязали, не мешает нам сравняться с ними в уме и даже встать выше их! --

'No!' he [Pavel] answered himself, looking hard in the direction of the three [his comrades]. We want to be people. We must show those who sit on our necks, and cover up our eyes, that we see everything, that we are not foolish, we are not animals, and that we do not exist merely to eat, but to also live like decent human beings. We must show our enemies that our life of servitude, of hard toil which they impose upon us, does not hinder us from measuring up to them in intellect, and as to spirit, that we rise far above them!"47

We see, once again, the use of the word “work”, or rabota, expressed in negative terms. Much of Pavel's criticism is a classic Marxist argument against the oppression of the urban working masses: laborers are forced to work long hours for minimal pay. Pavel describes this existence as akin to slavery (katarzhnaya zhizn', literally “penal life”) which reduces him and his comrades to nothing but cogs in a machine, thus representing the ultimate in "unwarranted suffering." The protagonist's voice stands defiant, stating that the socialists must show their oppressors that they are not zvyeri ("animals") but rather they are dostoyna lyudyey ("decent people," or human beings.) It is a call to end "unwarranted suffering", not on the basis of economic egalitarianism, but on the basis of human dignity.

Though Pavel embodies the heroic, masculine nature of revolutionary socialism, "The Mother" plays a different, but equally important role. During the scene of the May Day demonstration, Pelagea Nilovna gives Pavel and his comrades an inspirational and highly emotional speech, exemplifying the mission of the demonstrators through the lens of a maternal figure:

46 Gorky, Polnoye Sobranie sochinenii, 170.
47 Gorky, Mother, 36.
Послушайте, ради Христа! Все вы -- родные ... все вы сердечные ... поглядите без боязни, -- что случилось? Идут вмире дети, кровь наша, идут за правдой ... для всех! Для всех вас, для младенцев ваших обрекли себя на крестный путь ищут дней светлых. Хотят другой жизни в правде, в справедливости ... добра хотят для всех!48

Listen for the sake of Christ! You are all dear people, you are all good people. Open up your hearts. Look around without fear, without terror. Our children are going into world. Our children are going, our blood is going for the truth; with honesty in their hearts they open the gates of the new road—a straight, wide road for all. For all of you, for the sake of your young ones, they have devoted themselves to the sacred cause. They seek the sun of new days that shall always be bright. They want another life, the life of truth and justice, of good for all.49

"The Mother's" speech, stylistically, resembles those that Pavel gives throughout the novel; the feminine protagonist appeals much more to the promise of a kinder, safer future in which her “children” can live in peace. Most importantly, “The Mother” uses a particular Russian word that would become a prominent staple of Socialist Realism. Krov’, the Russian word for “blood”, resonates strongly throughout the genre, and especially throughout Mother. For socialists, krov’ represents a precious human resource which cannot be wasted, and can only be used constructively. The novel contains several instances in which Pavel, “The Mother,” and other characters paint their adversaries as vampires which can “suck their blood.” In later works, such as Gladkov's Cement and Ostrovsky's How The Steel was Tempered, the author would revive the subject of krov’ in a much more positive context. Here, "The Mother" also uses this word optimistically, professing that her children and her friends must not allow their strength to be depleted by oppression; they must instead focus their energy (krov’) in order to achieve a sense of

48 Gorky, Polnoye Sobraniye sochiyenii, 268.
49 Gorky, Mother, 232.
truth (pravda). Like her son Pavel, Pelagea Nilovna is addressing the issue of suffering. To suffer in a life of un-truth and injustice represents a cardinal sin, yet to suffer for the sake of pravda represents something pure and noble. In many ways, Gorky's dialectical use of the terms krov' and pravda encapsulates the very nature of "righteous suffering."

For Gorky, as well as his followers, this idea of pravda refers—almost without exception—to the socialist cause: a society which would operate on goodness, equality and dignity instead of bourgeois oppression. Thus we can conclude that, within the lexicon of Socialist Realism, the term krov' contains implications of a constant struggle for a beneficial ideal, and therefore suggests a form of "righteous suffering."

The conclusion to Maxim Gorky's Mother amplifies the theme "righteous suffering" by combining the stirring rhetoric of the protagonists with their courageous acts of martyrdom. For Katerina Clark, the “master plot” of a Socialist Realist novel nearly always contains an element of physical and/or psychological sacrifice on the part of the main characters. If Mother represents a kind of prototype for the genre as a whole, its ending gives a powerful demonstration of an ultimate sacrifice for the cause, and therefore the most complete expression of "righteous suffering" and loyalty towards socialism. After a long and agonizing wait, the young Pavel finally gets a chance to defend himself in court for charges of treason. However, much like in Plato's Apology, the vibrant revolutionary voices his disregard for an unfair, “bourgeois” legal system. It is at this point where Pavel identifies himself as his comrades as members of a revolutionary cause:
We are revolutionists, and will be such as long as private property exists, as long as some merely command, and as long as others merely work. We take stand against the society whose interests you are bidden to protect as your irreconcilable enemies, and reconciliation between us is impossible until we shall have been victorious. We will conquer—we workingmen! Your society is not at all so powerful as it thinks itself. That very property, for the production and preservation of which it sacrifices millions of people enslaved by it—that very force which gives it the power over us—stirs up discord within its own ranks, destroys them physically and morally.  

Though the language of Gorky's novel is direct, explicit, and emotional, the vast majority of *Mother* refrains from engaging too heavily in the specifics of socialist ideology. As we have seen, both the author and the characters alike place the revolution in a much more general context about human dignity and freedom. Here, Pavel breaks from this tradition by using Marxist terminology (sobstvyennost’ “property”, rabochiy “workingmen”) in order to contrast himself and his followers to the tsarist regime. He even vaguely refers to Marxist/Leninist theory by suggesting that capitalism as a system will fail due to its need for continuous expansion. Pavel's language resonates with a much more militant quality, by identifying his accusers as enemies which must be conquered. It is at this point, when Pavel publicly accuses the court—and by extension the entirety of the bourgeoisie—of perpetuating the dynamics of oppression, that he has

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50 Gorky, *Polnoye Sobraniye sochiyenii*, 381.
demonstrates a triumphant act of "righteous suffering." Shortly after, the court sentences Pavel to exile, and he permanently disappears from the novel.

Though banishment from society represents a high sacrifice for the socialist cause, death becomes an even greater expression of ideological faith. The significance of "The Mother" becomes paramount at the very end of the story, when she takes her own life for the struggle of the proletariat. Before Pelagea Nilovna engages the gendarmes in a physical confrontation, she rouses her brethren with a gloomy, yet highly emotional speech:

Бедность, голод и болезни - вот что дает людям их работа. Всё против нас - мы издохаем всю нашу жизнь день за днем в работе, всегда в грязи, в обмане, а нашими трудами тешатся и объедаются другие и держат нас, как собак на цепи, в невежестве - мы ничего не знаем, и в страхе - мы всего боимся! Ночь- наша жизнь, темная ночь!52

Poverty, hunger, and sickness—that's what work gives to the poor people. This order of things pushes us to theft and to corruption; and over us satiated and calm, live the rich. In order that we should obey the police, the authorities, the soldiers, all are in their hands, all are against us, everything is against us. We perish all our lives day after day in toil, always in filth, in deceit. And others enjoy themselves and gormandize themselves with our labor; and they hold us like dogs on chains, in ignorance. We know nothing, and in terror we fear everything. Our life is night, a dark night; it is a terrible dream.53

"The Mother" paints an extremely vivid portrait of human suffering, utilizing words which evoke the plight of the oppressed: byednost' ("poverty"), golod ("hunger"), and bolyezni ("sicknesses"). We also see that Gorky, once again, uses the term rabota negatively: proletarian labor does nothing but further the control of the capitalist class. "The Mother" also uses the word krov' with vampire imagery. Like Pavel, Pelagea

52 Gorky, Polnoye Sobraniye sochiyenii, 403.
53 Gorky, Mother, 495.
Nilovna positively identifies the cause of proletarian suffering, and uses this speech to get others to come to this realization as well. It is at this point that "The Mother"—as well as the exiled Pavel—come to what Lenin refers to as the “consciousness of the working class”: a point of maturity from the more primitive “spontaneity” or “desire for revolution.” With this spiritual revelation, "The Mother" threatens the authorities, who retaliate by attempting to choke her. Before she finally perishes, Pelagea Nilovna leaves the reader with the promise of hope: “Морями крови не угасят правды.”

"They will not drown the truth even with seas of blood.”

With that haunting conclusion, Maxim Gorky created a document which would become the model for “formulaic Socialism Realism” nearly twenty-five years after its publication. It is evident why Mother would appeal so much to a man such as Joseph Stalin: the language is highly militant and explicit, and it portrays the socialist cause not merely as the natural outcome of a materialist vision of history, but as a valiant struggle for basic principles of humanitarianism. Gorky does not present socialism as a complicated riddle, in which the reader must wade through innuendo and sub-text. Rather, the author tugs at the reader's emotions and feelings, forcing the reader to sympathize with the plight of the workers. To enhance the effectiveness of his prose, Gorky carefully employs both emotional narrative description and emotional character speech. We also see that Mother makes a stark distinction between "unwarranted suffering", which represents naked oppression, hunger, poverty, and exploitation, and "righteous suffering," which involves the collective struggle and personal sacrifice for the

54 Gorky, Polnoye Sobraniye sochinenii, 404.
55 Gorky, Mother, 499.
socialist cause. It is precisely these aspects of *Mother* which made this work the perfect model for the Soviet Writers' Union. Gorky's militancy with language, his lack of subtlety, and his romantic and emotional depiction of the socialist movement fit in perfectly with Stalin's grand vision of “socialism in one country.”

*Socialist Realism before Orthodoxy: The N.E.P. era.*

While *Mother* and other works of Maxim Gorky would become highly influential in Russia during the 1930s, the intervening period of the New Economic Policy proved to be radically different in the literary world; it produced a genre of literature which discussed socialism in a real world context (“categorical Socialist Realism.”) As discussed in Chapter One, this was *before* proletarian literature had been consolidated into a single definition. The formation of the Russian Association for Proletarian Writers in 1928 served originally to allow the Soviet government to establish more control over the literary current of socialist writers. Yet in the end, the organization resisted directives from the Central Committee, and included other literary groups such as the On Guardists and the Proletkult. Thus, until 1934, a centralized definition of Socialist Realism did not truly exist, as there were many different styles and subjects which proletarian writers chose to employ.

While "formulaic Socialist Realism" promoted the romantic ideals of Stalinism, the writers of “categorical Socialist Realism” in the early twenties used many different styles and themes. Unlike Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, works from the N.E.P. era adopted a
much more subtle style, relying on character development, foreshadowing, and literary symbolism to convey their narrative. Novels such as Leonid Leonov's *Badgers* and Valentin Kataev's *Embezzlers* (1929) address complex questions about particular issues surrounding the establishment of socialism within Russia. These authors appeal to the reader's intellect instead of their emotions: we do not see the militant language and the explicit, visual examples of suffering that Gorky uses in his work. Perhaps most importantly, “categorical Socialist Realists” often criticized the official ideology of the Communist Party. While these writers still identified themselves as socialists and warriors for an egalitarian paradise, they did not see the Party of Lenin as infallible. This was to change dramatically a decade later when Socialist Realist authors fully accepted the notion of what C. Vaughan James describes as the phenomenon of *partiinost*': literature had to serve the interests of the Communist Party to be considered legitimate.

Kataev's *Embezzlers* and Leonov's *Badgers* are highly representative of many pieces of “categorical Socialist Realism” during the era of N.E.P. Both of these works feature colorful characters, historically accurate events, and conflicting definitions of socialism. The literary public lauded both of these writers as having produced superior examples of proletarian fiction. What most distinguishes these novels from both *Mother* and the Stalinist-era novels which *Mother* influenced is their various idiosyncrasies. Books such as *How the Steel Was Tempered*, *Cement*, and *Virgin Soil Upturned* use a similar structure and language, Kataev and Leonov create their own narrative style and discuss a variety of relevant themes. Not only do these nuances make the N.E.P. novels more pleasurable to read, they attest to the socio-political-literary differences that existed
between N.E.P. and the era of High Stalinism. Socialist writers could be original and unique in the twenties; under Stalin, they had to adhere to Maxim Gorky's literary template.

The “categorical Socialist Realist” works of the twenties did not display the explicit and highly emotional brand of "righteous suffering" seen in Gorky's *Mother* and the works of the thirties. In fact, "righteous suffering" is almost completely absent from their stories. However, Kataev and Leonov do not completely omit the the faculty of suffering in general; through symbolism, sub-text and sophisticated prose, these author indicate the presence of “unwarranted suffering.” Most critically, neither *Embezzlers* nor *The Badgers* link suffering, righteous or otherwise, with a *formulaic political agenda*. Instead, these authors use suffering as a kind of personal socio-political commentary on the situation in the Soviet Union during the twenties.

**Truth Through Satire: Valentin Kataev's *Embezzlers***

Like Gorky, Valentin Kataev played the role of a literary rogue throughout much of the early 20th century. Robert Russell details Kataev's biographical information in his 1981 work, *Valentin Kataev*. A Ukranian by birth, Kataev started his literary career much later than Gorky, beginning his early life as a regionally acclaimed poet. After joining the military and participating in the First World War, Kataev dabbled in a brief journalism career, writing for such prominent Moscow newspapers such as *Trud* (“Labor”), *Gudok* (“Whistle”), and the staple of the Thaw Period, *Novy mir*. The burgeoning writer used
these newspapers as a kind of literary platform, where he was able to publish many short stories. It was during this period that Kataev finally wrote his satirical masterpiece: *Rastrachkiki* ("The Embezzlers"). This quickly became Kataev's most popular work, and Maxim Gorky himself praised *The Embezzlers* as a shining example of socialist literature. Although the style of *Embezzlers* stood in sharp contrast to the works of Gorky, he still appreciated Kataev's use of humor and character dialogue to convey a stinging critique of the N.E.P. era.³⁶

Kataev's short but poignant story makes a much more powerful revolutionary statement than some of the more explicit Stalinist works of the thirties. If the two protagonists of *Mother* represented "positive heroes" of socialism, the two main characters of *Embezzlers* can truly be called "negative heroes", as Kataev portrays them as the embodiment of bourgeois materialism and corruptive greed. Ultimately, Kataev depicts the era of the New Economic policy as a facade: something which appears to be a new world, but in fact greatly resembles Russia before the Revolution. Thus, *Embezzlers* keeps the focus on the reality of the Soviet Union during the 1920s. Unlike *Mother*, the message of *Embezzlers* is geared more towards a more sophisticated audience. In particular, Kataev does not overemphasize the theme of suffering to the degree that Gorky does; the story suggests that Russia as a whole suffers due to widespread hypocrisy, fraud, and bourgeois materialism. The militancy of *Mother* is absent in *Embezzlers*; Kataev signifies his support for a more authentic socialist society through more subtle critique and satire.

The general plot of *Embezzlers* unfolds in a rather absurd manner. Two Moscow bureaucrats, Filipp Stepanovich Prokhorov (an accountant) and his cashier Vanechka, stumble upon a large sum of money after hearing about a series of scandals within their own firm. Rather than trying to find the proper owners of this fortune, the two decide to embark on a spending spree and explore the Moscow nightlife. The rest of the book details a night of debauchery, drunkenness, and mischief, eventually resulting in a foray into the countryside. On a return trip to Moscow, the embezzlers realize, much to their own shock, that they have spent all of the money. In the final scene, both characters realize that they have retreated to an illusionary, “vacation” type world, and that reality intends to punish them for their delusions of grandeur. The adventure-tale tone of *Embezzlers* allows for the narrative of humorous situations and embarrassing displays for intoxication, but underneath it all is a serious message about the weaknesses of the New Economic Policy.

Although there is no dichotomous conflict within *Embezzlers*—proletariat against bourgeoisie, rebel against state, Red against White—Kataev still manages to make a statement about N.E.P. and the notion of socialism in general by utilizing two important literary techniques. The most critical theme of *Embezzlers* is the concept of hypocrisy and falseness. Many of Kataev's scenic descriptions and character monologues contain inherent contradictions, expressed in a humorous manner. The author's second critical theme—bizarrely enough—is drunkenness. It was vodka that initiated the embezzlers' journey, and it was vodka that caused it to spiral out of control. The state of intoxication allows the protagonists to delve further into a realm of unhinged hedonism, becoming
oblivious to the day-to-day mundaneness of both urban and rural Russia. Drunkenness also serves to symbolize the farcical quality of Soviet society, where bureaucrats delude themselves into believing that the system has become more egalitarian since the days of Tsar Nicholas II, when in fact the same inequalities still exist. Both drunkenness and hypocrisy point towards the a greater theme of self-delusion, which is the primary cause of suffering in N.E.P.

