

Ilya Frank

Jumping over the Bull

Annotation

The book “Jumping over the Bull” is about the figure of the antipodean double of the protagonist in literature and film and its plot-forming role.

JUMPING OVER THE BULL

Now it is all clear, and as plain as a pikestaff. Formerly — I don't know why — everything seemed veiled in a kind of mist. That is, I believe, because people think that the human brain is in the head. Nothing of the sort; it is carried by the wind from the Caspian Sea.

Nikolai Gogol, Diary of a Madman

Already I could distinguish the wall at the back, at the foot of which a light-coloured skirting-board ran; I took my bearings from the table legs, and in particular made out my own outspread hand, moving all alone down below, a little like some aquatic animal exploring the seabed. I still recall that I watched it almost with curiosity; as it groped about down there with a mind of its own, moving in ways I had never seen it move, it seemed able to do things I had not taught it. I observed it as it pushed onwards; I was interested, and prepared for anything. But how could I have expected another hand suddenly to come towards it from the wall, a larger and unusually thin hand, such as I had never seen before?

Rainer Maria Rilke. The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge

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Sometimes it happens that a person (being in some unusual state of mind) suddenly sees his (or her) double. Let's look at three examples from the life of three writers. Goethe tells in his autobiography “Fiction and Truth” how one day he was riding

away from Friederike (his beloved) and suddenly saw a horseman in whom he recognised himself:

“... then one of the strangest premonitions came over me. I saw myself—not with my real eyes, but those of my mind—riding on horseback toward me on the same road and clothed in a garment such as I had never worn: its color was the gray of a pike, with some gold in it. As soon as I roused myself from this dream, the figure had completely disappeared. It is strange, however, that after eight years I found myself on this same road, going to visit Friederike once more, wearing the garment of which I had dreamed and which I was wearing not from choice, but by accident. Whatever may be the state of affairs in these matters, the curious optical illusion did afford me some comfort in those moments of parting.”

August Strindberg in his autobiographical book “The Confession of a Fool” testifies: *“I was afraid to stay in a room by myself; I was haunted by my own spectre, and my friends took it in turns to spend the night with me, while the candles burned and the fire crackled in the stove.”*

E.T.A. Hoffmann writes in his diary: “Seized by thoughts of death: doubles”. (According to popular belief, the appearance of a double foreshadows a quick death.)

However, our subject will be not literal doubles, but antipodean doubles, and not in real life, but in works of art.

Double-antipode — who is it? The very name — an oxymoron — suggests that, on the one hand, he is identical to the protagonist, to the hero¹, on the other hand, he is the opposite of him. What is such a character for? If you meet a person who is both you and not you, it means this: he penetrates you, captures you (because he coincides with you), and then either expands your life (because he is different) — that is, takes you beyond your personality, or takes you out of life altogether — that is, takes you into death. Probably to take the hero beyond the limits of his own personality.

¹ I use the word ‘hero’ in two meanings at the same time: 1) the protagonist of a work of fiction; 2) a person undergoing or having undergone the rite of initiation (the so-called rite of passage).

In the poem by William Butler Yeats “Ego dominus tuus” (which in Latin means ‘I am thy Lord’ — words from Dante's “The New Life”, where they are spoken to the poet by the Spirit of love who appears to him in a dream) there is a brief definition of the antipodean double and its role in relation to the hero (or to the “I” of the author):

*I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
And look most like me, being indeed my double,
And prove of all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self,
And standing by these characters disclose
All that I seek; and whisper it as though
He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud
Their momentary cries before it is dawn,
Would carry it away to blasphemous men.*

The antipodean double, the double-antipode (“my double”, “my anti-self”), standing next to a certain drawing (“standing by these characters”, that is, standing next to certain signs-symbols, hieroglyphs), will reveal to the hero everything that he is looking for.

The antipodean double that appears to the hero in any literary or cinematic work can, of course, take on various forms. However, he has one main and obligatory feature: he radically influences the fate of the hero — whether he wants it or not, whether he knows about it or not.

In the film by Michelangelo Antonioni “The Passenger” (1975), journalist David Locke, having gone to Africa to make a report about the rebels fighting against the dictatorial power in one of the African countries, accidentally meets in the hotel a man of about the same age and build, whose name is David Robertson. David meets David. Robertson is a secret supplier of weapons to the African rebels. Locke

discovers the dead Robertson when he returns to the hotel after his car is stuck in the desert sand (and we have not seen and will not see Robertson alive, conversations with him only reverberate in Locke's memory). At first, Locke simply gazes into Robertson's face, leaning over it, like a man looking into a mirror, or rather leaning over the water like Narcissus:



He then assumes the identity of the deceased. Since the two Davids are not twins in the literal sense, but only slightly similar, Locke has to change passport photos for this purpose. Then he dresses in Robertson's clothes, not very attentive employees of the hotel arrange the funeral of the imaginary Locke, and Locke himself flies to Europe. He will say: "I used to be somebody else, but I traded him in." He went from a reporter to an arms dealer — from an observer, so to speak — to a doer (*Locke*: "I mean, however hard you try, it stays so difficult to get away from your own habits. Even the way we talk to these people, the way we treat them, it's mistaken." *Robertson*: "Well, it's like this, Mr Locke. You work with words, images — fragile things, I come with merchandise — concrete things — they understand me straightaway"). Locke has Robertson's notebook — it is according to the entries in it that he moves and meets different people. And this leads him to death (there are a number of completely transparent hints in the film that Locke, so to speak, has entered the path of death — for example, he asks for directions from an old man sitting on a grave under a large white cross).

So, David Robertson has given David Locke the opportunity to live another life — and at the same time opened the way for him to another world, to the world of death. It is not accidentally that Locke's car will get stuck in the desert sand before he bends over his antipodean double in the hotel. We will also look at examples from different works, where falling into some hostile or dangerous element (for example, a snowstorm), as well as falling into a certain labyrinth or even a simple fall into the mud (before meeting with a double) means that the hero has fallen into the world of the dead. In Antonioni's film, it is interesting to note that there is also a labyrinth — Gaudí's building. (The fact that the building inside resembles a labyrinth is said in the film itself.) In this labyrinth, Locke meets a girl who becomes his companion (her name is not mentioned, which is somewhat strange).

Having assumed the identity of the antipodean double, David Locke begins to see the signs ("these characters") of his own fate. This is evidenced by his conversation with nameless girl:

"Do you believe in coincidence?" "I never ask myself." "I never used to notice it. Now I see it all around."

We will talk later about the female character associated with the antipodean double (the girl, incidentally, near the end of the film, ahead of Locke on his journey, checks into the hotel as Mrs Robertson). In the meantime, let's put it this way: between the hero (the main character) and his double, there is often "she" — the goddess of life and death, the witch, the "Beautiful Lady".

Thus, in Henry Rider Haggard's novel "She" (1887), it is "She-who-must-be-obeyed" — the immortal Ayesha (a two-thousand-year-old old woman who has retained her youth and beauty) — that brings the hero (Leo Vincey) to his mummified distant ancestor — to his exact double. Leo's companion (on whose behalf the story is narrated) reports:

"With a sudden motion she drew the shroud from the cold form, and let the lamplight play upon it. I looked, and then shrank back terrified <...>. For there, stretched upon the stone bier before us, robed in white and perfectly preserved, was what

*appeared to be the body of Leo Vincey. I stared from Leo, standing **there** alive, to Leo lying **there** dead, and could see no difference; except, perhaps, that the body on the bier looked older.”*

Here is this scene in a still from Irving Pitchell's film “She” (1935):



* * *

The meeting of a hero with a double-antipode is not only a certain plot move in literature or film, such a meeting may well occur in reality. Often it happens in childhood or adolescence. Thus, in Yukio Mishima's autobiographical novel “Confessions of a Mask” (1949), the hero recalls how he, a four-year-old boy, met a night-soil man — “a symbol for the earth”:

“My earliest memory, an unquestionable one, haunting me with a strangely vivid image, dates from about that time.

I do not know whether it was my mother, a nurse, a maid, or an aunt who was leading me by the hand. <...> Someone was coming down the slope, and the woman jerked my hand. We got out of the way and stood waiting at one side.

There is no doubt that the image of what I saw then has taken on meaning anew each of the countless times it has been reviewed, intensified, focused upon.

Because within the hazy perimeter of the scene nothing but the figure of that

'someone coming down the slope' stands out with disproportionate clarity. And not without reason: this very image is the earliest of those that have kept tormenting and frightening me all my life.

It was a young man who was coming down toward us, with handsome, ruddy cheeks and shining eyes, wearing a dirty roll of cloth around his head for a sweatband. He came down the slope carrying a yoke of night-soil buckets over one shoulder, balancing their heaviness expertly with his footsteps. He was a night-soil man, a ladler of excrement. He was dressed as a laborer, wearing split-toed shoes with rubber soles and black-canvas tops, and dark-blue cotton trousers of the close-fitting kind called "thigh-pullers."

The scrutiny I gave the youth was unusually close for a child of four. Although I did not clearly perceive it at the time, for me he represented my first revelation of a certain power, my first summons by a certain strange and secret voice. It is significant that this was first manifested to me in the form of a night-soil man: excrement is a symbol for the earth, and it was doubtlessly the malevolent love of the Earth Mother that was calling to me.

I had a presentiment then that there is in this world a kind of desire like stinging pain. Looking up at that dirty youth, I was choked by desire, thinking, 'I want to change into him,' thinking, 'I want to be him'."

The night-soil man, most likely, did not pay attention to the boy he met, this boy meant nothing in his life. But the boy heard through this night-soil man the mysterious call of the "Earth Mother". The night-soil man seems to be a door to another world, a funnel through which the "Earth Mother" beckons the boy with her "malevolent love". Why is this call "tormenting and frightening", why is this love "malevolent"? Because it is the call of the "night-soil" — the call of death.

This is a call into the underworld of the dead (and perhaps into another life): it both frightens and attracts. The boy is not a night-soil man, but suddenly he feels that he wants to be one. This means that he met his antipodean double.



Here is a drawing by Federico García Lorca. You see a person (a clown) with his dark double-antipode. The possibility of a double-antipode resides inside a person, in his soul. This possibility becomes a spiritual reality when a person encounters in real life someone similar to this inner premonition (and then the seed sprouts). Federico was eight years old when to him (to a boy from a good family who loved reading, drawing, music and, accordingly, loneliness) appeared a gypsy boy, a ragged vagabond named Amargo ('amargo' is Spanish for 'bitter'). García Lorca put it this way (in his lecture "Romancero gitano" — "Gypsy Ballads"):

"I'll say only a few words about the Andalusian force — the centaur of death and hatred that is called the Amargo ('Bitter'). When I was eight years old and was playing at my house at Fuente Vaqueros, a boy looked in the window. He seemed a giant and he looked at me with scorn and hatred I shall never forget. As he withdrew he spat at me, and from far away I heard a voice calling him: 'Amargo, come!' After that, the Amargo grew inside me until I could decipher why he looked at me that way, an angel of death and of the despair that keeps the doors of Andalusia. Like an

obsession, he entered my poems. And now I don't know if I saw him or if I dreamed of him, if I invented him or if he really almost strangled me."

Amargo ("era moreno y amargo" — 'was swarthy and bitter' — "Amargo's Mother's Song") became for Federico the personification of the bitterness of life — life through which the moonlight of death shines through. The supporting images of Garcia Lorca's poetry are associated with Amargo-bitterness: the moon ("He is in the moon, my Amargo" — "Amargo's Mother's Song"); tart or poisonous plants and fruits: sour lemon (besides, yellow or yellow-green, like the moon — green, by the way, are the eyes of Amargo) and poisonous oleander (both symbols of unhappy love), olive (rhyming with the moon : luna — aceituna), nettle and hemlock; knife or knives (as well as daggers, swords, arrows, snakes: "Llora flecha sin blanco, / la tarde sin mañana, / y el primer pájaro muerto / sobre la rama / ¡Oh guitarra! / Corazón malherido / por cinco espadas." — "It sobs for aimless arrow, / evening without morning, / and the first dead bird / on the branch. / O guitar! / Heart deep-wounded / by five swords."²); finally, the whole gypsy theme of this poet (about the capture and murder of a gypsy).

Without Amargo, there would be no poetry by García Lorca; without the goldsmith, there would be no prose by Yukio Mishima. However, these artists could recognize their antipodean double in someone else. They could meet another figure, through which they would hear " a certain strange and secret voice."

This, as you already understand, is not only about the character with whom the hero of a literary or cinematic work often meets, and even not only about the inspirer of artistic creativity (the male incarnation of the Muse), but about the figure to which everybody (or not everybody?) is drawn in real life.

* * *

In fact, everything is not so scary (as you might think). Let me tell you one of my childhood experiences.

² Translated by Martin Sorell.

When I was six years old, our family moved to a new place. We moved in the winter, there was heavy snow in the yard.

And so I go out into the yard. Immediately across the path from our entrance I see a long and high snowdrift. A tunnel was dug in the snowdrift — the entire length of the snowdrift. I get acquainted with the engineer of this project (and its executor) — Seryoga, aka Gray (as everyone calls him³). For me, this person is immediately associated with the "gray wolf" of fairy tales. Seryoga is very big, completely grown-up (he was a fifth grader then). He treats me patronizingly (and I treat him very reverently) — and suggests I go through the tunnel! I crawl, crawl through — and this is real happiness.

Happiness would not have happened if I had gone out into the yard, and Gray would not have been there. Or if he drove me away. Or if there was no tunnel in the snowdrift. Or if I were, for example, the same age as Gray. Or if I hadn't just stepped out into this completely alien courtyard for the first time since the move. Or if I went out into the yard with my mother ... But happiness was achieved, because what is called the rite of initiation (the rite of passage) was achieved.

The essence of this rite is as follows: the hero (hereinafter, this word does not mean any particularly courageous person, but only a person undergoing or passing a test, means a participant in the rite of passage) is devoured by a mythical beast (death occurs) and then erupted by it (a new birth), or he plunges into some element (into water, under the ground, into the depths of the forest, into the snow ...), and then comes out of it. So the element of nature becomes synonymous with the beast that devours the hero and then regurgitates him. Let us unite the beast and the element under a common name: both are the "source of life and death." (Thus, for example, the beast and the element are combined in the gnostic Hymn of Judas Thomas the Apostle: "If thou goest down into Egypt, / And thence thou bring'st the one Pearl — / The Pearl that lies in the Sea, / Hard by the loud-breathing Serpent — / Then shalt Thou put on thy Robe ...")

³ The Russian name 'Sergéy' has a colloquial, friendly form 'Seryóga', as well as 'Sériy — Gray'.