One of the first vital passages which sets the scene for the novel’s dialectical hypocrisy in *Embezzlers*—as Robert Russell also points out—involves a scenic description of a street in Moscow:

Now, strictly speaking, there hasn’t been any Myasnitskaya St. in the world of ours for some time...There’s one called First of May St. instead. But, in the middle November, at that dreary hour of the morning when the Moscow rain busies itself with drenching everyone

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in its monotonous drizzle, when carts loaded with unbelievably long rods of some indeterminate function rumble by and wait in ambush for you at bends in the road to smack you right in the kisser with their sharp ends, when your way is suddenly blocked by a milling machine or dynamo that has suddenly rolled out of some engineering bureau onto the sidewalk, when an enormous beast of a horse smashes you in the shoulder with an iron-clad wagon tongue and an automobile slops and an automobile slops a wave of mud over your already besplattered overcoat, when the glass sign-plates of the state banks stun you with their sinister gold lettering, when millstones, chaff cutters and saws stand ready any minute to smash through their gloomy display windows, hurl themselves out at you and cream you on the spot, when every street corner reeks of lamp gas escaping from burst pipes, when green-shaded lamps burn the whole day through on the desks of the office-workers—who at such a time can bring himself to call this street by any other name. Nope, Myasnitskaya it's always been, and Myasnitskaya it's going to stay. It was evidently destined from its very birth to be called Myasnitskaya, and any other name, ever so splendid, is just never going to stick.\footnote{Valentin Kataev, \textit{Embezzlers}, trans. Charles Rougle. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975), 126.}

Kataev sets the tone for the rest of the novel with this brief description of a busy Moscow street. Ultimately, the purpose of this passage is to illustrate the way in which certain aspects Russian society remained steadfast in spite of a new Communist regime. The new street name, “First of May St.” implies a relationship to the May Day celebration: a prominent holiday among many socialist organizations. Yet, as the author points out, it is the same dubious characters who live on and traverse through First of May St. on a regular basis. By using phrases describing the ostentatious displays of the passers-by, and implying physical acts of violence, Kataev creates a sense of gloom and danger. This scenic paradox stands as a recurrent theme throughout the rest of the book: although Moscow may have vowed to taken on a new image which rejects the materialist conventions of bourgeois capitalism, this change is only superficial. Through imagery, Kataev implies that political regimes may change, but the individuals who live within
them have a much harder time changing. Thus, First of May St., at least in the minds of
the public, retains its original name. The scene here stands as a greater metaphor for the
suffering of Russia: citizens in Moscow believe their world has changed, but in fact the
most nefarious aspects of the *ancien regime* still persist.

Kataev delivers an example of absurdist hypocrisy in his second chapter, in
which Nikita, a courier who works for Prokerov the accountant, boards a Moscow
streetcar while on his way to make a delivery:

> Никита терпеливо дождался трамвая и, работая локтями,
> втиснулся на площадку. Вагон был новенький, только что из
> ремонта, сплошь выкрашенный снаружи свежим краплаком и
> расписанный удивительными вещами. Тут были
> ультрамариновые тракторы на высоких зубчатых колесах,
> канареечно-желтые дирижабли, зеленые, как переводные
> картички, кудрявые деревенские пейзажи, тщательно
> выписанные - кирпичик к кирпичику- фабричные корпуса,
> армии, стада и манифестации. Знамена и эмблемы окружали
> золотые лозунги: «Земля крестьянам - фабрики рабочим>>,
> «Да здравствует смычка города и деревни», «Воздушный
> Красный флот- наш незыблемый оплот» и многие другие. От
> мокрых стен вагона еще пахло олифой и скипидаром. В общем,
> весь он был похож на тир, поставленный на колеса и выехавший,
> к общему удивлению, в одно прекрасное воскресенье из
> увеселительного сада. Подобных вагонов ходило по Москве
> немного, и Никита ужасно любил в них ездить. Они приводили
> его в состояние восхищения и патриотической гордости. «Вот
> это я понимаю, - думал он, неизменно протискиваясь на
> площадку,- трамвай что надо. Вполне советский, нашенский»

Nikita waited patiently for the streetcar, and when it came, elbowed
his way onto the platform. The car was brand-new, just out of the
repair-shop, had a fresh coat of lacquer and was covered with
fantastic paintings. There were ultramarine tractors with enormous
toothy wheels, canary-yellow dirigibles, leafy green landscapes that
resembled lithographic prints, factory buildings meticulously painted
brick and brick, armies, herds of animals and demonstrations
processions, whose banners and emblems were bordered by those
golden slogans ‘Land to the peasants, factories to the workers!’,
‘Long live the alliance of town and country!’, ‘The Red Air Force is
our bulwark of defense!’ and many others. The moist walls of the car
still smelled of drying oil and turpentine. All in all, you could say it

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resembled a shooting gallery on wheels that, to everyone's amazement, up and drove out of the amusement park one fine Sunday. There were only a few such streetcars running around Moscow, and Nikita passionately loved to ride them. They both delighted him and filled him with patriotic pride. 'Now this,' he would think, squeezing his way as usual onto the crowded platform, 'is what I call a streetcar. And she's all ours, too—Soviet through and through.'

The author uses the streetcar as an analogy which contrasts official Soviet propaganda from the reality of urban life. In many cities from the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century, the streetcar proved to be a highly efficient way of moving large volumes of people from one place to another in a short period of time. Yet, this useful contraption also created a sense of social stratification: those bureaucrats who managed to rise to prominence in the Soviet system could afford to ride the streetcar whenever they wished, whereas the innumerable Soviet citizens who still lived in poverty could not. It is ironic that Nikita feels a sense of pride gazing at the elaborate posters which coat the interior of the streetcar walls, professing equality and unity between urban workers and peasantry. When the protagonists actually travel to the countryside, the myth perpetuated by the posters becomes even more hollow. Moscow becomes a city of exorbitant wealth while the peasantry still lives in poverty and backwardness. The "unwarranted suffering" of inequality continues.

The theme of drunkenness persists throughout Embezzlers with a comic tone. After "accidentally" falling upon 12,000 rubles due to a technicality, the main characters, Prokhorov and Vanechka spend the rest of the day carousing around Moscow in a drunken stupor. They eventually end up staying over at Prokhorov's apartment, and much to their chagrin, they wake up the next morning:

Kataev, Embezzlers, 138.
The next day Filipp Stepanovich woke up at his usual hour of the morning... Those who have the most agonizing time of all waking up after one of those scandalous nights, however, are elderly bookkeepers burdened down with families and a susceptibility to liver ailments. When this type of citizen wakes up, he usually spends a long time lying uneasily on his back with his eyes closed, and around and inside him he hears such a dreadful roar and rumble that he imagines himself to be riding on the roof of a freight train. He lies there and counts up how much money he's going to make it stretch until the next payday. His knees tremble violently, and unpleasantly, his heels itch unnaturally, his eye twitches, and right in the middle of his organism, somewhere between his heart and the pit of his stomach, he feels a buzzing, sucking sensation, a strange hollowness. And our poor citizen lies there on his back, not daring to open his eyes, recollecting the details from yesterday's swinishness and awaiting that terrible, inevitable moment when the sneering face of his wife will appear over the sofa (in the overwhelming majority of cases of this sort, the awakening process definitely does not take place in the conjugal bed) and he will hear her acrid voice saying: 'Go take a look at yourself in the mirror, you old pig! Open your shameless eyes and just look at your jacket—the back of it is all

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white! I wonder what rat-hole you were wallowing in this time!"\textsuperscript{62}

This hangover episode stands as a sort of metaphor for the transition from fantasy to reality. For the two protagonists, the previous evening was a worry-free romp through the city, armed with a sack of rubles and no concern about the consequences. Although money was a primary factor in their exploits, the alcohol caused them to escape the “mental prisons” of the day-to-day grind. The repercussions of excessive intoxication mirror the repercussions of avoiding reality. In the case of Filipp Stepanovich Prokhorov, the unwilling journey back to the real world not only results in physical agony, but, in a comic twist, Prokhorov must face the wrath of his insufferable wife. The protagonist's dilemma resembles the greater problem Kataev implies about the N.E.P. period: so-called socialists are only deluding themselves that real change has occurred. Such an emphasis on the consequences of drunkenness characterizes a socialist critique. Historically, the Bolshevik party condemned the use of alcohol as they believed it to be form of backward and uncivilized behavior. Although Prokhorov and his assistant temporarily find themselves in possession of a vast sum of money, they nevertheless engage in bad habits which produce nothing but a temporary release. In many ways, the protagonist's hangover represents a form of "unwarranted suffering."

Perhaps the most telling scene in Kataev's \textit{Embezzlers} takes place the night after Preherkov's terrible hangover. For both of the main characters, a single night of recklessness is not enough: more fun must be had! On the second day of their journey, the protagonists travel around Moscow frequenting high-class restaurants and bars, and

\textsuperscript{62} Valentin Kataev, \textit{Embezzlers}, 158-159.
tourist attractions. During their stay at the European Hotel, they encounter a lively plutocrat named Zhorzhik. After chatting with Zhorzhik and his voluptuous lady-friends—and after consuming more vodka—the protagonists travel to an exclusive club. Much to their astonishment, the main foyer is populated with former princes, royals, and even Tsar Nicholas II. However, the characters find out later on—from a woman named Isabella—that these nobles are not who they seem:

Представь себе, начали недавно снимать одну картину, называется <<Николай Кровавый>>, где царь участвует, и царица, и вся свита, министры и разные депутаты. И, главное, снимаются не какие-нибудь там артисты, а настоящие бывшие генералы, адмиралы, адъютанты, офицеры. Даже митрополит один и тот снимался. чтоб мне не сойти, тьфу, с этого места! По три рубля в день получали, а которые на лошади, так те - восемь. Пораздавали им ихние всевозможные лейб-гвардейские френчи, галифе, погоны, сабли - нате, надевайте. Потеха. Сначала они, конечно, сильно стеснялись переодеваться. Думали, что как только наденут свои старорежимные формы, так их сейчас же - бак за заднюю часть и в понверт. Но потом, однако, переоделись. Как-никак все таки три рубля на земле не валяются. Потом их три дня мучили - снимали как на площади, так и в самом Зимнем дворце. Народу собралось видимо-невидимо как на наводнение. Конную милицию вызывали. Даже царя Николая для этого дела выкопали настолько подходящего что многие бывшие в обморок попадали, как только увидели -до того, говорят, похож. И, представь себе, кто же? Один простои, обыкновенный булочни из Петербурга, а по фамилии Середа. Пьяница и жулик. По фамилии Середа. У него и борода такая, и усы такие же точь-в-точь - словом, вылитый царский полтинник.63

A little while ago, see, they started shooting this film that's gonna be called 'Nicholas the Bloody' with the Tsar and Tsarina and the whole bunch—ministers, deputies, what have you. But the thing is that they're not gonna use just any old actors...all these guys really were generals, admirals, adjutants and officers. They're even using the real Archbishop, cross my heart and hope to die! They paid 'em three roubles a day, except for the ones on horseback, who got eight. They gave 'em all kinds of field jackets, and riding pants, and epaulettes, and sabers and junk from the Tsar's bodyguards, just like that, handed it out and told 'em to get into it. It was a gas. At first, you know, they were all scared to dress up in their old uniforms, because they figured that as soon as they did they'd all get their butts shot off and it'd be

63 Kataev, Sobraniye sochiyenii, 34-35.
curtains for everybody. But anyway, they ended up putting the stuff on. No matter how you look at it, you just don't find three rubles growing on trees these days. Then they racked them for three days—shot 'em on the square, shot 'em in the Winter Palace. There were gobs of people all over the place, and they had to send for the mounted police, just like there was a flood going on, or something. They even dug up a Tsar Nicholas for this deal that looked so much like the real one that a lot of have-beens fainted dead away soon as they got a glimpse of him—that's how real he looked. And who do you think the guy is? Some ordinary run of the mill baker from over on the Petersburg side. A drunkard and a swindler. Name's Sereda. He's got exactly the same kind of beard and exactly the same mustache—a dead ringer for the real Tsar.  

Isabella then reveals that, since the experimental filming of “Nicholas the Bloody” got canceled, the “actors” continued to be paid three roubles a day to essentially assume these roles and drink liquor. Kataev once again uses the notion of absurdity to illustrate the backwards nature of N.E.P. society. In a drunken haze, the protagonists believe that they have traveled back in time to encounter the royalty of the pre-Revolutionary days. The intoxication does not merely affect the main characters: it becomes clear that all of the drunk patrons participate in this distortion of reality. This scene, however, also reinforces Kataev's notion of farce and hypocrisy which has captivated urban society. Even those who were not actually members of the upper-class—such as the drunken baker who pretends he is Nicholas II—have become so attached to the roles they have crafted for themselves that they can no longer separate fantasy from reality. This entire display further demonstrates the “culture of illusion” which Kataev believes has become pervasive in Moscow during the 1920s. For Kataev, this is the ultimate form of “unwarranted suffering;” instead of depicting emotional reactions to physical oppression and socialist strife, the author shows how bourgeois materialism can spawn a society of

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hypocrites and play-actors.

Despite the protagonists' efforts to prolong their physical and mental “vacation,” grim reality remains only a few steps behind throughout the rest of the story. Gradually, Prohorkov and Vanechka begin to realize that the money and booze which have propelled them through their wild adventure has taken its toll. On the return train home from the village of Verkhnaya Beryozka, the two shockingly discover that they have spent almost all of the money they have stolen. It is not long before both of them are arrested by the authorities and sentenced to five years in prison, promptly ending the story. Kataev's implication of the protagonists' impending fate represents the only trace of "righteous suffering" within the entire narrative; they have committed crimes against the Soviet state and the socialist revolution, thus their punishment is rightly deserved. On the surface, Valentin Kataev's story appears to be nothing more than entertainment: a humorous adventure tale with both urban and rural backdrops. Yet, as we have seen, the exploits of Prohorkov and Vanechka mirror the greater problem of the Soviet Union during the N.E.P. period. Kataev's criticism poignantly suggests that, although some would praise the twenties as embracing a “culture of pluralism,” the author believes that “culture of pretending” exists in its place. From the ornately decorated streetcar to the farcical display of the nobles, we see a society which lack genuine proletarian concerns: the people have simply deluded themselves that they have accepted new values. Without a national direction or a guided ethos, the Russian Revolution means nothing.

If we take Maxim Gorky's definition of suffering, the protagonists certainly do not endure oppression and physical violence like the workers in Mother. However, one
can certainly argue that these characters suffer from a sense of “mental backwardness;” something which can be just as destructive. Although Vladimir Lenin and the communist vanguard have supposedly established a new order within Russia, many of the problems the Bolsheviks hoped to eliminate still persist. Prohorkov and Vanechka live in a world of corruption, drunkenness, and inequality: three cardinal sins in the gospel of socialism. While the protagonists certainly do not appear to be innately good-natured, we see that their social environment only encourages their deceitful impulses. When Prohorkov and Vanechka finally face justice, the reader is left wondering: are these characters fully responsible for their own demise, or had the world of N.E.P. become so pluralistic that it was willing to accept the values of embezzlement and self-delusion as acceptable values?

This brings up another important point: if Valentin Kataev's *Embezzlers* supports a more disciplined and more structured society of socialism, why would it be to difficult to imagine him writing a novel like this during the reign of Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Writer's Union? The answer lies in the novel's approach to critique. Unlike *Mother*, Kataev's deeper themes are buried beneath more superficial story elements. We do not see emotional, militant language or the existence of any major struggle between two ideological forces. Kataev does not address socialism explicitly the way that Maxim Gorky does. During the thirties, "formulaic Socialist Realism" was extremely direct so that even those undereducated peasants and workers—who were the presumed audience —could understand the overall message. Furthermore, the *Embezzlers* is essentially a satire. Kataev uses the faculty of humor to make his story more amusing, but also to make his critique more effective. The novels of the Stalinist era are almost devoid of
humor: the socialist struggle became an extremely serious emotional topic. Though *Embezzlers* does fit the earlier, categorical definition of Socialist Realism by reflecting on real events and supports proletarian socialism, its unique style certainly would not suit the parameters set by Maxim Gorky and the Soviet Writers' Union. Thus, Kataev's masterful work remains an emblem of the very era it was trying to criticize.

*Skepticism on Paradise: Leonid Leonov's The Badgers*

Although *Embezzlers* may deviate from the style of many later pieces of Socialist Realism, the ideological message of hope remains, for the most part, intact. There was, however, another pinnacle work of “categorical Socialist Realism” which diverged even further from the formula to be established in the 1930s. Leonid Leonov, one of the most prolific writers and playwrights of the early 20th century, wrote a number of important pieces of early Socialist Realism. Like Kataev, Leonov rejects the realm of the abstract and the utopian, focusing instead on contemporary events and his perception of real history. His first major novel, *The Badgers*, outlines some of the major complexities and conflicts which surrounded the communist ideals in the early 20s. Unlike *Embezzlers*, which takes place during the establishment of N.E.P., the main narrative of *The Badgers* takes place just before the Revolution of 1917, and also during the Russian Civil War. Although this would become a popular setting for many works in the thirties, Leonov's book differed greatly from the tone to be set later by Maxim Gorky and the Soviet Writers' Union.
The Badgers is one of the few entries into the Socialist Realist which actually criticizes the aims of the Communist Party, implicitly arguing that the urban-based Bolsheviks and the rural peasantry have fundamentally different values, and that the implementation of a single system can not possibly be successful everywhere. That is not to say that Leonov did not support socialism; on the contrary, he actually wrote for a Communist newspaper and joined the Red Army in 1918. He did, however, view socialism in a more multi-faceted manner than many of his political and literary peers. In The Badgers, we see the Revolution through the eyes of two brothers, both who become disillusioned with the tsarist regime. While one sibling runs off to join a factory union and embrace the tenets of Bolshevism, the other sibling, Senya, rejects the urban sensibilities of his brother and instead forms a colition of “rebel” peasants which go off and form their own independent commune. Although Leonov sets the story up as a classic “brother against brother” dynamic, most of his narrative focuses on the experiences of Senya and his attempt to create an authentic obschina—a 19th century definition of a rural commune. Without showing bias towards one side or another, The Badgers effectively demonstrates a fierce ideological struggle between socialism of the city and socialism of the country.

Leonov's approach to the theme of suffering takes on a rather ambiguous form in this novel. Although The Badgers lacks the kind of militant rhetoric and romantic descriptions of Mother, the author does provide a vivid and somewhat disturbing picture of a wartime environment. Within this framework, Leonov's approach to suffering

appears to be almost uniformly anti-ideological. Even though the struggle between the “countryside” socialists and the urban Communist Party ultimately results in a victory for the Soviet government, the author never glorifies the great socialist cause. Leonov typically portrays the Soviet officials who profess their doctrine as being aloof, arrogant, and utterly disconnected from peasant culture. Additionally, his inclusion of the great tale of Kalafat—a mythical king who attempted to rule the world based on a singular, ideological ethos and ended up sowing the seeds for his own demise—shows a certain skepticism towards the notion of functional utopian societies in general. In this respect, most of the suffering that takes place in *The Badgers* does not come with any kind of explicit—or implicit, for that matter—justification or political purpose, thus revealing it to have an “unwarranted” nature.

Leonov’s *The Badgers* has two distinctive settings: Part One tells the story of two brothers, Pavel—most commonly referred to by his nickname, Pashka—and Senya, who move to a laboring distract of Moscow—known as Zariadye—from the remote village of Vori. Part Two takes places in the countryside after the Bolshevik Revolution and during the Russian Civil War. The first few chapters of the story rely primarily on character development, at which point it becomes clear that Senya is the more vivacious and gentle-hearted of the two brothers; Pashka appears sullen, rebellious, and violent. A bloody incident involving Pashka attacking another boy leads the brothers' caretaker, Bykhalov, to banish Pashka from his household. Although Semya at first feels a sense of loss when his brother leaves, the author states that he “did not grieve over much over his brother's absence. Pashka was a constant reminder of the depressing side of human
existence, of a vale of tears without a glimpse of paradise.”
A few months later, Senya unexpectedly runs into his brother while on an errand:

Зловеще больно сжалось сердце Сени, такое
бывает, когда видишь во сне непроходимую пропасть.
Pавел был приодет; черный картуз был наложен на
коротко обстриженный Пашкии волос. Все на нем было
очень дешевое, `но без заплат. Сидя на подоконнике,
Pашка писал что-то в записную книжку и не видел
вышедшего брата.67

Senya's heart contracted with dread; he had the kind of feeling one has
in a dream where an impassable gulf suddenly yawns beneath one's
feet. Pavel was dressed up. A black cap with a shiny peak covered his
neatly cropped head. Further, he wore trousers much too long for him
and a jacket over a black sateen shirt. His laced boots, which were of
the proportions only seen on monuments, shone with a gay splendour
that drew the eye irresistibly. The whole outfit, though inexpensive,
was innocent of darns or patches. Pashka was writing something in a
note-book and did not see his brother come out of the shop.68

Leonov's meticulous description of Pashka's outfit signifies a change in character.
The uniform he dons, and the notebook his writes in, demonstrates his new identity as an
urban worker. The notebook is particularly revealing, as literacy would become a
requirement for a “proper” Soviet citizen. Senya and his newly reunited brother travel to
the local bar and have a chat before Pashka disappears once again. Though his meeting
with his brother is short, this represents somewhat of a turning point for Senya; it lends
the possibility of leading a different life rather than the one he currently knows. Little
does Senya realize how different his path will be from that of his brother.

The tone of Badgers in Part One is extremely mundane. The narrative focuses on
the various events which take place within the small section of Moscow. The setting
does not truly change until the outbreak of war begins. Initially, there are several scenes

68 Leonov, The Badgers, 60.
in the book which reveal Senya's indifference to the national crisis; he remains embroiled in local conflicts. But when the toll and violence of war become more and more visceral, Senya begins to grow keenly aware that he might be drafted into the army. Leonov describes the impact of war upon the townsfolk, utilizing the extensive vocabulary of Kataev as well as the emotional urgency of Gorky:

В том году как рав прогремели первые военные вести.
Те, которым, как братьям, одну бы песню петь,
стояли в больших полях друг против друга, засипали
чужую сторону железом, душили смрадом и уже много
народу побили. Брали тогда и брили молоденьких, везли в самые
погибые места, где и земля-то сама, как
воск, таяла и гнила стыдом. Тужились стороны, тужилось и
Зарядье, посылая молодятину в пораховой
чад .

This, as it happened, was the year when the first tidings of war came. Those who should have been singing, like brothers, the same song, were facing each other across great fields, strewing the earth of the opposite side with steel, choking each other with gas, striving with all their might to burn man off the face of the earth. And after they had striven like that for a while, great numbers were slain. In those days young men were called up in thousands and the shaven heads of these rawest of recruits were laid down in the very thick of the fight, where the earth itself melted like wax and rotted for shame. Both sides sorrowed, and Zariadye sorrowed for the youth it had sent into battle.

Along with illustrating the public terror of being summoned to fight on the battlefield, Leonov also uses this analogy of brothers fighting on the field as a form of foreshadowing for the ideological divide between Paskha and Senya. The scene itself serves as a reminder that mundane and routine existence can be brutally disrupted by war. Even more horrifying is the fact that the return to a “normal” life can prove to be extremely difficult: the experiences of those who fight can permanently alter one's perception of reality. For Senya, it is an event that would affect him significantly. At the

69 Leonov. Barsuki, 66.
70 Leonov, The Badgers, 66.
conclusion of Part One, when the October Revolution finally hits Moscow, the Zariadye
district is completely abandoned, and the narrative comes to a grinding halt. Leonov does
not reveal what happens to Senya, Paskha, Byhalkov, or any of the the characters in the
three years in between the two halves of the story. As readers, we can only surmise how
the experience of the war directly affected each character; even the fate of Pashka
remains a complete mystery. The author uses the omission of information as a form of
"unwarranted suffering": in many cases, war is a horrific disruption of ordinary life, as it
can separate families and destroy one's homeland. Although the link between the two
halves of the story is rather vague, we can see that Senya evolves from a naïve youth to a
hardened revolutionary.

The first few chapters of Part Two offer the reader a great deal of rural history.
Through a series of anecdotes, we see that Senya's native village of Vori has gone through
many turbulent episodes, notably against the rival village of Gussaki. Even though
several natives survived the war and managed to come home, bitter rivalries and petty
squabbles still persist. It is not until the sixth chapter where Senya finally arrives on the
scene. Although life after the war would never be totally the same, many of the village
inhabitants appear to assume a “normal” existence once again. Yet this “return to
normality” becomes interrupted when a Soviet official comes to Vori to initiate grain
requisitions. Leonov portrays the official in a particularly intrusive and unsympathetic
manner; something one would never see in later pieces of “formulaic Socialist Realism”:

Пути-де к победам трудами вышебенены. Голодает-де рабочий,
брать и сын ваш. Люди злые, в трудовой правде не правые, хотят
ядовитым зубом взять нас, идут полчищами, несут смерть.
Красная-де Армия разута и раздета, хлеба у мужика просит: «Дай
хлеб, братишка! Отвоюем -- отработаем, один у нас с
тобой кошель! » Хлеб нужен. Не будет хлеба- мрак будет. Мрак
будет - мор будет. А там и предел всякой гибели: восседет вновь
на мужиковскую спину всякая явная и неявная насекомая тля.71

The road to victory is paved with hard work. The workers—your
sons and brothers, are going hungry. There are bad people who care
nothing for the truth and rightness of labor, they want to get the better
of us, and they’re coming in their thousands, bringing death with
them. The Red Army men have no clothes and no boots, they’re
asking the peasants for bread. They say: “Give us bread, brother!
When we've won, we'll do our share of the work and share the
earnings with you!” Bread is wanted. If the bread isn't forthcoming,
it'll mean disaster and if disaster comes—it means famine and
pestilence. And that'll mean the end of everything: all manner of
parasites, visible and invisible, will settle on the peasant again...72

The speech by the official is perhaps one of the most significant passages in The
Badgers. In the context of both “categorical” and "formulaic” Socialist Realism, this
language resembles some of the romantic themes we have seen in Mother. The official
uses words which denote suffering: mar (“pestilence”), mrak (“darkness”), as well as
positive words associated with the proletarian movement (pobyedam trudami or “victory
of labor”). In many ways, the official portrays himself as a socialist positive hero, like
the character of Pavel or “The Mother.” Yet we also see that he does not hesitate to use
threats of coercion. This is perhaps one of the few instances where an author of
“categorical Socialist Realism” displays the underlying threat of state power which is
attached to the allegedly sympathetic words of a benevolent socialist. Much to the
surprise of the commissar, this emotional language does not arouse the villagers
positively. Instead, the Soviet commissar comes off as a thuggish buffoon; a foreigner
with the temerity to impose his own ideology on an unwilling populace. In this passage,

71 Leonov, Barsuki, 165.
72 Leonov, The Badgers, 161.
Leonov takes a typical “positive hero,” and places him in a situation where his emotional appeal for the cause of socialism simply does not resonate with rural inhabitants. The author gives his readers an example of a figure who attempts to present the deprivation of food as a form of “righteous suffering,” but ultimately fails in the process.

Following the passive resistance and non-compliance of the residents of Vori, a series of scandalous and mysterious events occur in Vori soon after, the most significant being Senya's mysterious disappearance. What makes Leonov's narrative more intriguing is the fact that the author's gaze remains focused on the villagers; for a long time, the reader only learns about the actions of Senya through the gossip of the townsfolk. After a number of squabbles with the food-commissars, the “deserters” who go to join Senya in the woods arrive in the village:

У же вошла в Воры всем количеством летучая братия, доселе укрывавшаяся в лесах. Мужики встречали сыновей, бабы - мужей. Сибинбедов, разойдясь в порыве заметавшегося сердца, потрошил напропалую остатки своей торговли, сооружая угощение чужакам. Есть никому не хотелось, пропала обычная жадность к еде. Нужно всем было пить, стало красно в мужиковских глазах от сожигающей жажды. Пронярливостью Егора Брыкина был открыт на радость всем целый самогонный завод в омшанике у бабки Мятлы, повитухи. Пили дико, и ковшом, и блюдечком, и прямо так, вприхлебку.73

All the deserters who had hitherto been hiding in the woods now came boldly into Vori. Men welcomed their sons, women their husbands. Sinibedov, moved by a sudden impulse in the excitement of the moment, recklessly divided up the remains of his once large stock of groceries to treat the unexpected guests. No one wanted to eat, the usual craving for food had gone, but everyone wanted to drink; the men's eyes were red with a burning thirst. To the delight of

73 Leonov. Barsuki, 199.
all, through the cunning of Yegor Brykin a whole distillery had been discovered in the midwife's moss-covered vegetable-house. They fell upon it savagely, with dippers and saucers, and drank straight from the cask.\textsuperscript{24}

The “Badgers”—a group of Vori natives who establish an autonomous village out of the jurisdiction of the Soviets—initiate a vulgar display of debauchery and brutality. Although Leonov does not portray the Soviet commissars in a sympathetic light, he does not glorify the behavior of the badgers either. In this respect, Leonov views the cruelty of the Bolsheviks as being exact, calculated, and thoughtfully considered, whereas the behavior of the peasants is much more impulsive and “savage.” The eagerness for intoxication reinforces the Bolsheviks disdain for behavioral “backwardness.” Sobriety was a vital value for Communists since the days before the October Revolution, and many of the positive heroes in other pieces of Socialist Realism pride themselves on refraining from alcohol. While the food-commissar may view this clamoring for vodka as an act of barbarism, the badgers see it as an act of rebellion. These rural rebels deliberately take the positive values of the urban-based Communists and directly defy them. Yet, Leonov still maintains his neutrality on the issue of suffering. Even though the basic physiological needs of human beings appears to be just cause for raiding the village and satisfying one's hunger, the author's focus on the brash, violent, and excessive manner in which the Badgers execute their deeds exhaust the righteousness behind their actions. Leonov presents the situation as an unfortunate consequence of war and political division, crafting this scene another example of "unwarranted suffering."

The exploits of the Badgers quickly become legendary, and the viewpoint of the

\textsuperscript{24} Leonov, \textit{The Badgers}, 191.
narrator shifts from one location to another at a rapid pace. In keeping with Leonov's insistence that his story focus on both sides of a conflict, he does not over-expose the reader to one group of characters for too long. For the reader, this does create some confusion: if Leonov is constantly shifting perspectives, is there any indication about where his own views fall? The answer is never definitive, yet we do get a glimpse of Leonov's own opinions through a scene in which his characters discuss the legend of Kalafat.

The Badgers have successfully created a home for themselves out in the woods, with plenty of food and drink to survive for months. Two of the members debate the subject of science versus nature, specifically whether the two can truly co-exist. An old man, Eugraph Podpriatov, interjects a mythical tale about a king named Kalafat. According to legend, before the age of modernity and industrialization, gods dominated their realms by laws of their ancestors. Humans, animals, and plants all lived in harmony; but one day when a young prince complained to his father that everything was too chaotic: “Now there's a science called 'yeomatry,' and you have to live according to that science. We'll put a number on every fish, and on every star as well, on every blade of grass—plain of flowery.”

Once the prince implements “yeomatry” and other forms of science to run the world, he calls himself Kalafat. At the height of his own pride, Kalafat decides that a great tower must be built; one that can reach the stars. Men from all over the world come to work on Kalafat's tower, and many die in the process. When the tower reaches the highest it can do without crumbling, Kalafat decides this is not

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Leonov, *The Badgers*, 240.
enough; as the ruler of the world and the arbiter of science, he must climb to the top of this tower himself. At the summit, the tower can no longer support the weight of the great ruler: his mighty achievement crumbles, and Kalafat falls to his death.

While initially the point of Podpriatov's story may be that science can never conquer nature, it has a deeper meaning in the context of the rest of the story. The Badgers feel that they are rebelling against a system which professes that a scientific principle can and should be applied towards all of mankind. This, of course, is the essence of Marxist communism. While the rebels do have their own ideas about how society ought to be governed, a majority of them agree that Kalafat's ancestors had a better method for ruling the world than Kalafat himself. This story, which mirrors the Biblical tale of the Tower of Babel, does not so much demonstrate the inherent evil of science, but rather the consequences of excessive pride. Leonov's equally negative treatment of the Badgers leads us to believe the problem is not application of science to society which is the problem; it is the hubristic notion that a single theoretical principle can be applied to every people and every culture and yield positive results. The story of Kalafat serves as an anecdotal refutation of the Bolshevik mantra that the dictatorship of the Communist vanguard will bring happiness and equality to all peoples of Russia.

Clearly, Leonov's example of the Badgers shows that not all have benefited from Soviet principles. Moreover, the author doubts that "righteous suffering" in the name of abstract principles can ever actually exist, even if it is for the sake of a fairer and more egalitarian society. Those who constructed Kalafat's tower clearly suffered, toiling day and night to bring the king's dream of a new world order into reality. Yet, as the ending of the tale
shows, the tower crumbles, and the effort appears to be only a physical manifestation of Kalafat's vanity. Leonov's inclusion of this tale stands as a warning to the Communist Party: they must be *cautious* when implementing their policies especially in the countryside. What may appear to be a rational economic or social policy may in actuality be nothing more than an abuse of state power, and what one party may interpret as "righteous suffering" may be perceived by others as "unwarranted suffering."