This is what apparently happened to me when I crawled through the tunnel. But what does “Gray” have to do with it? I think the following three images merged in this image: firstly, the image of the person conducting the rite (the master of the rite), secondly, the image of the zoomorphic spirit which the initiate joins — passing through the mythical beast, thirdly, this is the image of the initiate himself, but who has already passed the rite, who is already initiated, “updated”.

So, the hero meets his double-antipode (often zoomorphic — for example, a "gray wolf", a bear, etc.), who guides him through the “source of life and death”.

A six-year-old boy makes his way (and is happy about it) through a snow tunnel not because there was once (and partially is still preserved in modern society — in manifestations that are mostly not so easy to recognize) a similar primitive initiation rite. It is the other way round: the primitive rite took place for the same reason that a modern boy is happy, making his way — under the guidance of a “gray wolf” — through a snow tunnel. This rite was and is necessary for the formation of a person's personality: after passing through the world of death, the boy joins another life, that is to say, the adult life, the “spiritual” life. (For primitive man to become an adult meant to get to know the spirits and enlist their support.)

And when we pick up a book or sit down to watch a film, we need that book or film to have something like the striking, mind-blowing tunnel in a snowdrift and the awe-inspiring “Grey”.

Such, for example, is the story of Jonah. On a Persian miniature (from the beginning of the XIV century, from the historical work “Jami al-Tawarikh” — “Collection of chronicles”) we see Jonah coming out of the whale, in whose stomach he stayed for three days, and the angel (thanks to whom he came out) hurrying to give him clothes:



Another life awaits Jonah: he must (by God's command) go to prophesy in Nineveh. Before us is the main cultural code (the main one for both art and life): hero (Jonah) ↔ the “source of life and death” (whale) ↔ double-antipode (angel).

* * *

Here is a short story about the rite of initiation from the book by Vladimir Propp “Historical Roots of the Wondertale” (1946):

“What is initiation? This is one of the institutions peculiar to the tribal system. This rite was performed at the onset of puberty. By this rite, the young man was introduced into the family association, became a full member of it and acquired the right to marry. This is the social function of this rite. Its forms are different, and we will dwell on them in connection with the material of the fairy tale. These forms are determined by the mental basis of the rite. It was assumed that the boy died during the ceremony and then resurrected again as a new person. This is the so-called temporary death. Death and resurrection were caused by actions depicting the absorption, devouring of a boy by a monstrous animal. It was as if he was swallowed by this animal and, after staying for some time in the stomach of the monster, he returned, i.e. he was expectorated or erupted. To perform this rite, special houses

or huts were sometimes built, having the shape of an animal, and the door represented a mouth. Circumcision was performed immediately. The ceremony was always performed in the depths of the forest or shrubbery, in strict secrecy. The rite was accompanied by bodily tortures and injuries (cutting off a finger, knocking out some teeth, etc.). Another form of temporary death was expressed in the fact that the boy was symbolically burned, boiled, fried, chopped into pieces and resurrected again. The resurrected received a new name, brands and other signs of the rite he had passed were applied to the skin. The boy went through a more or less long and strict school. He was taught hunting techniques, religious secrets, historical information, rules and requirements of everyday life, etc. were communicated to him. He went through the school of a hunter and a member of society, a school of dances, songs, and everything that seemed necessary in life.”

Propp also speaks about the special state of mind in which the initiate was brought: *“Apparently, these cruelties were supposed to, so to speak, “knock off the mind.” Continuing for a very long time (sometimes for weeks), accompanied by hunger, thirst, darkness, terror, they had to cause the state that the initiate considered death. They caused temporary insanity (which was facilitated by the adoption of various poisonous drinks), so that the initiate forgot everything in the world. He lost his memory so much that after his return he forgot his name, did not recognize his parents, etc. and, perhaps, fully believed when he was told that he had died and returned a new, different person.”*

Apparently, “temporary insanity” is just the ecstatic state that was necessary for a future hunter to get acquainted with spirits.

I will give another brief description of the rite of initiation — from the book by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl “How Natives Think” («Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures», 1910):

“The novices are separated from the women and children with whom they have lived until this time. As a rule, the separation occurs suddenly, and often takes them unawares. Confided to the superintendence and care of a particular adult, to whom they often are definitely related, the novices must submit passively to

everything imposed upon them and bear pain uncomplainingly. The tests they undergo are long and difficult, and often they are actual tortures: deprivation of sleep, of food, being whipped with cords or rods, cudgellings upon the head, pulling out the hair and extracting the teeth, branding, circumcision, subincision, bleeding, the stings of poisonous insects, suffocation by smoke, being suspended by means of hooks fastened in their flesh, ordeal by fire, etc. The secondary motive of these practices may no doubt be to ascertain the novices' courage and powers of endurance, and to test their virility, by seeing whether they are capable of bearing pain and of keeping a secret. But the primal aim sought after is a mystic effect which in no way depends upon their will-power: the important matter is to establish a participation between them and the mystic realities which are the very essence of the social group, the totems, the mythic or human ancestors, and to give them, by means of this participation, a "new soul," as it has been termed. Herein we perceive difficulties which appear insurmountable to our logical thought, since they raise the question of the unity or of the multiplicity of the soul, whilst the prelogical mind finds no difficulty in imagining that which we call soul as at the same time one and multiple. Just as the North American Indian hunter, by fasting for a week, establishes between himself and the spirit of the bear a mystic bond which will enable him to find and kill bears, so do the tests imposed upon the novices establish between them and the mystic beings in whom they must participate, a relation which is indispensable to the spiritual fusion which is desired. It is not the material aspect of these tests that is of importance; that, in itself, has as little to do with the case as has the pain of the patient, with respect to the success of a surgical operation. The means employed by primitives to induce in novices the required condition of receptivity are, as a matter of fact, exceedingly painful, but it is not because they are painful that they make use of them, nor would they give them up for that reason, either. Their attention is fixed upon one single point, and it is the only one that matters: this is the condition of special receptivity in which the novices must be placed if the desired participation is to be realized.

<...>

It places the individual in a special state of susceptibility and receptivity, akin to the dream-states, catalepsy, or ecstasy which, in all primitive peoples, are the invariable condition of communication with the invisible world.”

One correction needs to be made to this description: it is not true that the material side of the tests itself is indifferent. It is important because it symbolically expresses the dismemberment (eating by a mythical beast) of the initiate, as well as the fact that the initiate is already dead (does not eat, does not drink, does not see, does not breathe ...).

Having briefly explained the “mental basis of the rite”, Vladimir Propp then proceeds to his topic: how the plot and elements of the initiation rite were reflected in the plot and elements of the fairy tale. As for us, we will exclusively consider the image of the double-antipode (its signs and actions) in various artistic works, as well as the image of the “source of life and death” connected with it.

In the “source of life and death” we have already included both the mythical beast and the element of nature. However, the “source” can also be anthropomorphic — in a male or female hypostasis: an ogre or an ogress. Let's get acquainted with Sosom-the “devourer of boys” from the myth of the Marind-Anim tribe (in Papua New Guinea):

“As soon as Sosom's voice sounds, the women and children leave the village. Men who know Sosom, call the big boys and go with them to the giant's ground. But the boys are very afraid of him. Singing is heard all night on the giant's ground. Finally, the songs fall silent. Then Sosom appears and takes the boys one by one. While he devours the second one, the first one is already coming out of his anus. And so it goes on until the giant devours and passes through all the boys. In the body of Sosom, boys become young men, and when they return home after the holiday, they already put on decoration of young adults. Young people who have become Sosom people have the right to see the village honk, from which the giant's voice comes.”