The remainder of the story continues to display the conflicts between the Badgers and the Communists. Ultimately, the citizens of Gussaki, the rival village of Vori, get caught in the middle of the conflict. The Badgers conduct a series of raids on the village, which cause death and destruction for those peasants who are simply trying to get on with their lives. The incidents catch the attention of Anton, a local Soviet commissar who becomes increasingly intrigued by this group of bandits. At the conclusion of the novel, when Senya is forced to surrender to the Bolsheviks due to interior conflicts and a series of failed offensives, he travels to the occupied village of Vori to surrender to Anton. In a revealing scene, Senya admits to the commissar that he was “right” about the peasants:

Именно теперь, когда все стихло, Семен вышел из глубин леса и пошел к Ворам. Сапоги его, и без того дырявые, размокли в ливне и трудили ноги. Он присел на пень, снял их и кинул в кусты. Потом, уже босой, шел дальше. Ливень загнал в избы Антоновых часовых. Да Антон и не ждал никакого нападения. После шума грозы наступила полная тишина. Везде текли ручьи, возле Пуфлиной избы целый водопад сверкался вниз. Семена никто не остановил, пока он шел по селу. Вороны как бы обезлюдили, даже ребята не бегали, вседашние охотники посучить ногами вязкую грязь. Огня нигде не было. Избы уныло, как поздней осенью, глядели мраком окон.
Попалась старуха Суповева на пути, она отшатнулась от Семена, но все же ответила на его вопрос. Семен после того пошел на выселки, к бабинцовскому дому. В воздухе было очень сыро. На большом крыльце стоял стол, на столе— свеча. Пламя ее не колебалось: полное безветрие. На ступеньках сидел Антон и диктовал что-то Афанасу Чигунову, изъявившему свое согласие потрудиться для Антона в должности временного писаря,— когда-то в штабе писарем состоял Афанас. -А-а, - сказал Антон без тени удивления. -Пришел же ведь! Ну, вот видишь … - Сказать пришел, что ты, пожалуй, и прав был ночью утром, в лесу-то, - так же спокойно отвечал Семен, - Это насчет чего, насчет мужиков-то? - нахмурился Антон и покосился на брата, стоящего с опущенной головой. Афанас не глядел на Семена и грыз ручку пера, которым писал

It was exactly at this time, when everything had quieted down, that Semyon emerged from the depths of the woods and took the road to Vorii. His boots, which were worn through in any case, got soaked with the rain and weighed him down. He sat down on a stump, took them off and flung them into the bushes. Then he went on his way barefoot. The rain had driven Anton's sentries into shelter. But Anton was not expecting an attack. After the storm came a profound calm. Rivulets babbled and gurgled everywhere; there was a regular waterfall by Poufla's house. No one stopped him as he went through the village. Vorii seemed deserted; even the children, always so ready to wallow in wet mud, were nowhere to be seen. No lights shone in the windows. The houses looked out as dejectedly as in late autumn through their gloomy windows. He met old Suponyeva who recoiled in terror but nevertheless answer his question. Then Semyon went on to the outlying farm where the Babintsov's lived. The air was very damp. On the broad porch stood a table with a candle burning on it. The flame did not waver; there was not a breath of wind. Anton was sitting on the steps dictating to Afanas Chigunov, who had declared his willingness to act as a temporary clerk; Afanas had once been a clerk at army headquarters. 'A-ah,' said Anton without a trace of astonishment. 'So you've come after all! Well, now you see...' 'I just dropped in to tell you that perhaps you were right this morning in the wood,' Semyon replied just as calmly. 'What about? Oh, the peasants?' Anton frowned, struck by the strange disharmony of Semyon's features; they seemed to disintegrate.

The ending scene of The Badgers perhaps explains why so many fervent communists such as Anatoly Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky praised Leonov as a literary genius. Although the novel uses an ideologically neutral approach in displaying the

76 Leonov. Barsuki, 353-354.
77 Leonov, The Badgers, 335-336.
positives and negatives of both sides of the conflict, the tone of the novel seems to change drastically here. The image of Senya seems horribly defeatist: he wanders through a depressingly empty Vori, encountering a few perturbed souls, and essentially grovels before a Soviet commissar, who is resting comfortably on a porch. What is more, it has been revealed earlier in the novel that Anton is actually Senya's brother, Pashka. For the protagonist, the supplication to his brother makes the situation even more significant. The scene represents the end of the ideological conflict; one in which the Soviet Union is victorious. Anton/Pashka proves not only to have defeated the Badgers militarily, but his brother's admission of the peasants treachery represents an ideological victory for Anton as well. The ending is quite curious, as the rest of the novel clearly demonstrates that Leonov does not believe that the ethos of the Bolsheviks is innately superior to the more traditional beliefs of the peasantry. Furthermore, we have already seen several examples of the author's reluctant attitude towards the idea of "righteous suffering." Although Leonov acknowledges the limitations of urban socialism, he sees its dominance over the whole of Russia as being an inevitable outcome of the historical process.

Leonid Leonov's *The Badgers* proves to be a fine example of categorical "Socialist Realism." The author focuses on the very real conflicts that took place in Russia during the early part of the decade. Although Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks successfully seized power in the major cities, implementing their control and ideology over the countryside still proved to be a challenge. Senya's fictitious Badgers have factual roots in peasant rebellions that occurred during the Russian Civil War and the
early years of N.E.P. Furthermore, the novel displays graphic examples of suffering: the atrocities of war, and the devastation of civil unrest dramatically affect the experiences of those who simply wish to live out their lives peaceably. Leonov does not glorify the exploits of the Communist Party in his tone; in fact he sympathizes with those very rebels who stood against the Bolsheviks. Additionally, Leonov's use of the Tale of Kalafat demonstrates a highly skeptical attitude towards the notion of scientific modernism and—more importantly—the theme of "righteous suffering." The author clearly presents the merits and drawbacks of Western socialism and Russian traditionalism; something which would be consider blasphemous during the reign of Stalin. In the end, The Badgers is simply too intellectual and too controversial to fit the mold of Stalinist triumphalism.

To conclude this discussion of Leonid Leonov's The Badgers and Valentin Kataev's Embezzlers, the novels are among the two most famous examples of “categorical Socialist Realism.” In accordance with the principles of the Russian Association for Proletarian Writers, these novels focus on “real” events of Russian history, and also promote—albeit indirectly—the benevolence of socialism. Both works approach their subjects with a highly sophisticated and idiosyncratic style: Kataev critiques the social values of N.E.P. using paradox, satire, and hypocrisy. Leonov discusses the polarity between city and country during the Russian Civil war with deep character development, graphic realism, and an admission that Soviet Communism may be limited in its ability to cure society's ills. More critically, neither Kataev and Leonov promote the notion of "righteous suffering." Though both narratives display several vital examples of "unwarranted suffering", we never see either author give examples of
physical, mental, or psychological pain which yield an explicitly positive outcome. Ultimately, Kataev and Leonov wrote literature that accurately reflected the cultural time period in which they were written. Once Stalin took power in the Soviet Union, and once Maxim Gorky established the principles of "formulaic Socialist Realism" through the Writers' Union, the scope of the genre became much narrower. While the literary climate of the thirties valued simplified prose, militancy, emotionalism and an earnest adherence to the principles of "righteous suffering," Kataev and Leonov valued skepticism, humor, literary depth, and—perhaps most importantly—a capacity to question authority. In the harsh ideological climate of Stalinism, where politicians, writers, and social activists could be arrested at the snap of the General Secretary's finger, the literary community simply could not afford to deviate too far from the guidelines put forward by the Soviet Writers' Union, let alone challenge the basic tenets of Communism.

* A Literary Five Year-Plan: Socialist Realism as a Literary Formula

It is not at all coincidental that the Socialist Realist novels from the 1930s contain a great deal of similar characteristics. As the leader of the only officially recognized literary organization in the Soviet Union, Maxim Gorky wielded the power to set the tone for Soviet literature. The primary characteristics that we have already seen in *Mother* emerged as the cornerstones of Socialist Realism. And indeed, Stalin's ideology of discipline, collective labor, and obedience shared many similarities with Gorky's interpretation of a utopian socialist state. Both men adopted an “us-versus-them”
dichotomy, firmly identifying who could be “allies” of socialism, and who were its “enemies.” Both believed one must be in touch with the Communist movement at a spiritual level as well as a material one.

Under the direction of the Soviet Writers' Union, a new generation of writers embraced the notion of "righteous suffering.” Unlike what we have seen with Kataev's *Embezzlers* and Leonov's *The Badgers*, the individual writers did not decide the parameters of suffering in these writings for themselves; they followed a much stricter literary template. As we have seen in *Mother*, to suffer for reasons which do not contribute to the advance the Soviet cause are meaningless ("unwarranted suffering"). However, if one were to get arrested for leading a socialist demonstration, die on the field of battle fighting for the Red Army, or even become physically disabled from overwork in a Soviet factory, this kind of suffering would be permissible, as it would imply a sacrifice for the greater good of society (“righteous suffering”).

There are three critical sub-themes which resonate strongly throughout “formulaic Socialist Realism.” First, these narratives depict the cause of socialism as a kind of Manichean struggle; each book contains a benevolent group of revolutionaries who must engage in an ideological war with a tangible foe. The “enemies of socialism” come in many forms: the tsarist authorities, the White Army, counter-revolutionaries or traitors to the cause all constitute legitimate threats. It was important that Socialist Realist authors of place their ideology in the context of conflict, giving a clear example of those forces which do *not* support socialism. Secondly, Stalinist novels rely on explicit, emotional, and repetitive language to convey their message. Unlike *Embezzlers*...
and *The Badgers*, these works do not struggle with complex ideas or use humor to critique contemporary society; in fact nearly the entire genre completely lacks humor. Finally, we see that these novels emphasize the importance of sacrifice. Those characters who wish to demonstrate their loyalty to the cause and the Communist Party must endure a physical and/or psychological sacrifice. All of these sub-themes lay the building blocks for the greater theme of "righteous suffering": the cornerstone of "formulaic Socialist Realism", and the aspect which would determine eligibility for publication for the Soviet Writers' Union.

The first novel which represents "formulaic Socialist Realism" was actually written before the establishment of both RAPP and the Soviet Writer's Union. Yet Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* contains many of the conventions that one would see in the literature of the thirties, and therefore fits extremely well into this analysis. In fact, this pinnacle work by Gladkov inspired later authors almost as much as Maxim Gorky's *Mother*. The novel's protagonist and positive hero, Gleb Chumalov, returns to his factory hometown after years of combating the White Army during the Russian Civil War. He finds an unfamiliar world. One of the first major changes he observes is the status of women in the new socialist society. His wife, Dasha, is the head of the Women's Party in the local Communist Party. Throughout the novel, Gleb will face his wife's lack of interest in him, forcing him to endure a period of prolonged emotional despair. Nevertheless, Gleb still maintains his role as a positive hero by taking a leading role in making his factory town a productive component of the Soviet economy, while at the same time maintaining his role as a military leader by defending his town from the
marauding Cossacks.

The other two authors under discussion here composed their novels after the establishment of the Soviet Writers' Union and the codification of “formulaic Socialist Realism.” Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How The Steel Was Tempered* represents perhaps some of the more militant aspects of the genre, as the majority of the novel focuses on the armed struggle against the White Army in the name of socialism. Similar to the protagonist of *Mother*, the main character of this book grows up in a world of oppression and poverty to emerge as a fighter for the Soviet cause. After encountering a group of socialist revolutionaries and intellectuals, Pavel decides to join ranks with the Red Army. Much of the book details his military and espionage exploits against the capitalist foes, and achieves a considerable amount of fame throughout the Soviet Union. Despite his numerous victories, Pavel does endure some major setbacks as well. As the novel progresses, the main character garners physical and mental scarring, and by the end of the story he is unable to fight any longer. Though Pavel is left blind and crippled, he still maintains his mental faculties, and with the help of his comrades he manages to write an autobiography of his life.

Fyodor Sholokov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* shifts the narrative of utopian socialism from the city to the countryside. Davidov, the Soviet official charged with bringing Stalinist collectivization to a small peasant village, encounters a variety of difficulties carrying out his task. The protagonists attribute most of these difficulties to reluctance and ignorance on the part of the villagers, as well as the corruption and mismanagement from the regional commissars. The antagonist, Polovtsiev, a former member of the
Imperial Guard tries to undermine the efforts of Davidov through an anti-Soviet conspiracy. Although ultimately Polovtsiev's rebellion does not prove to be successful, his struggle against the Soviet state makes the effort to collectivize this village even more difficult. In particular, Sholokov depicts the brutal violence which takes place on behalf of both parties. Such acts by both parties can confuse and disillusion the reader about socialism, yet Sholokov writes in such a way where Davidov's actions are always justified through speeches or through a downplaying of the actual violence. The killing and rape committed by the anti-Soviet conspirators does not receive the same kind of justification.

Although all three of these novels do retain individual characteristics, they do strongly emphasize the three aforementioned themes: militant language, Manichean struggle, and personal sacrifice. In many ways, the diversity of atmosphere, character development, and writing style among these works actually serves to cement the universality of Stalinist principles. "Formulaic Socialist Realism" did adopt a propagandist mode of narrative prose as well as a rigid definition of "righteous suffering," yet it simultaneously maintained a form of independence—albeit only a little—through the literary subjectivity of the authors.

**Friends and Foes: Socialism as a Battle Between Good and Evil**

Like most authoritarian movements throughout history, "formulaic Socialist Realism" acknowledged the notion that its supporters embraced a radical ideology which
would not be accepted by the majority of world establishments. In order for socialism to succeed, it would inevitably have to do battle with reactionary forces. Each of these novels at one point or another puts a human face on the antagonism of socialism: oftentimes in the form of anti-Communist Cossacks raiders, or members of the White Army, yet other times we see these enemies as allies who commit treacherous acts, or selfish supporting characters who distract positive heroes from the movement.

The opening chapters in *How The Steel Was Tempered* display a series of concrete antagonists which represent the forces of oppression. We see an immediate link between this story and Maxim Gorky's *Mother*: Ostrovsky also places his protagonist in a position of unwarranted abuse and oppression. Pavel—the same name given to the main character in *Mother*—faces the retribution of a monstrous school teacher for questioning the tenets of Christian Scripture:

Po закону божию поп всегда ставил Павке пять.
Все тропари, Новый и Ветхий завет знал он назубок; твердо знал, в какой день что произведено богом. Павка решил расспросить отца Василия. На первом же уроке закона, едва поп уселся в кресло, Павка поднял руку и, получив разрешение говорить, встал. - Батюшка, а почему учитель в старшем классе говорит, что земля миллион лет стоит, а не как в законе божием - пять тыс ... - и сразу осел от визгливого крика отца Василия: Что ты сказал, мерзавец? Вот ты как учишь слово божие! Не успел Павка и пикнуть, как поп схватил егоза оба уха и начал долбить головой об стенку. Через минуту, избитого и перепуганного, его выбросили в коридор.78

The priest had always given Pavel full marks for Scripture. He knew almost the whole prayer book practically by heart, and the Old and New Testament as well. He knew exactly what God had created on each day of the week. Now he resolved to take the matter up with Father Vasili. At the very next lesson, before the priest had time to settle himself properly in his chair, Pavel raised his hand and, having obtained permission to speak, he got up. 'Father, why does the

78 Nikolai Ostrovsky, *Kak zakalialis' stal'* (Kharkov : Prapor, 1976), 5.
teacher in the second grade say the earth is millions of years old, instead of what the Bible says, five thou. . . .' A hoarse cry from Father Vasili cut him short. 'What did you say, you scoundrel? So that's how you learn your Scripture!' And before Pavel knew what had happened the priest had seized him by the ears and was banging his head against the wall. A few minutes later, shaken with fright and pain, he found himself outside in the corridor.79

This early scene in *How The Steel Was Tempered* addresses a conflict which was surprisingly rare in Socialist Realism: the ideas of Marxism and the traditions of Christianity. Through acts of physical and verbal abuse, Father Vasili represents Old Russia, one which has established a long history of unquestionable truths. Here, we see that Pavel is punished not for promoting a radical form of government, but simply questioning the validity of Biblical passages regarding the creation of the earth. At a very young age, Pavel becomes quite accustomed to the personalities of repression. Even when he acquires a job working as a dishwasher, he finds that most of the authority figures in his life exercise their power with extreme cruelty:

Дверь в судомойню открылась, и в нее вошли трое официантов, неся груды грязной посуды. Один из них, широкоплечий, косоглазый, с крупным четырехугольным лицом, сказал:- Пошевелевайтесь живее. Сейчас придет двенадцатичасовой, а вы копаетесь. Глядя на Павка, он спросил: А это кто? - Это новенький,- ответила Фрося. - А, новенький,- проговорил он.- Ну, так вот, тяжелая рука его опустилась на плечо Павки и толкнула к самоварам,- они у тебя всегда должны быть готовы, а они, видишь, едва дышит, а другой еще дышит. Сегодня это тебе так пройдет, а завтра если повторится, то получишь по морде. Понял? Павка, не говоря ни слова, принялся за самовары. Так началась его трудовая жизнь. Никогда Павка не старался так, как в свой первый рабочий день. Понял он: тут- не дома, где можно мату не послушать. Косоглазый ясно сказал, что если не послушаешь- в морду.80

The scullery door opened and three waiters entered carrying trays piled

80 Ostrovsky, *Kak zakalialas' stal',* 8.
high with dirty dishes. One of them, a broad-shouldered cross-eyed man with a heavy, square jaw, said: "You'd better look lively. The 12 o'clock is due any minute, and here you are dawdling about." He looked at Pavel. "Who's this?" he asked. "That's the new boy," said Frosya. "Ah, the new boy," he said. "Well, listen, my lad." He laid his heavy hands on Pavel's shoulders and pushed him over to the samovars. "You're supposed to keep them boiling all the time, and look, one of them's out, and the other is barely going. Don't let it happen again or I'll beat the stuffings out of you!" Pavel busied himself with the samovars without a word. Thus began his life of toil. Never had Pavka worked so hard as on that first day. He realised that this was not home where he could afford to disobey his mother. The cross-eyed waiter had made it quite plain that if he did not do as he was told, he would suffer for it.81

Whether it be his religious schoolteacher or his overbearing boss, Pavel clearly has had a childhood where he observes a great deal of physical and mental oppression; the kind of injustice which he can easily identify with specific individuals. These incidents are descriptive examples of "unwarranted suffering." Pavel, much like his counterpart in Mother, recognizes through his encounters with these villains that the world is full of injustice and evil. This leads the protagonist to seek out radical solutions to overcome these enormous burdens: the essence of Lenin's “spontaneity to consciousness” theory. More important, however, is the literary usefulness of portraying Father Vasili and Pavel's cruel boss. If Ostrovsky had simply described “evil” and “oppression” using conceptual and abstract terms, the image would not nearly be as powerful. Here, we actually see archetypes which encompass those negative qualities that socialism tries to correct. While Father Vasili represents the obstinacy of a traditional, religious-based value system, the boss represents a simpler model of bourgeois economic oppression. Both figures cause the reader to be much more sympathetic towards the plight of the budding protagonist, but they also achieve a greater

81 Ostrovsky, How The Steel Was Tempered, 16.
understanding of what it means to suffer without a justifiable purpose.

This is not to say that all pieces of Socialist Realism introduce concrete antagonists in the early chapters of their narratives. For example, in Fyodor Gladkov's Cement, the initial struggle for Gleb Chumalov is much more abstract. After returning from the Russian Civil War to the aptly named “Pleasant Colony,” Gleb finds that his old factory town appears largely dilapidated and unproductive. As a war hero for socialism, the local Party Committee appoints him to revitalize the colony and make it thrive once again. Although Gleb enthusiastically undertakes such an ambitious task, he must also confront turmoil in his personal life. During her husband’s tenure as a soldier for the Red Army, the hero's wife, Dasha, becomes a member of the Women's Committee for the colony. Upon returning home, Gleb finds that the women he loves has changed dramatically, breaking away from traditional gender roles and asserting herself as an independent female. Throughout the entire novel, Dasha appears disinterested in her husband, and the protagonist must ultimately accept the fact that her feelings and the expectations of women have changed.

In spite of these abstract struggles, Cement still contains many concrete examples of a direct opposition to socialism. While Gleb and the denizens of Pleasant Colony work to turn their community into a flourishing example of Soviet productivity, hostile foes still lurked outside the confines of the town. Even worse, there are also internal threats to the sanctity of the Party and the workers. Chapter Eight describes a tragic episode in which Dasha embarks on a diplomatic journey, only to be attacked by Cossacks and violated by Comrade Badin en route to their destination. The two
comrades have a discussion about the role of women within the Party, after which point Badin lunges to molest Dasha's leg. The two engage in a physical struggle; one which Gladkov portrays as savagery against decency:

The physical struggle between Dasha and Badin mirrors the greater struggle between discipline and savagery. Gladkov's words suggest that the author actually somewhat sympathetic towards Badin, essentially describing him as an “untamed animal.” At the same time, the prose suggests that Dasha is much more disciplined and civilized individual; she attempts to remain composed in spite of her comrade’s submission to his own sexual impulses, only acting to defend herself. During the Russian Civil War, when the Bolsheviks were attempting to consolidate their power, the ruling

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Party instituted many cultural exceptions on their followers: a Soviet man (or woman) must have self-discipline by keeping himself hygienic, and refraining from such vices like drunkenness or irresponsible fornication. Gladkov presents this scene as a form of ideological contrast, with Badin representing the old, bestial world of oppression and privilege and Dasha representing equality, consciousness, and sophistication. The heroine's struggle not only to physically resist Badin, but to combat the temptations of the flesh represent a form of "righteous suffering."

Although Badin may strike readers as a somewhat unconventional antagonist in the context of Socialist Realism, Gladkov also provides his narrative with much more tangible, “foreign” enemies as well. Shortly after the awkward exchange between Badin and Dasha, a horde of Cossacks approach the wagon and assault the crew. Dasha, who at this point has cut her hair, confuses the assailants at first into thinking she is a man. This does not stop them from violating her physically once they discover her true sex:

. За ребром утеса фыркала и брыкалась лошадь и гремела удилами. Туда и оттуда перебегали в одиночку казаки с обалделями лицами. - Веди сюда! Какого там черта они голову морочат? Одна усатая папаха остановилась около утеса и вытянулась с ладонью у шапки и локтем на отлет. - Баба, господин полковник... Хай повиснут ее на ясени и байдуже. Она, бисо.ва душа, Лымаренку раком поставила ... Разрешить, господин полковник ...
- Веди, не разговаривай ... дубина! Вместо нее я вас перевешаю, трусов. Только на баб ловкачи, мерзавцы! Оравой, путаясь в винтовках, поволокли ее через камни, ямыны, по траве и поставили прямо перед лошадью, а лошадь бешено храпела и выкатывала глаза.
Даша почувствовала влажный, горячий запах конского пота. Она стояла прямо и смотрела на полковника. А полковник, похожий на калмыка, тоже смотрел на нее. Он был в черкеске, с серебряным пояском и висюльках, в серебряных погонах, в плоской мерлушковой шапке-кубанке. Лицо грязное, давно не бритое. Длинные
черные усы покрывали и губы и подбородок.84

A mustached, fur-capped Cossack stopped by the rock and stood erect, his hand to the salute. 'A woman, Colonel. Let's hang her and have done with it! She's the one that smashed Limarkeno. Give us permission, Colonel.' 'Bring her here and don't talk so much! Instead of her I shall have all you cowards hanged! You're only good for fighting women, you swine!' Growling, stumbling over their rifles, the group dragged Dasha along like a doll—she did not walk, but trailed along in their hands—over the stones and ruts, on to the grass, and placed her before a horse which was madly snorting, its eyes bulging, and prancing. Dasha felt the moist hot odour of horse flesh; she felt shameless hands crawl greedily over her hips and thighs. The weapons rattled and the voices cried together: 'Yes, it's really a woman, Colonel! Let's crush the louse!' Dasha stood erect and looked straight at the Colonel. He regarded her steadily, swaying gently to the movement of his horse. He was wearing a Circassia cloak, a silver belt, silver epaulettes and a flat Kuban cap of Astrakhan. His face was dirty long and unshaven; his long black mustache fell over his lips and chin. His nose was snub with a shiny rounded tip; and his bulging eyes flashed with laughter or with insult.

Again, we see the battle between civilization and savagery with this scene. Gladkov uses the stereotype of the border Cossack as a marauding tribesman to demonstrate the cruelty of Eastern primitivism and “backwardness.” From the underlings' physical violation of Dasha, to Gladkov's description of their attire, facial hair, and weaponry, the reader gets a keen sense of an uncivilized world. The Colonel's mocking of his troops, suggesting they are only suited for fighting woman, testifies to the un-enlightened attitude of those who oppose the Soviet Union. For Dasha, this scene illustrates a kind of endurance test for the purity of socialism. Not only must she remain strong in the face of physical danger, she must also stay true to her assigned role as a Soviet woman. *Cement's* emphasis on gender equality reinforces the benevolence of the socialist state, where Gladkov's derogatory descriptions of the Cossacks stands as a

84 Gladkov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 116
85 Gladkov, *Cement*, 126.
criticism towards groups which remain hostile towards the Bolshevik's mission of progress. Like the previous passage, this scene reinforces the suffering one must endure if one subscribes to Soviet ideology; Dasha stands against barbarism for a new social order.

The demonization of the non-socialist “Other” is repeated in Mikhail Sholokov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Unlike *Cement* and *How The Steel was Tempered*, the setting of Sholokov's story does not take place during the Russian Civil War, nor does it occur in an urban setting. Instead, the tale revolves around a Soviet official by the name of Davidov who is charged with administering a collective farm—a *kolkhoz*—during the era of Stalin's Five-Year Plan. Along with a generally reluctant peasantry, Davidov must also contend with a band of former Cossacks who wish to conspire against the Soviet government. With lurid descriptions of violence and disorder, Sholokov's antagonists display the same sort of “uncivilized” behavior as the raiders in *Cement*, only their actions are much more graphic and disturbing. A significant example occurs in the twelfth chapter—appropriately titled “Murder”—in which the reader witnesses the exploits of Polovtsiev, the “lead conspirator” of the village rebels. The bulk of the chapter does not feature amicable coordination among the dissidents, but rather violent disagreement and bouts of drunkenness; even a few of Polovtsiev's associates threaten to report the conspiracy to the Soviet officials. At the conclusion of the chapter, Polovtsiev loses control of his temper, attacks a fellow worker and violates his wife due to an irrational fear that they may be reporting him to Davidov:
Половцев упал на женщину, подушкой придавил ей лицо и
крутит, вяжет рушником руки. Его локти скользят по зыбким, по-
нативо мягким грудям женщины, под ним упруго вгибается ее
грудная клетка. Он ощущает тепло ее сильного, бьюще-
гося в попытках освободиться тела, стремительный, как винтс, стук
сердца. В нем внезапно и только на миг вспыхивает остroe, нан
ожог, желание, но он и с яростью просовывает руку под подушку,
как лош. раздирает рот женщине. Под его синюкным пальцем
ре. зиново подается, потом мягко ползет разорванная губа, палец
- в теплой крови, но женщина уже не кричит глухо и протяжно: в
рот ей до самой глотки забил он скомканную юбку.86

Polovtsiev had fallen on the woman, had smothered her face with a
pillow, and was twisting and tying her hands together with a towel.
His elbows slipped over the woman's shifting, flabbily soft breasts;
beneath him her chest bent springily inward. He felt the warmth of
her strong body as she struggled to free herself, her heart beating
violently like that of a captured bird. Suddenly and only momentarily
a sharp desire flamed up within him, but he snarled, and furiously
thrust his hand under the pillow, forcing the woman's mouth open as
though he were a horse. Beneath his crooked fingers her torn lip
yielded like rubber, then slowly slipped away; his fingers felt the
warm blood. But the woman no longer emitted long, muffled
screams, for he gathered her skirt into a ball and stuffed it into her
mouth as far as her throat.87

This horrific scene reflects the violence we have already seen in Cement, only the
violence here is much more pronounced. Like Gladkov, Sholokov successfully uses
concrete acts of violence to demonstrate the innate inhumanity of the foes of socialism.
We also see that that the antagonist victimizes a female character, testifying to
Polovtsiev's degraded perspective on women. Although Davidov and his associates
commit physical acts of punishment against the peasants on the collective farm,
Sholokov gives the socialists an opportunity to explain their behavior and justify their
acts of violence as necessary punishment. Polovtsiev's actions do not receive—or merit,
according to the tenets of Socialist Realism—any kind of justification. Thus, the

86 Mikhail Sholokov, Podnyataya Tselina (Moskva, Govyetskii Pismel', 1971), 87-88.
antagonist's sexual violation constitutes a form of "unwarranted suffering." The extended description of the antagonist's physical and sexual assault serves to show inherit barbarism of those who oppose the Soviet Union. If, for the Socialist Realist writer, socialism represents the height of human accomplishment, what else could the other side represent except for despotism, inhumanity and exploitation? Sholokov treats Polovtsiev's assault as an event which requires no explanation: such behavior is innate for those who do not subscribe to the Party of Lenin. The “enemies of socialism” engage in act out of impulse rather than reason, as evidenced by Polovtsiev's destructive outburst and reckless decision-making; they are simply incapable of engaging in any form of "righteous suffering."

In stark contrast, Sholokov provides an important example of ideologically permissible violence: the kind which serves to enhance the mission of the Party and the socialist state. In Virgin Soil Upturned, enlightened socialist masters (the kolkhoz administrators) can, in the name of instruction and discipline, claim the right to punish those who misbehave (in this case, the reluctant peasantry). We may refer to this phenomenon as "distributive righteous suffering," in which the subject does not engage in hardship for themselves, but instead inflicts suffering on others for a specific ideological purpose. A strong example of a character who acts as the arbiter of socialist justice is Davidov himself. At the end of Chapter 35, the chief administrator confronts a group of peasants who have become involved in acts of rebellion against the Communist party. Davidov acts to dispell nefarious rumors made about the Party, while also making a stern warning to those who would continue to create disturbances:
Те, что были шнщиками этих беспорядков и кто активно выступал, тованы, но остальные, поддавшиеся на кулацкую удочку, должны опомниться и понять, что они упали в заблуждение.
Это я фактически говорю... В президиум неизвестный гражданин бросил записочку, в ней спрашивается: «Верно ли, что все, забиравшие хлеб, будут арестованы, конфискованы имущества и сосланы? Нет это неверно, граждан Большевики не мстят, а беспощадно карают только врагов но вас, хотя вы и вышли из колхоза, поддавшись уговора кулаков, хотя вы и расхищили хлеб и били нас,- мы не считаем врагами. Вы-качающиеся середняки, временно за ..
блужденные, и мы к вам административных мер применения не будем, а будем вам фактически открывать глаза.88

'Those who were the instigators of these disorders and took active part in them have been arrested. But the others who have been caught on the kulaks' hook must come to their sense and realize that they've gone wrong. That I tell you as a fact. An unsigned note has been handed up to the table, and it asks: “Is it true that all who have taken grain will be arrested and exiled and their property taken away from them?” No, that is not true, citizens. The Bolsheviks are not vengeful, they mercilessly punish only their enemies. But we do not regard you as enemies, although you have left the collective farm, yielding to the kulaks' arguments, and although you have stolen grain and beaten us up. You are wavering middling peasants who've temporarily gone wrong. And we shall not apply any administrative measures to you, but shall open your eyes...We, the collective farm, will take their land from them [the kulaks] and sow it ourselves.89

Davidov employs harsh, yet sophisticated language when addressing the peasants, implying that these peasants had been lured to the false promises of the kulaks, and that their best interest still lies with the Communist party. He specifically creates a distinction between those rebel leaders and those who simply followed orders, noting that “the Bolsheviks are not vengeful, they mercilessly punish only their enemies.” Davidov effectively states that while the instigators will receive the full brunt of Soviet wrath, those “mislead” peasants shall be spared receiving re-education instead. While both fates

88 Sholokov, Podnyataya Tselina, 268.
89 Sholokov, Virgin Soil Upturned, 348.
appear similar, the distinction suggests that Davidov and the party leaders consider the appropriate degrees of punishments based on disobedient actions. For an official to murder a peasant simply because he is unfamiliar with the practice of collective farming would constitute an unjust punishment, contributing to the phenomenon of “unwarranted suffering.” Yet, if that same official were to educate that same peasant through propaganda and martial discipline, this would be a just action, and therefore an example of “distributive righteous suffering.” Conversely, if Party member encounters someone who methodically conspires against the Soviet Union, and decides to summarily execute them, this would also be considered an act of "righteous suffering" because of the severity of the crime. This militant logic became a vital component of Stalinist ideology: it was the duty of proper socialists to vigorously educate those who simply did not know better, but to ruthlessly destroy the “enemies of socialism” that deliberately threaten the fabric of Soviet society. In Virgin Soil Upturned, Davidov and his underlings act as the arbiters of Stalinist justice by delivering two distinct forms of "righteous suffering" to the local residents: harsh education to the ignorant, and death to the saboteurs and conspirators.