(Singing, of course, is the voices of spirits, which are reproduced by adult males of the tribe who have disguised themselves and brought themselves into an appropriate state.)

Perhaps the most famous ogre in European mythology is Polyphemus from Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus and his companions go inside the mountain (to the dwelling of the one-eyed giant Polyphemus), where Polyphemus eats part of the companions, and also drinks wine, which Odysseus treats him with (but the companions also eat and drink in the cave of Polyphemus — before the giant arrives), then Odysseus and his comrades burn out Polyphemus' only eye with a red-hot stake, after which they manage to get out of the cave, hiding under sheep and rams, which the already blind giant lets out to pasture.

Let 's take a closer look at the Polyphemus:

*This was the lair of a huge creature, a man
Who pastured his flocks off by himself,
And lived apart from others and knew no law.
He was a freak of nature, not like men who eat bread,
But like a lone wooded crag high in the mountains.*

Polyphemus is similar to “a lone wooded crag high in the mountains”. Here, of course, it's just a comparison, but the comparison is based on a myth. Polyphemus is a mountain (that is, the earth, that is, the element of nature), and the cave in the mountain is his stomach. The giant eats, kills the heroes, and then lets them out. (This is in the mythical basis. But in the Homeric text he eats some of them, and some manage to escape from him.) Moreover, the characters come out as if in a zoomorphic image. Yes, they only hid under the sheep and rams of the giant, but this is in the epic, and in the mythical basis (in the “mental basis of the rite”) they turn into sheep and rams. Polyphemus, in his mythical basis, is the so-called “master of animals” (“Who pastured his flocks off by himself, / And lived apart from others and knew no law.”).

The initiates passed through him and became animals, acquired a zoomorphic appearance. (Such contact with the “master of the beasts” and such a metamorphosis, of course, are absolutely necessary for adult members of the tribe for successful

hunting.) So, we see here the “source of life and death” in three synonymous manifestations (in three hypostases): firstly, it is an element of nature (mountain, earth), secondly, an ogre and, thirdly, a mythical beast (in this case in its anthropological form: in the form of a “master of the beasts”).

Odysseus gets into the cave to Polyphemus, the Russian hero (bogatyr) Ilya Muromets gets into the pocket of the giant hero Svyatogor (whose name means either ‘Holy Mountain’ or ‘inhabitant of the Holy Mountain’):

“And Svyatogor-bogatyr pulled out Ilya Muromets from his pocket and began to question him, who is he and how he got into the deep pocket. Ilya told him everything in truth. Then Svyatogor killed his own wife [who cheated on him with Ilya Muromets. — I.F.], swapped crosses with Ilya and called him his little brother. Svyatogor taught Ilya all heroic techniques and manners; and they went to the Northern Mountains, and came this way to a huge coffin, on that coffin was written the inscription: ‘Who is destined to lie in the coffin, He will lie down in it.’ ”

Compare: in the Finnish epic Kalevala, Väinämöinen goes inside the giant Vipunen to force him to reveal magic words (“Immediately Vipunen rich in songs opened his mouth wider, / spread open his jaws; he swallowed the man along with his sword, / gulped down that old Väinämöinen into his throat.”) Väinämöinen arranges a forge inside the giant, lights a fire and begins to forge. Vipunen to get this racketeer out (“You did well when you came, you are doing better now that you are going!”), sings secret spells to him.

To get not into the stomach of a giant, but only into his pocket is a “light version” (that is, a later one).

Let's return to Svyatogor. Having found the coffin, Svyatogor lies down in it, closes himself with a lid, and then, through a crack, breathing on Ilya Muromets with a “heroic spirit”, transfers his strength to Ilya. Raising Svyatogor's sword-kladenets (magic sword), Ilya is leaving “for a wide free field.”

Here it is noteworthy that the image of the giant is divided into a mythical creature (mythical beast), absorbing the hero, and a double-antipode, performing the rite (the “master of the rite”).

Svyatogor leads Ilya Muromets through death (not only, so to speak, absorbing him with his pocket, but also dying himself), after which Ilya becomes a real hero.

Apparently, the beast devouring the initiate (the second element of our code) at a certain stage of the development of the myth acquires anthropological features and thereby becomes the “master of the beasts” (that is, the double-antipode, the third element of our code) — and then it no longer absorbs the hero, but simply meets him. Svyatogor becomes the elder brother of Ilya Muromets, teaches him heroic skills, gives him the “heroic spirit”, and also leaves him his magic sword. In this, the “master of the rite” (some adult member of the tribe) is clearly visible.

The image in which the ogre (the “mythical beast”) and the “master of the rite” merged is clearly visible on the example of the rite from the Oceanic islands, which Propp cites: “... a platform is being built, the master of the rite stands at the top. Neophytes pass under it. When each of them approaches, he pretends that he swallows, chokes.”

In the story of J. R. Tolkien “The Hobbit, or There and Back Again” (1937) the “master of the beasts” is Beorn, but he no longer absorbs anyone — this is a light version of Polyphemus (from devouring initiates, all that remained in him is that “he can be appalling when he is angry”):

“ ‘The Somebody I spoke of—a very great person. You must all be very polite when I introduce you. <...> He can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humoured. Still I warn you he gets angry easily. <...> If you must know more, his name is Beorn. He is very strong, and he is a skin-changer. <...> He changes his skin; sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard. <...> He lives in an oak-wood and has a great wooden house; and as a man he keeps cattle and horses which are nearly as marvellous as himself. They work for him and talk to him.’ ”

In the very title of Tolkien's story, by the way, there is a direct indication of the rite of initiation.

The “master of the beasts” can also act as the “master of the birds” — such, for example, is Lariosik (‘little Hilarion’, an affectionate variant of the name) in

Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The White Guard" (1924), who is so unlike Polyphemus. When Nikolka Turbin (Nikolka is an affectionate variant of the name 'Nikolai') is the hardest on his soul — namely, when the Petliurists took the City (that is, when the Ukrainian nationalists seized Kiev, in 1918), when his commander and older friend Nai Turs died before his eyes, when his older brother Alexey disappeared, when (as he dreams) his whole life perishes in a thick web, from which there is no way out to clean snow, he suddenly (through sleep) hears the cry of a bird — and finds an "apparition" in front of him:

"The apparition was holding a large birdcage covered with a black cloth and an unsealed blue letter ...

'I must be still asleep,' Nikolka thought, with a gesture trying to brush the apparition aside like a spider's web and knocking his fingers painfully against the wires of the cage. Immediately the bird in the cage screeched in fury, whistled and clattered. <...>

'I brought the bird with me,' said the stranger, sighing. 'A bird is man's best friend. I know many people think they're a nuisance to keep, but all I can say is that at least a bird never does anyone any harm.'

Nikolka very much liked that last sentence. Making no effort to understand it, he shyly scratched his forehead with the incomprehensible letter and slowly swung his legs down from the bed, thinking: 'I can't ask him his name ... it would sound so rude ... What an extraordinary thing to happen ...'

'Is it a canary?' he asked.