The novels by Gladkov, Sholokov, and Ostrovsky contain vivid personifications of the “villains” of the socialist world. Yet, unlike American Western films or science fiction, the “good guys” do not have direct standoffs or detailed battles with the “bad guys.” In all three of these books, the antagonists make vital appearances, but the positive hero (or heroes) do not confront and single-handedly defeat them. The notable lack of a mano-a-mano dynamic suggests that, in the case of "formulaic Socialist
Realism", the primary subject is not the struggle between two individuals, but rather the collective power of a movement. While it is true that the “positive” hero and the “negative” antagonist do play important symbolic roles in this genre, this is not as important as the role of the socialist community as a whole. In *How The Steel Was Tempered*, Pavel participates in the October takeover of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd: an event which most likely displaced Father Vasili and Pavel's abusive boss. The events of *Cement* do not only involve the re-construction of Pleasant Colony, but also the ongoing expansion of the Russian Civil War. In many of Gladkov's chapters, Gleb and his fellow soldiers score numerous victories against the White Armies, including those brigades which included Cossacks. The trajectory of the story suggests that, even though the venomous Colonel that violated Dasha may not have been killed, he certainly appears to have been on the losing side of the conflict. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Sholokov's villain ends up designing his own demise. In the concluding chapters of *Virgin Soil Upturned*, the conspirators who originally stood behind Polovtsiev decide that the entire plan is ludicrous, and that their so-called leader is nothing but an oaf. The reader witnesses the downfall of the rebellion not due to the victory of the Soviet officials, but because of dissension within the ranks of the participants.

The ultimate purpose of displaying these passages is to demonstrate to the reader the stark contrast between “unwarranted” and "righteous suffering” through the lens of heroes and villians. Figures such as Badin from *Cement*, Polovtsiev from *Virgin Soil Upturned*, and Father Vasili from *How The Steel Was Tempered*, symbolize the ideological opposite of socialism: these men come across as unkempt, impulsive,
irrationally violent, and mentally “backwards.” They engage in acts of oppression and cruelty with which the author provides no explanation. At the same time, we see that characters such as Davidov engage in an acceptable form of violence through the faculty of distributive "righteous suffering.” He calmly explains why certain peasants must endure harsh punishment whereas the other “misguided” workers will simply have to labor more vigorously. Both ends of this spectrum assume a strong literary presence in all of these works.

*The Power of Words: Language in "Formulaic Socialist Realism"*

Maxim Gorky's *Mother* demonstrated that an author can amplify his message with the repetition of certain words, phrase, and inflections. Through the fusion of narrative description and character speech, Gorky successfully elevates the struggle of socialism from one of economic determinism to a fight for human freedom, or *svoboda*. This theme resonates throughout the novel; the author certainly does not leave his message to the convention of sub-text, and this particular characteristic of *Mother* translated quite smoothly into the lexicon of "formulaic Socialist Realism.” Gladkov, Ostrovsky, and Sholokov frequently adopt Gorky's strong language in both speech and description, emphasizing the *romantic* aspect of the genre. When Gorky himself declared at the First Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union that the literary community of Russia would subscribe to the tenets of Socialist Realism, it was perhaps his point about militant prose which affected his audience the most. This particular use of language serves to amplify
the notion of "righteous suffering" by not only providing emotional narrative descriptions, but also by directing those characters who may have become complaisant or misguided back towards the true path of socialism.

Before the Russian Revolution, and before the construction of the socialist state, the primary goal of the proletarian movement was to achieve freedom, or _svoboda_. In _Mother_, industrial labor is viewed negatively; tasks which Gorky associates with oppression and bourgeois greed. This attitude towards labor changes dramatically in the writings of the 1930s. The authors of _Cement_, _Virgin Soil Upturned_, and _How the Steel Was Tempered_, describe work—particularly agricultural and industrial labor—as highly positive and desirable. This corresponds with Russia's regime change and the establishment of the Soviet Union. In Stalin's vision of “socialism in one country,” manual labor is a _contribution_ to the socialist mission rather than an impediment. We see that whenever the characters in a piece of 1930s Socialist Realism encounter either economic or military difficulties, the ultimate solution to the problem is the reinforcement of _rabota_ (“labor”). _Rabota_, and not _svaboda_, becomes the ultimate justification for "righteous suffering."

_Cement_ features countless examples of militant language, both in the form of description and dialogue. The main plot revolves around Gleb Chumalov's efforts to revitalize his factory hometown and mold it into a model of Stalinist productivity. Upon looking over the once iconic industrial valley, Gleb does not survey his home with a sense of despair or defeat, but rather with optimism and the potential for greatness:
Вот оно- и горы, и море, и завод, и город, и 
дали, уходящие за горизонты, - вся Россия- мы ... 
Все эти громады -и горы, и завод, и дали -поют в 
недрах своих о великом труде... Разве руки наши не 
дрожат от предчувствия упорной работы? Разве сердце 
не рвется от напора крови? .. Это- рабочая Россия, 
это - мы, это - новая планета, о которой мечтало в веках 
человечество!

Without understanding why, Gleb felt wings unfolding in his soul. 
All this, the mountains, the sea, the factory, the town and the 
boundless distances beyond the horizon—the whole of Russia, we 
ourselves. All this immensity—the mountains, the factory, the 
distances—all were singing in their depths the song of our mighty 
labour. Do not our hands tremble at the thought of our back-breaking 
task, a task for giants? Will not our hearts burst with the tide of our 
blood? This is Workers' Russia; this is us; the new world of which 
mankind had dreams throughout the centuries. This is the beginning: 
the first indrawn breath before the first blow. It is. It will be.  

Gleb's initial determination to “re-make” Pleasant Colony stands as perhaps one 
of the most moving passages in all of Cement. Romantic imagery dominates this scene: 
Gladkov projects the protagonist's feeling of optimism with the figurative immersion of 
his soul. But more importantly, we see an acute juxtaposition between nature and 
industry: the mountains are embedded with factories, and littered with workingmen 
(rabochaya Rosseya or “Worker's Russia”) of all ages. At the time, this rosy image only 
exists in Gleb's mind: an ideal to be achieved over time. In this passage, the author uses 
two words that have great significance for Socialist Realism. First, we have the 
aforementioned rabota, indicating the positive value of manual labor. We also see a 
familiar term that served as a vital component of the language of Mother: krov.' Here, 
Gladkov adopts Gorky's notion of “blood” or “energy”: the life resource which fuels the 
socialist cause. Unlike Mother, where the author references krov' in relation to the 

90 Gladkov, Sobraniye sochiyenii, 37. 
91 Gladkov, Cement, 34.
consumption of blood of the proletariat by the bourgeois, Gladkov uses this term in a much more positive sense. For the author, blood has a direct relationship with labor. To toil, suffer, and bleed for the material satisfaction of a few idol industrialists’ amounts to nothing but death and despair. However, to undertake great sacrifices and to put all of one's energy (krov‘) towards the construction of a utopian socialist state through labor (rabota) represents the core of the Communist mission. For Gleb, the achievement of a proletarian society not only represented the transfer of wealth from the few to the many, but the fulfillment of spiritual satisfaction for all of mankind. Gladkov's specific use of words and romantic imagery to describe his protagonist's revelation highlight Gleb's desire to initiate the process of suffering.

The theme of rabota as the engine of "righteous suffering" continues throughout Cement. As the story progresses, the Workers' Club of Pleasant Colony begin to form initiative to adopt modern forms of technological production. In particular, the Committee decides that they shall become the national leaders of cement production, in reference to the book's title. During a meeting of top officials, one of the workingmen reports that the Tenth Congress of the Central Committee has enacted a “new economic policy” which would increase the demands of industry. Although the tasks seem daunting, Gleb gives a rousing speech which inspires his comrades to return to work:

Товарищи, не будем много разговаривать. Мы и без того чересчур болтали от бедняг за эти годы. Надо кончать, товарищи. Мы забыли свои революционные обязанности. Завод стал не завод, а скотный двор. Государственное достояние мы грабим для своих личных потребностей. Разве это, товарищи, дело? Человек, друзья, о двух концах: одним можно лезть к черту в зубы, а другим бить черта по зубам. Наши руки-не для коз и свиней: наши руки другого устройства. Мы, большевики, особой породы. Какая душа - такие
руки, такая работа мозгам. Как товарищ Ивагин скала: новая экономическая политика... Что такое новая экономическая политика? Это—бей черта по зубам хозяйственным строительством. Мы—производители цемента. А цемент—это крепкая связь. Цемент—это мы, товарищи, рабочий класс. Это надо хорошо знать и чувствовать... Довольно бедленькать и заниматься козьими интересами. Пора перейти к нашему прямому делу- к производству цемента для строительства социализма.92

Comrades, don't let us play around with words. We've played around enough already with pigs and pipe-lighters. Enough. The factory isn't a factory any more, but a cattle barn. We're a lot of fools. Is this business, Comrades? There's two sides to every man: You can either let the devil grab you, or you can swing him by the tail. It all depends on just how much of a fool you are. Our hands aren't meant for goats and pigs, but for something else. We know this: As our hands are so are our souls and our minds. To hell with all foolishness! As Comrade Ivagin said, there's now a new economic line. What is this new economic policy? It means hit the devil in the jaw with a great effort at reconstruction. Cement is a mighty binding material. With cement we're going to have a great building-up of the Republic. We are cement, Comrades: the working-class. Let us keep that in mind. We've played the fool long enough; now we've got to start real work.93

If the previous passages symbolize Gleb's desire to create a productive colony in his own mind, his speech here indicates his resolve to verbally motivate his comrades to action. It is evident that Gleb does not only use positive reinforcement to emphasize the need for strenuous labor: he also unleashes a string of negative terms, referring to his friends as animals (svinyey, “pigs” and koz “goats”). Such insults are reminiscent of Pavel from Mother, who fervently declared that his fellow proletarians must prove they are not beasts, but capable human beings. The most striking part of his speech highlights class consciousness, formally reminding his comrades that they constitute a special breed of people (osoboy porad’) and should behave as such. With his speech, Gleb declares his intention to bring back a Stakonovite discipline to his previously uninspired comrades. It

92 Gladkov, Sobraniye sochiyenii, 62.
93 Gladkov, Cement, 65.
is *rabota* which separates the workingmen of Pleasant Colony from the idle bourgeoisie, saving them from corruption and indifference. It is also *rabota* which justifies the need for a stricter work schedule and a more strenuous pace.

*How The Steel Was Tempered* presents a slightly different idea of labor than the other two novels. Although Ostrovsky wrote his novel during the Stalinist-era, his narrative focuses almost exclusively on the *military* exploits of the Soviets during the Russian Civil War, ignoring economic themes of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the author's prose remains explicit, instructional, and dedicated to its loyalty to the Party. One of Ostrovsky's critical passages occurs in Chapter Eight: Pavel has become a seasoned veteran of the Red Army, successfully participating in campaigns to fend off the White invaders. After a hard fought battle, the protagonist and his fellow soldiers set down to rest, eat, and talk amongst themselves. It is not long before Pavel and one of his superiors, Kramer engage in a discussion about discipline and authority:

Слушай, политрук, как ты посмотришь на такое дело вот я собираюсь перемахнуть в Первую Конную у них дела впереди горяче. бедь не для гулянки их столько собралось. А нам здесь придется толкаться все на одном месте. Крамер посмотрел на него с удивлением. -- Как это перемахнуть? что тебе Красная Армия мия -- кино? На что это похоже? Если мы все начнем бегать из одной части в другую, веселые будут дела. -- Не все ли равно, где воевать? перебил Павел Крамера. -- Тут ли, там ли. Я же не дезертирую в тыл. Крамер категорически запротестовал. -- А дисциплина по-твоему, что? У тебя, Павел, все на месте, а вот насчет анархии, это имеется. Захо тел -- сделал. А партия и комсомол построены на железной дисциплини. Партия -- выше всего. И каждый должен быть не там, где он хочет, а там, где нужен. Тебе Пузьревский отказал в переводе. Значит -- Точка.94

"Look, Kramer, what would you say if I switched over to the First Cavalry Army? There's going to be big doings there by the looks of it.

94 Ostrovsky, *Kak zakaliias' stal'.* 121.
They're not being massed in such numbers just for fun, are they? And we here won't be seeing much of it." Kramer looked at him in surprise. "Switch over? Do you think you can change units in the army the way you change seats in a cinema?" "But what difference does it make where a man fights?" Pavel interposed. "I'm not deserting to the rear, am I?" But Kramer was categorically opposed to the idea. "What about discipline? You're not a bad youngster, Pavel, on the whole, but in some things you're a bit of an anarchist. You think you can do as you please? You forget, my lad, that the Party and the Komsomol are founded on iron discipline. The Party must come first. And each one of us must be where he is most needed and not where he wants to be. Puzyrevsky turned down your application for a transfer, didn't he? Well, there's your answer."

This scene reveals a curious, yet vital aspect of "formulaic Socialist Realism."

Although Pavel has achieved fame within the Red Army, Kramer points out that he still carries a sense of reckless individualism: he desires to join a different division because he believes it will expose him to more combat. Kramer than suggests that the protagonist fights for this particular brigade because the Soviet authority wishes him to do so. He implicitly trusts in the higher powers' guidance, remarking that “the Party must come first.” Kramer emphasizes the importance of the collective struggle over the acts of powerful men. The passage serves to instruct the reader: the Communist Party is the arbiter of wisdom and distsiplina (“discipline”); and for a worker or soldier to question his or her place demonstrates a profound lack of ideological understanding (or, in Leninist terms, consciousness). Although Kramer directly addresses Pavel's unique situation, one can easily extrapolate this message to the larger principles of socialism and the Communist party. Ultimately, the decisions of the Party reflect thoughtful guidance, whereas those decisions by individuals are likely to be contaminated with impulse, inexperience and, in some cases, outright stupidity. Like the scene in Virgin Soil

95 Ostrovsky, How The Steel Was Tempered, 110.
when Davidov explains to the peasants the value of discipline and the consequences for treachery, Kramer acts as the voice of Party wisdom. To remain loyal to the edicts of the Soviet Union, even though they may contradict one's personal desires, is to engage in another form of "righteous suffering." Pavel's wish may not have been granted, but his assurance from his commanding officer that this rejection is for his own good gives the protagonist a sense of comfort and security.

The significance of *rabota, krov',* and *distsiplina* resonate strongly throughout *Cement* and *How The Steel Was Tempered*. The task of the Communist Party was twofold: it had to defeat the capitalist threat while simultaneously creating an egalitarian society based on mass mobilization and industrial production. Things are more complicated in Sholokov's novel, however. The setting of *Virgin Soil Upturned* takes place after the Red Army had successfully routed their immediate foreign threats, and after the Soviet Union had made an impressive transition from an agricultural state to an industrial one. Yet it is critical to recall that agriculture remained a vital part of the Soviet economy: a fact which would drive Stalin to enact his program of farm collectivization. To implement socialist principles in the city might be simple enough, as the theories of socialism and Marxism revolved around the uprising of an urban working class. To implement these same theories in the Soviet countryside proved to be much more difficult, and Sholokov's protagonist, Davidov, struggles to construct a functional *kolkhoz* in spite of constant difficulties. The positive hero of *Virgin Soil Upturned* finds himself repeatedly trying to convince his comrades, his superiors, and the very peasants he is trying to convert that collectivization is essential to realizing socialism. Davidov
also emphasizes the crueler elements of this process, namely the removal of the kulaks (rich peasants whom Stalin believed were hoarding grain and vital supplies). In Sholokov's ninth chapter, the protagonist presses his comrades to take the issue of de-kulakization seriously, and to not sympathize with their fate:

Davidov slowly rose from the table. And just as slowly was his unbound cheek flooded with a deathly blue, and his ear went white. He went up to Andrei, took him by the shoulder, and gently turned him round. Breathing heavily, not removing his eyes from Andrei's face, he began to speak: 'You're sorry for them....You feel pity for them [the kulaks]. And they had pity on us? Have our enemies ever wept over the tears of our children? Did they ever weep over the orphans of those they killed? Well? After a strike at his factory my father was discharged and sent to Siberia. My mother was left with four children. I was the oldest—and I was nine. We had nothing to eat, and so my mother went—you look at me!--she went on the streets so we shouldn't die of starvation. She brought her guests into our little room—we were living in a cellar. We had only one bed left. And we children slept behind a curtain...And I was nine years old...Drunken men came home with her. And I had to put my hands over my little sisters' mouths to prevent them from crying....Who wiped away our tears? Did you hear? In the morning I would take the accursed rouble— Davidov raised his leathery palm to the level of Andrei's face and tormentedly ground his teeth—'the rouble my mother had earned, and go to get bread....' Suddenly he swept his leaden-

96 Sholokov, Podnyataya Tselina, 59.
hued fist down on the table and shouted: ‘How can you pity them?’

Davidov's tragic story represents one of the most emotionally striking passages within the genre of Socialist Realism; its effect is certainly undeniable. Here, we see a fascinating interplay between the verbal and physical aspects of militant language. While Davidov explains to Andrei the "unwarranted suffering" he endured as a small child, he physically accosts his friend to reinforce the emotional impact of his story. The positive hero views the cause for socialism as a dichotomy: a struggle between the oppressed, working masses and the idle, greedy bourgeoisie. Davidov employs Stalinist logic with his emotional speech: the kulaks do not constitute the working masses, they are in fact members of the oppressive landowning class. Therefore, by association, they are the “enemies of socialism,” and should not be pitied. But, Davidov does not explain this directly, he instead relies on an emotionally charged anecdote which not only captures the attention of his friend, but also of the reader. For Davidov, socialism is much more than a political ideology: it is a personal vendetta against those oppressors who tormented him through the earlier part of his life. This emotional appeal humanizes him, but it also serves as a justification for the displacement of the kulaks. Davidov's personal story contains both elements of “unwarranted” and "righteous suffering.” By itself, the oppression and poverty he endured as a youth does not serve to further the socialist cause. However, through his own experiences, he establishes an emotional attachment to the idea of a working-class society; one in which his former oppressors receive harsh punishment. Davidov's trials have molded him into a stronger, more

97 Sholokov, Virgin Soil Upturned, 72.
enthusiastic warrior for socialism and collectivization: a perfect example of "righteous suffering."