'It certainly is,' replied the stranger enthusiastically. 'Actually it's not a hen-canary as most of them are, but a real cock-canary. I have fifteen of them at home in Zhitomir.' "

Lariosik is the "master of the birds". It is not by chance that Nikolka looks like a bird, potentially he is a bird ("Set deep on either side of his long bird-like nose, Nikolka's blue eyes had a wounded, defeated look"; "Nikolka frowned and cocked his head to one side like a bird as he looked at Vasilisa"). Lariosik (Larion Larionovich — name-double) is a "fate-shaping" (I'll call it that) double-antipode of

Nikolka. “Lariosik's miraculous appearance” is a salutary, saving appearance of an eccentric man in a world that has reached madness and horror in its rationality. With the advent of Lariosik, everything is gradually turning for the better (“Lariosik is really very nice. He fits into the family very well — in fact we need him”).

In an ancient Egyptian fairy tale “The Shipwrecked Sailor” we see two hypostases of the “source of life and death” (a raging element and a mythical beast), as well as a twin-spirit — inextricably merged with them:

“Next I heard the sound of thunder, And I thought it was a wave of the Great Green. The trees were shaking and the ground quaking. When I uncovered my face, I found it was a serpent about to come. <...> Then he set me in his mouth And took me off to his resting place. He set me down without touching me. I was intact without his taking anything from me. <...> Then he said to me: Do not fear, do not fear, citizen, Do not turn white, for you have reached me. See, God has allowed you to live: He has brought you to this island of the Ka.”

(Compare with the words of the snake from the Russian fairy tale, who says to Ivan: “Say goodbye to the bright world now and climb into my throat yourself — it will be easier for you.”)

“To this island of the Ka” means ‘to the island of the double’ (the Ka double is a person's soul, which, unlike the Christian soul, is material in its own way) — that is, to the land of death, to another world (the expression “to go to one’s Ka” meant ‘to die’).

The raging elements in Russian fairy tales always indicate that the Serpent Gorynych (that is, the ‘Serpent living on the mountain’) is about to arrive:

“A strong storm was rising, thunder is thundering, the earth is shaking, the dense forest is bowing down: a three-headed serpent is flying.”

But who may also arrive is Baba Yaga (‘Grandmother Witch’ or even ‘Grandmother Serpent’ — Russian ogress).

* * *

Sometimes the Serpent and Baba Yaga appear together (usually in turn) and even act together. In “Tales of the Narts” (ancient myths and legends of the Ossetians), the hero Shoshlan first meets a certain ogress, who has three sons (three homogeneous characters — male or female — usually represent a personified fate — perhaps this reflected the very threefold nature of the main cultural code), and then an ogre — a one-eyed giant. The giantess puts the Shoshlan under a sieve — that is, as if in a coffin, in a grave — and thereby saves him. Then Shoshlan finds refuge in the mouth of the ogre:

“Shoshlan went on down the riverbank, and came to a house of sorts. He stepped over the threshold, and saw inside a woman sitting by the hearth, so enormous that in the gap between her teeth a swallow had built its nest.

‘May you have a good day, mother mine!’ said Shoshlan in greeting.

‘You just saved your life by calling me your mother; otherwise I would take your blood to wash the rust off my teeth,’ answered the woman. ‘But now you are my guest, so be well. Where are you from, and what are you seeking?’ she asked.

‘I come from the land of the Narts,’ replied Shoshlan. ‘I am seeking someone with powers greater than my own. In our land I conquered all comers, and then set out in the world to find a man against whom I might measure my strength.’

‘Oh, oh! Forget about that! My sons are catching fish. If when they return here at evening, they find you in our house, they will eat you, and leave no bones behind! Here is some food, take a bite, take a rest, and I will think up something to save you, to protect you!’

Quickly she placed a small three-legged table before him with various dishes on it. But did Shoshlan feel like eating—oh no! Then the woman lifted up an enormous sieve that was lying bottom-up on the floor, and hid Shoshlan beneath it. Several times he tried to lift the sieve, but he could not even budge it.

In the evening all three brothers returned home, and asked, ‘Today we sent a conceited mountain fellow here. Where is he? Give him to us, and we’ll clean our teeth with his blood. For a long time now we have not had the chance to taste human flesh.’

'You are hungry now, and need to eat something more nourishing than that,' answered their mother. 'That fellow can't get away—he's under that sieve, so let him stay there, and you can have him for your breakfast tomorrow if you like!' The mother fed her sons with the supper she had prepared, and after they had lain down to sleep, she tucked them up in their beds, and they were soon snoring. Then she let Shoshlan out from under the sieve, took him to the door, showed him the road and said, *'Run as hard as you can! Only your legs can save you now, and there is nothing else to rely on. In the morning they will come after you. One of them has the smelling powers of a wolf; the second can jump across three ravines at once; the third can fly like a wild hawk.'*

When the three young giants awoke in the morning, their mother told them that their guest had run off, and they at once set off after him.

Like a hare Shoshlan flew away from them. What else could he do? Suddenly he saw a wide pasture, and a one-eyed giant with one arm was pushing a plow before him, and on his waist-belt hung a bag of grain, and to his leg a raven was tied. So he plowed and sowed, and dragged the raven after him. Shoshlan ran up to this giant plowman.

'Alas and alack!' cried he. 'I give myself into your hands on this earth and in the next world. If those three brother fishermen overtake me, I am done for. There is no escape!'

'If you were to give yourself into the hands of God himself, he would not do more for you than I!' said the giant with one eye.

Then he opened his mouth, threw Shoshlan under his tongue and hid him."

The sieve of the giantess (replacing the mouth here — and her mouth itself, by the way, is described very intimidatingly in the story) and the mouth of the one-eyed plowman here mean the same thing, these are mythological synonyms: Shoshlan is saved in the stomach of a mythical beast (represented here by an ogre and an ogress).

The ogre's stomach in fairy tales is often replaced by an oven. For example, in the English fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk":

“Well, the ogre’s wife was not half so bad after all. So she took Jack into the kitchen, and gave him a hunk of bread and cheese and a jug of milk. But Jack hadn’t half finished these when thump! thump! thump! the whole house began to tremble with the noise of someone coming.

‘Goodness gracious me! It’s my old man,’ said the ogre’s wife, ‘what on earth shall I do? Come along quick and jump in here.’ And she bundled Jack into the oven just as the ogre came in.”

In “Odyssey”, the wandering heroes meet not only the “master of the beasts” — Polyphemus, but also the “mistress of the beasts” — the "enchantress" Circe:

*They went through the woods and found Circe’s house
In an upland clearing. It was built of polished stone
And surrounded by mountain lions and wolves,
Creatures Circe had drugged and bewitched.*

Circe is usually depicted with two beasts. This is how she appears in the famous painting by Edward Burne-Jones (1833—1898) “The Wine of Circe”:



Circe is pouring wine that is going to turn Odysseus' companions into pigs. Odysseus himself avoids this fate (by taking the antidote given to him by Hermes) and becomes her lover (forcing her to free his companions as well). As you can see, if the heroes at the meeting with Polyphemus only hid under animals, here they really turn into beasts:

*When she had led them in and seated them
She brewed up a potion of Pramnian wine
With cheese, barley, and pale honey stirred in,
And she laced this potion with insidious drugs
That would make them forget their own native land.
When they had eaten and drunk, she struck them
With her wand and herded them into the sties outside.
Grunting, their bodies covered with bristles,
They looked just like pigs, but their minds were intact.
Once in the pens, they squealed with dismay,
And Circe threw them acorns and berries—
The usual fare for wallowing swine.*

Wine also played a role in the cave of Polyphemus — the ogre was intoxicated and put to sleep by it. In the story of Circe, the heroes themselves got drunk (so to speak, to a piggy state). But, as you know, it doesn't matter to the myth who treats whom and even who eats whom (the hero in the process of initiation seems to coincide, mixes with a mythical beast, with an ogre or with an ogress — in Propp's words, “food gives consubstantiality with what is eaten”). It is only important that the action itself takes place: food, intoxication (including narcotic, often used in the rite — to achieve contact with spirits), eating... (From the symbolic union of the hero with the mythical beast by mutual eating, the rite of sacrifice must have arisen.)