Other characters in *Virgin Soil Upturned* use similarly militant language to further the cause of socialism. In Chapter 31, Andrei notices his comrade, Malak, carefully studying a collection of books, and asks which he is studying. Malak responds that he is studying the English language and Andrei, naturally, remains curious about why he would bother to study such a subject. Malak responds with a speech:

"You do ask strange questions, Andrei! You surprise me by your lack of understanding. I'm a Communist, am I not? And there'll be a Soviet government in England, too, won't there? You nod your head, so you evidently think there will. And how many Russian

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Sholokov, *Podnyataya Tselina*, 229.
Communists can speak English? That's just it; only a few. But the English bourgeoisie have conquered India and almost half the world and are oppressing the blacks and the darkskins. What sort of order do you call that? There'll be a Soviet government in England, but many English Communists won't now what the class enemy in his pure form is like, and because they're not used to them they won't be able to deal with them as they ought. And then I'll ask to go to them to teach them. And as I shall know their language, I shall arrive and get down to the job at once. “You've had a revolution?” I shall ask. “A Communist one? Then take the capitalists and generals and put them between your nails, my lads. In 1917 we in Russia were innocent enough to let them go, the reptiles, and afterwards they began to cut our veins. Put them between your nails so that you can't make any mistakes, so that everything's ‘all right.’”

As in Davidov's confrontation with Andrei, Malak offers his friend a militant diatribe powered by vengeance. Malak clearly regrets the fact that the Soviet government has allowed so many “class enemies” to continue living: a testament of emotional hatred towards the bourgeoisie. On the surface, it would appear that Malak supports the perspective of Trotskyist “world revolution:” one which had become taboo amongst the Central Committee after Stalin achieved supremacy due its association with Leon Trotsky. Yet Malak instead merely proposes that he will act as a revolutionary guide for those “inevitable” Communist revolutions in English-speaking countries. What is particularly revealing about this passage is how it nakedly displays the more sinister aspects of Stalinism. Here, Malak clearly celebrates the merciless eradication of socialism's enemies by noting that he will advise future revolutionaries to slaughter them (galov, “reptiles”), thus saving the trouble of having to deal with kulaks, counter-revolutionaries, and wreckers. His language is militant, emotional, and even threatening displaying some of the of linguistic parameters for "formulaic Socialist Realism". Like

99 Sholokov, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, 299.
his comrade, Davidov, Malak subscribes to the doctrine of “distributive righteous suffering,” believing that mercilessly slaughtering those “counter-revolutionaries” around the world constitutes justice for socialism.

A Noble Sacrifice

So far, we have discussed two fundamental elements of "formulaic Socialist Realism": a clearly defined Manichean struggle (socialists being on the side of good, all of their opponents are evil) supported by explicit, emotional and militant prose. Both of these elements fit into Stalin's utopian vision of a disciplined, productive and obedient Soviet society. More critically, both elements assist in framing the greater literary theme of "righteous suffering." However, neither of these aspects would be quite as effective without the notion of personal sacrifice. Following the tradition of Maxim Gorky, the works of Gladkov, Ostrovsky, and Sholokov contain strong examples of certain characters—mostly the positive heroes—sacrificing their mental and physical well-being for the greater good of the Soviet Union. Although the none of the positive heroes die—or, in the case of Mother's Pavel, receive exile as punishment—they do effectively lose something precious to them. In spite of such tragedies, the characters nevertheless emerge from these experiences with a strengthened resolve, and a more thorough understanding of their role in the socialist struggle.

Pavel Korchagin, the positive hero of How The Steel Was Tempered, endures perhaps the most physically painful trials of any protagonist in Socialist Realism. After
participating in many major battles, Pavel sustains injuries in his arms, chest, and eyes. Near the conclusion of the novel, the wounded hero loses almost all of his eye-sight, in spite of the best efforts of Moscow physicians. Pavel anguishes in sorrow not because of his lack of mobility and loss of senses, but because he fears he will no longer be of any use to the Party. However, after a few weeks his comrades introduce him to a device which enables sightless veterans to be able to write. Suddenly, Pavel has a revelation: what if he composes a biography of his life to inspire future generations to fight for socialism? Using his new device, the hero successfully writes a manuscript for an autobiography, and anxiously sends it to Moscow with the hopes of publication:

The fate of the book would decide Pavel's own fate. If the manuscript was rejected that would be the end for him. If, on the other hand, it was found to be bad only in part, if its defects could be remedied by further work, he would launch a new offensive. His mother took the

100 Ostrovsky, Ostrovsky, *Kak zakalialas' stal’, 381-382.
parcel with the manuscript to the post office. Days of anxious waiting began. Never in his life had Pavel waited in such anguished suspense for a letter as he did now. He lived from the morning to the evening post. But no news came from Leningrad. The continued silence of the publishers began to look ominous. From day to day the presentiment of disaster mounted, and Pavel admitted to himself that total rejection of his book would finish him. That, he could not endure. There would be no longer any reason to live. At such moments he remembered the park on the hill overlooking the sea, and he asked himself the same question over and over again: 'Have you done everything you can to break out of the steel bonds and return to the ranks, to make your life useful?' And he had to answer: 'Yes, I believe I have done everything!' At last, when the agony of waiting had become well-nigh unbearable, his mother, who had been suffering from the suspense no less than her son, came running into the room with the cry: 'News from Leningrad!' It was a telegram from the Regional Committee. A terse message on a telegraph form: 'Novel heartily approved. Turned over to publishers. Congratulations on your victory.' His heart beat fast. His cherished dream was realised! The steel bonds have been burst, and now, armed with a new weapon, he had returned to the fighting ranks and to life.\textsuperscript{101}

The dramatic ending scene frames Pavel as the ideal Soviet citizen: despite his personal disabilities, the main character's foremost concern is his usefulness to the Party. This coincides with the great Stalinist ethos: "Those who do not work, do not eat."

Pavel's attitude is directed towards those readers who support socialism: however accomplished one's past may be, one must always strive to serve the Party in the present. For the protagonist, "righteous suffering" does not merely involve a handful of brave episodes; it is a continuous struggle which ceases only with death. His injuries speak for themselves, as he sustained them while engaged in military operations against the White Armies. In the years of Stalin's reign, such bravery was regarded with the highest respect (where, subsequently, cowardice could result in execution by a commanding officer)

Yet, this passage demonstrates Ostrovsky's transcendental attitude toward his character.

\textsuperscript{101} Ostrovsky, \textit{How The Steel Was Tempered}, 259-260.
For Pavel, duty does not act as the primary motivator for his actions, but rather a sense of passion and personal fulfillment. Ostrovsky romanticizes the narrative by creating a character whose commitment to the socialist cause is so strong, that "righteous suffering" becomes something he simply cannot exist without. For this reason, *How The Steel Was Tempered* steps out of the realm of the believable, and into the realm of the transcendental. His sacrifice and personal redemption embody the core of "righteous suffering."

Ostrovsky’s work clearly represents the concept of "righteous suffering" in its purest, most ideological form. The two other works display this theme in a more realistic and humanizing manner. Although Davidov and Gleb Chumalov do not embody the kind of perfection that we see in Pavel Korchagin, they nevertheless carry the torch of socialism throughout their stories by undergoing both personal difficulties and trials. Gleb—one of the more dynamic and three-dimensional protagonists in Socialist Realism—concludes his own journey by emerging victorious as a proletarian leader, but fails to win back the affection of his estranged wife, Dasha. In fact, during the majority of the novel, the emotional rift between the married couple worsens. Gleb finds himself constantly overworked, struggling to revitalize his hometown, while his wife becomes more and more involved with the Women's Committee. To make matters worse, it becomes obvious to Gleb that Dasha has had numerous extramarital affairs. At the conclusion of *Cement*, Dasha finally confronts her husband and admits that being accepted as a full Soviet citizen has changed her: she is no longer the woman Gleb had married. Although this realization causes a deep sadness within Gleb's soul, he learns to
accept his wife's decision, and furthermore accepts the fact that despair, disappointment, and suffering can be an inevitable part of life. He expresses this sentiment eloquently in a conversation with his friend Motia in the final chapter.

'Oh, Gleb! How sad I feel about you two dear people! What a miserable fate! Dasha is lost from her home. She exists no longer, Gleb. Your little daugther has perished. And you're alone—no family, no warm corner, like a tramp! But don't complain, Gleb. Those who play with fire, themselves get burned. And between you, little Nurka flashed out like a spark. Oh, how I pity you--!' He turned away from Motia and began to fill his pipe. 'Never mind, Motia, fire is not such a bad thing. When you know which way you're going, when one is sure one's feet and eyes, you need not to be too scared of burns, big or small. We're fighting and building a new life. All's going well, Motia, don't cry. We're going to build up everything, God damn it! In such a way that we ourselves will be astonished at our own work.'

Even though Gleb has lost nearly everything he holds dear in his personal life, including his precious daughter who perished from disease a few months earlier, his quest to re-build the Pleasant Colony has taught him that the socialist cause remains the most important. As long as he fulfills this goal, he will remain optimistic and forward-looking. Here, we see that both Motia and Gleb use the word for fire (agon') to denote...

102 Gladkov, Sobraniye sochiyenii, 262.
103 Gladkov, Cement, 293.
suffering, yet their interpretation of the term differs. Motia suggests that the conflict between Gleb and Dasha caused the protagonist to get “burned” (ponyesli sami agon’ or “suffer by fire”), by enduring emotional pain, and thus contributed to many other tragedies in his life. While acknowledging his hardships, Gleb curiously states that “fire is not such a bad thing” (agon’ – nyeplokhaya doroga) or that suffering is not always something negative. He then adds that the construction of socialism (my stroim novuyu zhizn’) supersedes all else. As a man who survived the Civil War, it is clear that Gleb understands that in life suffering is inevitable. He does believe, however, that this kind of pain can easily be overcome with a moral commitment to a higher purpose.

By the end of Cement, Gleb still holds a great deal of sorrow in his heart. Yet his experience of fighting for the Red Army, and his success in revitalizing Pleasant Colony, serve to strengthen his resolve in the construction of socialism. If, however, the author believes that suffering is inevitable, is there a means to at least reduce the amount of hardship that one can encounter during a lifetime? It is here that Serge Ivagin—Gleb's comrade who had gone through similar tragedies and eventually gets exiled from the local Party—demonstrates the difference between unwarranted and "righteous suffering":

104 Gladkov, Sobraniye sochiyenii, 264.
On the surface, Ivagin assumes a rather extreme position by resolving to purge any kind of personal or emotional connection from his life that is irrelevant to the development of the Party. If we refer back to Chapter One's discussion of Stalinist ideology, this is precisely the kind of attitude which characterizes the “ideal Soviet worker” of the thirties. To sacrifice one's mind, body, and soul towards the construction of socialism represents the highest honor, but to make such sacrifices for any other cause is wasteful, insignificant, and in many cases counter-productive. Gladkov compares this idea of workers being part of a collective whole to being working components of a greater machine (*nichtozhnaya chatitsa v ii vyelikom organizmye* or “tiny particle of her great body”). Gleb, of course, experiences a similar revelation at the very end of the novel, when he triumphantly urges his comrades to continue fighting for socialism and to ignore all other distractions. Both characters conclude that their conflicts and dilemmas which did not relate to the great struggle—namely, Gleb's problems with Dasha and Serge's personal problems with the Party—ultimately did not yield productive results, and thus can be considered "unwarranted suffering." Simultaneously, Gleb's efforts to rebuild Pleasant Colony, and Serge's dedication to socialist redemption have a tangible,

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positive effect on the trajectory of the narrative, and thus fall into the category of "righteous suffering." The presence of a dual conflict—one being ideological and one being personal—represents a deliberate literary technique used by Gladkov. Instead of discussing suffering in an abstract manner, Cement presents an imperfect positive hero who embarks on two quests: Gleb can boast his own success as a Party leader, but fails in winning over his wife and conquering his personal problem. In typical Stalinist fashion, Gladkov instructs through his characters that a firm dedication to the Party is always more fruitful, more beneficial, and a more productive use of one's time and energy than an intense focus on personal affairs, which will more than likely end in failure and disappointment. A dedicated socialist must choose wisely which sacrifices to make.

Although both Cement and How The Steel Was Tempered present graphic, tangible, and emotional examples of sacrifice, it is in Sholokov's Virgin Soil Upturned that we see an intensification of this theme. This elevation directly correlates with the story's difference in setting and time period. Where Gladkov and Ostrovsky apply the Socialist Realist formula to an urban atmosphere during the Russian Civil War, Sholokov instead takes readers to the Russian countryside during collectivization. Davidov and his comrades quickly find that Gleb Chomolov's decree of “building socialism” proves to be much more difficult and complicated in the agricultural sector than the industrial one. The conflicts are highly ideological: the peasantry does not “understand” the tenets of socialism, and thus the kolkhoz administrators must instruct the reluctant natives as to why such policies will benefit them. In particular, Davidov and his associates find themselves attempting to chide the peasants into abandoning their traditional and
“backwards” system of values, embracing instead the promise of “socialism in one
country.” One especially revealing scene takes place in Chapter 37, when Makar
addresses a peasant who has doubts about joining a collective farm:

Troшки повремени, не вступай. Супротив всяких непорядков в
колхозном хозяйстве мы будем беспощадно бороться, хомуты
будут все подогнаны.
А уж ежели ты спишь и во сне бывших своих быков
видишь- тогда в партию тебе нельзя. В партию надо
идти безо всяких страданий об собственности. В партию надо
идти так, чтобы ты насквозь чистый и оперённый
одной думкой: достигнуть мировой революции. Мое
папаша жил при достатке и менл к хозяйству с малошки
приучал, но к этому ничуть не был приверженный, хозяйство
было дал менл вовсе никчемушнее. Я от сытой жизни
и от четырех пар быков в нужду ушел, в работники... Так
что ты до тех пор не вступай, покуда вовялт очистишься от
этой коросты – собственности.106

'Wait a little then, don't join yet. We'll fight relentlessly against all
shortcomings in the collective farm; all the collars will be
fitted to the right horses. But if you see your old bullocks in your sleep, then
you can't be in the Party. You must come into the Party without any
suffering over property. You have to come into the Party when you're
clean all through and are driven by the one thought of achieving the
world revolution. My father was comfortably off, and he got me used
to the farm from my childhood. But I wasn't in the least attached to it, the
farm meant nothing to me whatever. I gave up a well-fed life and four
yoke of oxen to be a poor labourer. So don't you join until you've got clean
rid of that scab of property.107

The administrator acts as both a salesman and an instructor. He acknowledges
that so far, his collective farm has experienced logistical difficulties, yet he assures the
peasant that the Party will use all its power to correct these problems. Conversely, Malak
bluntly tells the peasant that one must pass a sort of ideological “litmus test” in order to
become a productive member of the collective farm; he must renounce the so-called
archaic notion of private property, and instead embrace the more enlightened dogma of

106 Sholokov, Podnyataya Tselina, 292
107 Sholokov, Virgin Soil Upturned, 380.
communal land. Risking one's life in battle for a cause, or to work tirelessly in the hopes of a better require courage and discipline, yet to voluntarily abandon one's fundamental traditions and put faith in a radical and experimental society can be even more difficult. By this logic, Malak is “selling” what he and Communists believe is a better way of life for the Russian peasantry, yet he also stresses the requirement of "righteous suffering" by sacrificing one's adherence to the notion of private property. (*etoj korost' – sobstvyennosti*).