Circe only turns Odysseus' companions into pigs and drives them “into the sties”, but in a mythical sense she eats them, she is an ogre (and the sty is her belly). And

she is also a hero-absorbing earth. In the “mental basis of the rite” she is the same character as the “grandmother” with a rotten back in Paul Radin's book “The Trickster” (1956), where the following is told about the mythical Rabbit-trickster of the Winnebago Indians:

“Then Hare looked in her direction [in the direction of the old woman] and some of her back caved in just as the earth does sometimes. That was what he saw. And he saw people cave in with the earth.”

Circe is the goddess of death. But she is also the goddess of life, because in the end she releases Odysseus' companions from her sty, turning them back into humans, as if giving birth to them anew — and in an improved, “updated” form:

*... and Circe went outside
Holding her wand and opened the sty
And drove them out. They looked like swine
Nine or ten years old. They stood there before her
And she went through them and smeared each one
With another drug. The bristles they had grown
After Circe had given them the poisonous drug
All fell away, and they became men again,
Younger than before, taller and far handsomer.*

So let's clarify the second member of our cultural code: the role of the “source of life and death” can be played not only by an element of nature or a mythical beast, but also by the “mistress of the beasts” (Homer's words describing Artemis, in Greek: ‘pótnia therón’) — the “goddess of life and death” (usually acting in conjunction with an element or a beast). Moreover, Odysseus enters into a love affair with this “goddess of life and death” (fulfilling the order of Hermes: “She'll be afraid and invite you to bed. / Don't turn her down—that's how you'll get / Your comrades freed and yourself well loved”, and also yielding to Circe's request: “Well then, sheath your sword and let's / Climb into my bed and tangle in love there, / So we

may come to trust each other.”). I would like to dwell on the erotic aspect of the initiation rite in more detail.

* * *

Immersion in the elements (for example, passing through an underground tunnel) during the initiation ceremony is synonymous with both the hero's being eaten by a mythical beast and with his union with the “mistress of the beasts”: the initiate enters a certain main goddess, then to be born from her. It means: he enters the goddess as a phallus — and comes out of her as a child, that is, the goddess is both wife and mother to him (she is the “Great Mother”, “Mother Earth”).

Apparently, for this reason, the goddess (or witch) often appears in two guises: an old woman and a young girl (or mother and daughter). So, we see Demeter (the goddess of the earth and fertility) paired with her daughter Persephone. (It is curious that “pigs were thrown into the chasm where Demeter was supposed to live,” — as Propp notes in the article “Ritual Laughter in Folklore”. This is similar to what we know about Circe.)

In Kenji Mizoguchi' film “Ugetsu / The Tales of the Wave after the Rain Moon” (1953) a potter named Genjūrō finds himself in a ghostly house with ghost women — old and young:



Genjūrō married the young one, the old one was her wet nurse. In addition, the ghost of the murdered father of the young lady wanders around the house (we see only a sculptural image of his head — (we only see a sculptural representation of his head — terrifying, helmeted, mouth open — like that of an ogre).

Here are some examples from the literature. In the Christian Holy Scripture, Herodias destroys John the Baptist with the help of her daughter Salome.

In Goethe's *Faust*, Faust and Mephistopheles meet two witches on the Brocken — an old and a young one. Faust dances with the young witch, Mephistopheles (the antipodean double of Faust) — with the old one, while both conduct erotic conversations with their ladies.

In Gogol's story “Viy” we observe the transformation of an old witch into a young one.

In a Russian fairy tale “The Apples of Youth” the main character interacts with Baba Yaga, and then with her niece — “a strong bogatyrka (heroine), a Blue-eyed girl” (as a result of which two twin sons are born to the heroine).

In Ingmar Bergman's film “Fanny and Alexander”, the children end up in the house of their stepfather (a sadist, that is, a kind of ogre), where they are met by his mother and sister (although outwardly about the same age), dressed in black. And they are definitely witches — both in appearance and in behavior. In addition, their belonging to the evil spirits is reinforced by two goddesses of death — the drowned first wife of the stepfather (with two little daughters — we will talk about this aspect of the myth ahead, as well as about the twins) and the stepfather's insane sick aunt, who lies all the time (like a typical Baba Yaga — a “living dead” in a coffin hut, a mummy that can spontaneously come to life) and who will be the cause of the stepfather's death.

In Gogol's comedy “The Inspector General” Khlestakov hits on both the daughter of the governor and his wife (“Love knows no distinction,” as he puts it). And in Gogol's prose poem “Dead Souls”, the ladies of the city of N spread a rumor about Chichikov, “that Chichikov <...> had undertaken, in order to win the hand of the

daughter, to start an affair with the mother, had had a secret amorous liaison with her, and afterwards had made a declaration concerning the daughter's hand." In a pair of "old-young", the governor's wife (mother) and Mrs Korobochka (her name means 'little box') play the same role — the role of the elder witch (Mrs Korobochka, of course, is much more spectacular, the governor's wife is just a dummy needed for the plot solution of this mythological theme: she sort of transfers her motherhood to Korobochka). Chichikov meets first with Mrs Korobochka, and then (after Nozdryov) with the governor's daughter. It should be noted that the meeting with the doubled witch is foreshadowed already when Chichikov knocks at the house to Mrs Korobochka. First the old servant woman comes out, and then "some woman came out to the porch, a bit younger than the first one, but closely resembling her."

* * *

Before getting to Mrs Korobochka, "Chichikov plopped hand and foot into the mud". Chichikov's fall into the mud is preceded by the fact that his coachman Selifan missed the right turn ("Thinking back and recalling the road somewhat, he realized that there had been many turns, all of which he had skipped"), the fact that the britzka at first gets more and more bogged down in the mud of the road ("The dust lying in the road was quickly churned to mud, and it became harder every moment for the horses to pull the britzka"), and then it gets off the road altogether ("they had turned off the road and were probably dragging themselves over a harrowed field"). At the same time, we observe the rampant elements — thunderstorm and darkness ("it's a dark time, it's not a good time"). Chichikov, like the hero of a myth or fairy tale, falls into the underground realm of death (plunging into the mud, that is, going into the ground), falls into a maze. The maze is evidenced by many missed turns before visiting Mrs Korobochka, and many turns after visiting her (" 'It's hard to explain, there's a lot of turns; unless I give you a young girl to take you there ...' "), and by the mud, that is, the earth, which is hardly letting go of the hero. ("... the earth had

turned so much to mud that the wheels of the britzka, picking it up, soon became covered with it as with thick felt, which made the carriage considerably heavier; besides, the soil was clayey and extraordinarily tenacious. The one and the other were the reason why they could not get off the back roads before noon. Without the girl it would have been hard to do even that, because the roads went crawling in all directions like caught crayfish dumped out of a sack...”).

In another work, almost contemporary to the “Dead Souls” (1842), — in Herman Melville's novel “Moby Dick; or The Whale” (1851) — the protagonist (Ishmael) at the beginning of the novel also seems to fall into a kind of underground labyrinth (“Such dreary streets! blocks of blackness, not houses, on either hand, and here and there a candle, like a candle moving about in a tomb”). Then we see Ishmael fall and get dirty (“... so, entering, the first thing I did was to stumble over an ash-box in the porch”).