As we have seen, the literary world co-opted Stalin's vision of utopia through the edicts of the Soviet Writers' Union and codification of "formulaic Socialist Realism". While it is true that the prestigious writers of the thirties maintained a degree of artistic autonomy, they also rigorously adhered to a literary formula which romanticized Stalinism. Authors of this decade employed a variety of techniques to produce this narrow vision of socialist utopia, yet they relied on a handful of explicit guidelines to fashion their narratives. Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement*, Nikolai Ostrovsky *How the Steel Was Tempered*, and Mikhail Gladkov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* exemplify the Socialist Realist formula by depicting socialism as a force of benevolence against a hostile world, by utilizing militant, emotional, and even threatening literary prose to reinforce these principles. Underneath these stylistic conventions, those writers who subscribed to this literary formula crafted a positivist interpretation of "righteous suffering:" to endure physical pain and mental anguish for the sake of the Party was the highest expression of ideological purity.

Together, Joseph Stalin, Maxim Gorky, and other members of the Communist
vanguard sought to create a “politically correct” template for Soviet writers which matched the vision of “socialism in one country.” The consistent patterns in the examined works show that they successfully completed their mission. With the creation of the Soviet Writers' Union, Gorky and other leaders wielded the power to materially reward those writers who adhered to the principles of "formulaic Socialist Realism", and to punish those who defied them. Yet, as we will see in the final section of this research, the power of ideological hegemony in Soviet literature began to unravel after Stalin's death. The Khrushchev Thaw once again transformed the definition of Socialist Realism, effectively de-emphasizing the need for thematic conformity. The end of Stalinism led writers to question the concept of "righteous suffering"; their own experiences living under Stalin's dictatorship sowed seeds of doubt about whether or not State policies and edicts actually yielded any benefits for the working masses.

Post-Stalinism and the Re-Evaluation of Suffering

Although the multi-national Soviet Union boasted a seventy-seven year commitment to the principles of world socialism, the nuances of Soviet ideology shifted dramatically during its three-quarter century rule. This was most obvious in the political sphere, but the changes in the literary world reflected the shake-ups in the Kremlin. Already we have seen that, within the short span of a decade, a heterogeneous categorization of literature which discussed socialism through real historical events ("categorical Socialist Realism") was transformed into a romanticized literary formula
which trumpeted the political goals of Stalinism ("formulaic Socialist Realism"). Considering the extent of Stalin's power, one would assume that his influence on Soviet literature would remain indelible for generations to come. Yet, the era of Nikitia Khrushchev and beyond illustrated the fragility of the Socialist Realist formula. Once Stalin died in 1953, writers began to question the notion of “righteous suffering,” and to deviate from the parameters of “formulaic Socialist Realism.”

The phenomenon of cultural “relaxing” would later become known as the Thaw period. Although Khrushchev maintained much of Stalin's authoritarian tradition, he did not replicate the former Secretary's cult of personality and unflinching adherence to harsh punishment for those who defied him. This dramatic shift from the frightening atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s had a significant effect on the literary world, especially the Soviet Writers' Union. Because of the lessening of ideological pressure from the Central Committee, writers finally began to express themselves outside of the rigid confines of "formulaic Socialist Realism.” Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that the literature in the 1950s and 1960s entirely resembled the works of authors such as Leonid Leonov and Valentin Kataev. Stalin's reign had left a permanent scar on the cultural atmosphere of Russia, and many of the works produced by Thaw authors reflected bitter memories of state terror.

Anti-Stalinist sentiment resonated fervently in Vladimir Dudinstev's *Not by Bread Alone*, Ilya Ehrenburg's aptly named *The Thaw*, and the new direction of the well-established *Novy mir* periodical.\(^{108}\) Despite the more open-minded attitude of the post-

Stalinist Soviet Writers' Union, it continued its tradition of condemning and censoring those works which they deemed to be anti-Soviet. Two authors who truly tested the patience of the Writers' Union's achieved a considerable amount of fame in the Western world: Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Their novels, *Dr. Zhivago* and *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, questioned the remdemptive nature of socialist principles, and concluded that the Communist Party could not provide economic, spiritual, or social fulfillment. They believed that one must instead look for other forms of personal salvation. Such an offense to the fundamentals of socialism struck both the Writers' Union and the Central Committee as treasonous. Their works were banned throughout the Soviet Union for a number of years.\(^{109}\)

The literary challenge to the fundamentals of "formulaic Socialist Realism" came in a variety of forms, including a stinging critique of the concept of "righteous suffering." One of the more fascinating—as well as one of the less well-known—post-Stalinist writers who attacked these principles was novelist and professor Fyodor Abramov. Abramov spent much of his early life in the Russian countryside, away from the cement, factories, and urban atmosphere that characterized much of Stalinist mythology. Although the young writer quickly became accustomed to the norms of the Soviet Union, he was skeptical of socialism's promise of a better tomorrow. The horrors of both collectivization and the Second World War only reinforced his belief that the Soviet Union could not offer much of substance to Russian peasants. According to David Gillespie, the author of *The Life and Work of Fedor Abramov*, the prolific writer rejected

\(^{109}\) Hosking, *the First Socialist Society*, 413.
the notion that ordinary people—especially villagers—should look to “scientific” social-economic system for happiness and satisfaction. He looked to the Russian past and Russian tradition as alternatives to modern socialism, and also champions the individual: “Abramov does not propose any ready solution to save the country, the people, or mankind. He makes people think and decide for themselves what path to take in order to preserve, and not destroy, the centuries-old home that is Russia, to carry on the legacy of Russia's righteous and heroic sons.”

With other contemporaries such as Valentin Rasputin and Vasily Shukshin, Abramov helped to create a new literary movement which later became known as Village Prose. Such literature focused on everyday life of those who lived in Russian villages, and romanticized traditional and nature-based values instead of the urban triumphalism of "formulaic Socialist Realism."

Although many of Abramov's works focused on individual, non-partisan dilemmas of ordinary villagers and praised the architecture and rituals of Russian ancestors, there were instances where he discusses the direction of Soviet socialism. In 1968, Abramov published for Novy mir a book which, in many ways, can be considered a piece of “post-Stalinist Socialist Realism.” Two Winters and Three Summers combines elements of Village Prose and political commentary, focusing on the life and times of a kolkhoz family—the Pryaslins—who endure the hardships of war, starvation, and collectivization. Unlike Mikhail Sholokov in Virgin Soil Upturned, Abramov does not allow for Soviet officials to justify the purpose of grain-taxes, corporal punishment, and general starvation. In fact, the entirety of Abramov's narrative comes exclusively from

the point of view of the Pryaslin family, their neighbors, and their friends. The author discusses their family conflicts, their love affairs, and their struggle to simply survive. Whenever these characters interact with the Soviet officials, the exchange is almost exclusively a negative one. In a clever reversal of Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, Abramov portrays the administrators of the *kolkhoz* as the oppressors, exacting unreasonable demands for purposes which do not make sense to the characters. While Sholokov saw these officials as the upholders and distributors of "righteous suffering," Abramov effectively shows the inhumanity and insensitivity of their practices, countering the argument that the socialist project actually makes the lives of peasants better. Instead of attributing the re-construction and re-establishment of the post-war community to the Soviet officials, the author instead gives credit to the villagers who manage to maintain their traditions in the face of elemental and governmental opposition.

One of the more distinctive aspects of *Two Winters and Three Summers* is its anti-political stance. Much of the story focuses on individual character development, and usually any discussion of the Soviet government only arises when the rural administrators evoke direct action against the villagers. Through daily conversations between Abramov's actors, as well as the descriptive injunctions by the author himself, the reader becomes quickly aware that the protagonists have a disillusioned view of the Communist Party. In Part Two, Chapter Two, a verbal exchange between Mikhail, the protagonist, and his friend Lizka reveals this attitude:

Оказывается, на днях тем, кто - едет на дальний сенокос, правление выписало по три килограмма ячменной муки, а им ни шиша. Почему? -- Вот то-то и оно, что почему, заговорила Лизка.- Я уж ему, борову, вчера доказывала. - Кому?
It turned out that the people who had been sent out to the remote hayfields had recently been issued three kilos of barely four, while they had been given zero. Why? 'That's just it: why?' said Lizka. 'Just what I was telling him yesterday, the pig.' 'Who? The chairman?' 'Yup. Made a special trip to his office. You think our mother would ever go? I says to him, “Well, isn't Mikhail going to go harvesting? Are you going to keep him by the river through the whole harvest?” “He'll get it when he goes.” “What about Mama and me? Isn't that work? I've been tending the calves for three years. Well, the calves can go starve to death if this is what's going to go on.” And just then Pavel Klevakin walked into the office, just back from Germany. They say he brought a whole load of stuff back. 'Well, get this: “Here's fifteen kilos of flour for you, Pavel.” And he hadn't even asked for it. That's the way it goes. Anyone coming back from the war gets flour. At that point I couldn't say a word. I burst into tears. What kind of a law is that? Our dad gave up his life and we don't get a single grain, and this healthy guy comes back to his family and gets flour on top of it.'

Although it may satisfy the Soviet government to give returning soldiers—those who risked their lives for Mother Russia—a greater share of flour than ordinary workers, Lizka's complaint undermines the glorified notion of *rabota* that we have seen in "formulaic Socialist Realism". The peasants, who toil all day under the thumb of men like *Virgin Soil Upturned*’s Davidov, clearly do not receive the material improvements

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which Communism had promised them. Instead of a system of egalitarianism and equality, the arbiters of socialism clearly have preferences as to who will eat, and who will not. Abramov effectively uses Lizka and Mikhail as representatives not only for general social criticism, but as examples of people who have not benefited from "righteous suffering." By complying with the Soviet requirements for grain-taxes, and not participating in deliberate and armed rebellions against the Soviet state, these country-folk have followed the proscribed guidelines of socialism. Yet they still suffer greatly. The nonchalant manner with which Lezka talks about the wickedness of the Chairman demonstrates that the villagers see the Soviet officials only as the distributors of "unwarranted suffering."

The physiological necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter—naturally motivate human beings to perform certain actions. When the Soviet government deliberately deprives the residents of Pekashino of bread, flour, and supplies, one would expect that the villagers to view their "caretakers" as nothing more than thuggish autocrats. Yet Abramov's critique goes beyond the deprivation of bread; he also sees the Soviet Union as a hyper-centralized force which prevents local villagers—and even assigned Soviet officials—from making decisions about their community. In his Eighth Chapter, we see discussion between four villagers on supplies and skills needed to rebuild their village, including the local Soviet Chairman:

Все- и Михаил, и Петр Житов, и Илья- переглянулись меж собой, улыбнулись: забавно говорит председатель. Сразу видно, что новичок. Петр Житов, снисходительно поглядывая на Лукашина, разъяснил, что за порядки у них в районе. Ни один председатель не может снять своего колхозника с лесозаготовок без ведома райкома, а тем более групповода.
- Вот как! - удивился Лука шин.- Значит, колхоз не может своими колхозниками распоряжаться? А кто установил такой порядок? - Да не мы же, - ответил Петр Житов. - С тридцатых годов такой порядок идет.113

The others—Mikhail, Pyotr Zhitov, and Ilya—exchanged glances and smiled: droll fellow, this Chairman; you can tell he's a beginner a mile away. Pyotr Zhitov, looking condescendingly at Lukashin, explained the local customs to him. No Chairman could remove his kolkhoz workers from logging duty without the concurrence of the District Committee and, especially of the team foreman. 'I see!' said Lukashin, surprised. 'So a kolkhoz has no control over its own workers then. And who established such a system? 'Not us; that's for sure,' answered Pyotr Zhitov. 'It's been the system since the 1930s.'114

On the surface, the passage humorously jabs at the Soviet bureaucracy, noting that even kolkhoz administrators cannot make labor-related decisions without the approval of a higher committee, yet there is also a deeper and more insidious meaning behind this exchange. The comments made by Lukashin and the Chairman confirm the utter absurdity and injustice of the Soviet system. Local needs simply could not be decided by the villagers themselves, and the central, ideologically-driven government dictated the demands of kolkhozi, believing its actions would be in the best interest of the community. By referring to the Chairman as a “beginner”, the author also suggests that even the middle management administrators often reek of inexperience and incompetence.

Abramov also highlights Zhitov's unquestioning adherence to the Soviet system; it never occurred to him to inquire why local Chairmen must obtain permission from a distant Committee to make even the most basic changes to development plans. But perhaps the most critical aspect of this passage is the Chairman's comment that the system that was

113 Abramov, Brat'ya i syestri. 418.
114 Abramov, Two Winters and Three Summers, 211-212.
put in place during the 1930s. Abramov's jibe at the Soviet bureaucracy serves not only to show the reader the inherent stupidity of the Stalinist system, it also removes the romanticization of Stalinism that was crucial to "formulaic Socialist Realism." In the world of the Prysalins, toiling from sunrise to sunset under the cruel jurisdiction of Soviet functionaries yields no romance. The villagers, who appear so desperate to repair their war-torn community, find that the Soviet government only hinders their efforts by stripping them not only of their food, but of their voice. Though Two Winters and Three Summers contains many light-hearted and humorous moments, it becomes evident that Abramov's characters—who work tirelessly, are well-disciplined, and do not openly rebel against the Soviets—gain nothing from their tenure under the Soviets except for endless amounts of "unwarranted suffering." Those who once fought for svoboda in Maxim Gorky's Mother have now become the agents of oppression.

Thesis Conclusion

The transition from the pluralistic, categorical definition of Socialist Realism to one which was more romantic and formula-driven occurred over a period of time. Within the span of ten years, the literary apparatus of the Soviet Union shifted from encouraging enthusiastic socialists to bring disparate—and oftentimes—conflicting themes to the cultural foreground, to one which exclusively promoted literary Stalinism. Although the Central Committee originally intended for the Russian Association for Proletarian Writers to become an organization which would give a solid and single definition of proletarian
literature, it instead became a forum for socialist writers to exchange ideas and debate. In spite of the vast array of books, poems, and other forms of artistic expression which supported the establishment of a socialist state, it was Socialist Realism which became the favored genre of the literary community. Those writers could discuss the merits and drawbacks of Soviet Communism with an accessible prose, and could base their stories on current and past events of the real world. This sense of “literary reality” became distorted during the 1930s. With Maxim Gorky at the helm of the Soviet Writers' Union, his romantic, militant, and postivistic approach the great proletarian cause became the standard bearer for "formulaic Socialist Realism". The published writers of the thirties mimicked Gorky's style while enhancing the theme of "righteous suffering." It was not be until after Stalin's death that the literary community would truly break free from the grip from the 1930s formula, returning “Socialist Realism” to a category of literature which could accept many different perspectives.

Even though these Socialist Realist novels did not historically represent the reality of the Soviet Union, the shift in the style and content reflected the socio-political changes from the 1920s, to the 1930s and finally the 1950s and 60s. “Categorical Socialist Realism” like Leonid Leonov's *The Badgers* and Valentin Kataev's *Embezzlers* embraced humor, diversity, and various layers of sub-text, while books such as *Mother, How The Steel Was Tempered, Virgin Soil Upturned*, and *Cement* embraced “righteous suffering” through explicit, militant and emotional language. Indeed, under the duress and material appeal of the Soviet Writers' Union, “formulaic Socialist Realist” authors had to adhere to a specific ideological template. And yet, as Katerina Clark continuously
stresses in her book, these novels did not constitute simple forms of propaganda. Writers such as Ostrovsky, Sholokov, and Gladkov diverged significantly in their approach to the socialist causes when compared to Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, and their protagonists walk many different paths to socialist enlightenment. For all these reasons, even "formulaic Socialist Realism" should be recognized as a legitimate form of literary expression, and an important part of Stalinist culture. The theme of “righteous suffering” which dominated the 1930s did, however, undergo criticism after Stalin's death. While the writers of "formulaic Socialist Realism" believed that Party discipline, relentless work, and personal sacrifice would bring spiritual fulfillment, authors of the Thaw era revealed this literary theme as an ideological justification for unchecked state power. Fyodor Abramov demonstrated the limits of socialism best through his pastoral prose in *Two Winters and Three Summers*. Though the Bolshevik Party promised to bring equality and happiness to the lower classes of Russia, Abramov demonstrated that, ultimately, individual fulfillment and satisfaction cannot derive from even the most well-intended political systems. We, as human beings, he argued, must determine our own paths to salvation: "righteous suffering" can only be defined by the individual, and not by any external force.
Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