Compare this with the fall of Jack (by the way, the usual name of the hero of an English fairy tale) in Terry Gilliam's film “The Fisher King” (1991). Jack (successful and cynical, but who made a mistake just before the expected career takeoff), leaving the house, falls into the trash:



Next, Jack is destined to go through death (he is beaten by two guys and doused with gasoline — they are going to set him on fire) and meet with his double-antipode — homeless Parry, who saves him from death and takes him to the boiler room (quite

reminiscent of a maze or cave) where he lives. Perry is wearing a shearling hat and a sheepskin coat with a shearling collar (the usual symbol of “animal skin”). Perry himself, as a typical “animal double”, is bearded and hairy (this will be seen when he undresses at night in the park, urging Jack to feel free and disperse the clouds with him). At the end of the film, Jack gets the Grail, while wearing a fur hat and a Perry sheepskin coat.

If Jack, having fallen, soon finds himself in Perry's boiler room, then Melville's hero ends up in a hotel with a sign ‘Peter Coffin’. In the hotel (in the coffin!) Ishmael has to sleep in the same bed with Queequeg, a savage harpooner, a cannibal, outwardly very scary, but who will later manifest himself as his “good genius”.

The name of Mrs Korobochka (‘little box’) probably means the same thing as the name of the hotel in Melville's novel (meaning, of course, also more obvious things: the land-owning lady's mental limitations and her economic neatness). In the book “Historical Roots of the Wondertale” Propp notes that Baba Yaga's house symbolizes a coffin (and therefore her “nose has grown into the ceiling”). The name of the landownress not only indicates the passage of the hero of the fairy tale through death, but also correlates with another “box” — with Chichikov's casket, in which dead souls are enclosed (as in the kingdom of Hades or in the devil's bag) and which is described in the chapter dedicated to “Mrs Little Box”. (We are talking about the list of deceased serfs — “souls” (but who are still listed as alive) that Chichikov buys from landlords for the purpose of mortgaging them to the bank. (Serfs were called “souls” when they were registered or bought.))

The landownress Mrs Korobochka has a number of signs of the “mistress of the beasts”, more precisely, of the “mistress of the birds” (“there were turkeys and hens without number”) as well as of the “mistress of the snakes”, whose image arises when the clock strikes (“it sounded as if the whole room had suddenly become filled with snakes”). By the way, Baba Yaga sometimes not only “growls like a beast”, but also “whistles like a snake”. Let's look along the way at the “snake goddess” from the island of Gotland (in Sweden):



The feather bed, into which Chichikov plunges, resembles a feather bed from the fairy tale of the brothers Grimm “Mother Holle” (“Frau Holle”). The feather bed in “Dead Souls” covers the entire space (the whole world) — from ceiling to floor (“Left alone, he gazed not without pleasure at his bed, which reached almost to the ceiling. <...> When, having brought over a chair, he climbed onto the bed, it sank under him almost down to the floor, and the feathers he displaced from under himself flew into every corner of the room.”). As for Mother Holle, she comes from the Old Norse mythical Hel, the mistress of the world of the dead (her name is related to the English word ‘hell’). That's why she has such big teeth (she is an ogre — devours people to death):

“The next thing she came to was a little house, and there she saw an old woman looking out, with such large teeth, that she was terrified, and turned to run away. But the old woman called after her, ‘What are you afraid of, dear child? Stay with me; if you will do the work of my house properly for me, I will make you very happy. You must be very careful, however, to make my bed in the right way, for I wish you always to shake it thoroughly, so that the feathers fly about; then they say, down there in the world, that it is snowing; for I am Mother Holle.’ ”

Obviously, Mother Holle is also the Snow Queen (another version of the goddess of death).

Chichikov had a wonderful meal at Mrs Korobochka's. Propp writes in the book "Historical roots of the Wondertale"(in the chapter "Gave him a drink and fed him"):
"We note that this is a constant, typical feature of Yaga. She feeds, treats the hero. <...> having joined the food designated for the dead, the newcomer finally joins the world of the dead."

Chichikov's eating of various dishes (including pancakes, which are traditionally part of the menu of both Pancake week — Russian Mardi Gras — and commemorations) is superimposed on the desire to appropriate (so to speak, devour) dead souls (and here he himself becomes like an ogre — or the devil with a bag in which the souls of the dead are put together). At the same time, Mrs Korobochka is the mistress of the dead souls, who does not want to part with them ("Maybe they'd somehow come in handy around the house on occasion...").

Also noteworthy are "several scarecrows that had been set up for the same purpose, on long poles with splayed arms; one of them was wearing the mistress's own bonnet." The scarecrows here refer to the skulls on poles surrounding (in primitive society) a house intended for the rite of initiation. One of them here represents the hostess herself — as the mistress of the kingdom of death.

Having learned the name and patronymic of Mrs Korobochka, Chichikov notices: "Nastasya Petrovna? A nice name, Nastasya Petrovna. My aunt, my mother's sister, is Nastasya Petrovna." This emphasizes the special connection between the hero and Baba Yaga, typical of primitive ideas. Propp in the book "Historical Roots of the Wondertale" writes:

"We can observe the following: if Yaga or another donor or inhabitant of the hut is related to one of the heroes, then she always has to be akin to the wife or mother of the hero, but never to the hero himself or his father. In the Vyatka fairy tale, she says: "Oh, you child! You will be my own little nephew, your mammy is my sister." "Sister" cannot be taken literally here. These words in the system of other forms of

kinship mean that his mother belongs to the clan association to which Yaga herself belongs.”

So Chichikov turns out to be the “little nephew” of Mrs Korobochka.

Pay attention, by the way, to the striking coincidence of Gogol's text with folklore and myth. How does this happen? I think Andrey Sinyavsky is right when he writes in his book “In Gogol's Shadow” (1970—1973):

“The encounter with folklore takes place at the level of inner experience, from which information identical to the fairy tale is drawn, that at the same time is more reliable, deeper and reinforces it from below, from the inside, like an original or a subscript. Therefore, many paintings and scenes associated with pagan myth arise on the pages of Gogol like a revelation received first-hand, by mystical or psychic means, and not heard and retold from someone else's lips.”

And here's the crucial point: these words can be applied to all the other writers and poets I'm quoting as well.

Note also the comparison of Chichikov with the hog, referring us to the story of Circe (“ ‘... Eh, my dear, your back and side are all muddy as a hog's! Where'd you get yourself mucked up like that?’ ‘Thank God all the same that I only mucked myself up, I should be grateful I've still got all my ribs.’ ”).

It is also curious that Chichikov demonstrates (albeit unwittingly) his nakedness to Mrs Korobochka (“... a woman's face peeked in the door and instantly hid itself, for Chichikov, wishing to sleep better, had thrown off absolutely everything. The face that had peeked in seemed somehow slightly familiar to him. He began recalling to himself: who might it be?—and finally remembered that it was the mistress”).

In the article “Ritual Laughter in Folklore” Propp examines the cases when the hero of the fairy tale is naked in front of the princess Nesmeiána (‘the princess who would not laugh’), while doing “a phallic gesture” (seeing this gesture, the goddess will laugh — and life will be reborn).

Mrs Korobochka does not laugh at all, but Nozdryov laughs, to whom Chichikov gets, having left Mrs Korobochka (just as accidentally as he got to Mrs Korobochka). Nozdryov (whose name means ‘having (large) nostrils’, that is, a large nose) is a

male correspondence to Mrs Korobochka. Nozdryov is the “master of the beasts” (“Nozdryov was amid them just like a father amid his family; they all shot up their tails, which dog fanciers calls sweeps, flew straight to meet the guests, and began to greet them. A good ten of them put their paws on Nozdryov’s shoulders.”) Nozdryov represents the ogre Polyphemus, from whom Chichikov barely manages to escape. Let's stop here a little and note that the main “Polyphemus”, the main devil that Chichikov meets, in Gogol's prose poem is not Nozdryov, but Plyushkin. Plyushkin is also a kind of “master”, only the owner is not of beasts, but of many “dead souls” and a lot of perishable things, the owner of a kind of hell (his farm is described quite as a dead kingdom). He came to the poem from the novel by Charles Robert Maturin “Melmoth the Wanderer” (1820). At the beginning of the novel, John Melmoth comes to his dying uncle to take care of him. John should receive a large inheritance after his uncle's death. Uncle is a phenomenal miser. In particular, we read: “There was a great deal of decayed and useless lumber, such as might be supposed to be heaped up to rot in a miser's closet.” John sees, while at his uncle's, a portrait of his ancestor, also John Melmoth, who then acts as his antipodean double in the novel. The plot of Maturin was reflected in Gogol both in the pair of the artist Chartkov and the old usurer in the story “Portrait”, and in the pair of Chichikov and Plyushkin in “Dead Souls”. At the same time, the old man in the “Portrait” is just a devil (stereotypically romantic), he exists exclusively for Chartkov (as Chartkov's Shadow). As for Plyushkin, he is a man who has passed his own life path. Plyushkin is not for Chichikov, he is on his own. But on Chichikov's way, Plyushkin unwittingly plays the role of a devil: he shows hell to Chichikov. It is no coincidence that Plyushkin is the last landowner on Chichikov's path, a meeting with whom in fact represents the end of the path.

Back to Nozdryov. Nozdryov is a universal great combinator, he wants to get into everything and mix everything up, this is a trickster (but a completely ineffective one):

“Nozdryov was in a certain respect a storied man. Not one gathering he attended went by without some story. [Since Nozdryov, like Plyushkin, is a devil, this

characteristic will quite logically pass to Mikhail Bulgakov's Woland: “ ‘Aha! You’re a historian?’ Berlioz asked with great relief and respect. ‘I am a historian,’ the scholar confirmed, and added with no rhyme or reason: This evening there will be an interesting story at the Ponds!’ ”] <...> *Nozdryov was in many respects a many-sided man, that is, a Jack-of-all-trades. In the same moment he would offer to go with you wherever you please, even to the ends of the earth, join in any undertaking you like, trade whatever there was for whatever you like. A gun, a dog, a horse—everything was up for trade, but not at all with a view to gain: it came simply from some irrepressible briskness and friskiness of character*”.

Nozdryov is similar to Hermes — the god of borders and roads, the patron of merchants and thieves, the fleet-footed messenger of the gods and the guide of the souls of the dead:

“ ‘I’ll take you for a look at the boundary where my land ends.’ Nozdryov led his guests across the field, which in many places consisted of tussocks. The guests had to make their way between fallow land and ploughed fields. Chichikov was beginning to get tired. In many places water squeezed out from under their feet, so low-lying the place was. At first they were careful and stepped cautiously, but then, seeing that it served no purpose, they plodded straight on without choosing between greater and lesser mud. Having gone a considerable distance, they indeed saw a boundary, which consisted of a wooden post and a narrow ditch. ‘There’s the boundary!’ said Nozdryov. ‘Everything you see on this side of it is all mine, and even on that side, all that forest bluing over there, and all that’s beyond the forest, is all mine.’ ”

It is also interesting here that Nozdryov leads Chichikov into the field — and into the mud, which again betrays his root relationship with Mrs Korobochka.

Nozdryov 's very appearance is remarkable:

“... *his dark-haired comrade entered, flinging his peaked cap from his head onto the table, and dashingy ruffling his thick black hair. Of average height and rather well-built, he was a dashing fellow with full, ruddy cheeks, teeth white as snow, and*

whiskers black as pitch. He was fresh as milk and roses; health, it seemed, was simply bursting from his face."

It seems that we have a ghoul in front of us — that is, a dead man who has drunk blood (and excellent teeth are emphasized), who is trying his best to look like a living person — and therefore “overplaying”. Dostoevsky will borrow the features of Nozdryov's appearance for his “favorite” heroes — Svidrigailov, Lambert, Stavrogin (“And this is Stavrogin, ‘the vampire Stavrogin,’ as you are called by a lady here who is in love with you!”). Here, for example, Stavrogin (from the novel “Demons”):

“His face, too, impressed me. His hair was of a peculiarly intense black, his light-coloured eyes were peculiarly light and calm, his complexion was peculiarly soft and white, the red in his cheeks was too bright and clear, his teeth were like pearls, and his lips like coral — one would have thought that he must be a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there seemed something repellent about him. It was said that his face suggested a mask ...”

Or look at Svidrigailov (from the novel “Crime and Punishment”):

“It was a strange face, like a mask; white and red, with bright red lips, with a flaxen beard, and still thick flaxen hair. His eyes were somehow too blue and their expression somehow too heavy and fixed.”

Interestingly, in a conversation with Stavrogin, Shatov actually — albeit briefly — compares his interlocutor with Nozdryov. And here's how Dostoevsky originally outlined Stavrogin's image in the draft notebooks for the novel: “A frivolous man, busy only playing with his life, elegant Nozdryov, does an awful lot of things, both noble and dirty.”

Nozdrev, judging by his surname, represents the Nose, that is, the part of the hero that has become independent (in this case, the part of Chichikov). Chichikov's nose makes itself felt loudly already at the very beginning of the book (“The gentleman's manners had something solid about them, and he blew his nose with an exceeding loudness.”). Thus, the appearance of Nozdryov is foreshadowed — he is like a detached Nose, that is, he is a double-antipode of Chichikov. (Later, Dostoevsky will

extract his “The Double” from Gogol's “The Nose”.) Nose, generally speaking, in myth often means phallus, and in literature it is a common euphemism. (In folklore and folk pictures the nose is often identified with the phallus. Note also that in the myths of different peoples there is a phallus-snake separated from a man and independently moving.)

Let's look at the Etruscan statue of Priapus (such statues were placed in gardens so that they would contribute to the fertility of plants):



Here we can clearly see that the phallus is the man himself. (And you can also see where the garden scarecrow got its traditional hat from.)

The nose is also the man himself. Look, for example, in what form in Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's romantic novel “Undine” (1811) the antipodean double appears to the knight:

“... and then a wonderful little man appeared next to me, tiny and ugly beyond measure, all brownish and with a nose that was not much smaller than the fellow himself.”

We talked about the fact that Nozdryov resembles Hermes in his behavior. Compare with what Karl Kerényi writes in the article “The Trickster and Ancient Greek Mythology”:

“The phallus is a double and the “alter ego” of the Trickster. Hermes was also often depicted simply as a phallus <...> or as a phallus-like herma, a pillar that was crowned by the head of the deity.”

It seems that Nozdryov is Chichikov's phallus, namely his double-antipode, who would have to take part in the rebirth of life. But it doesn't work out in the poem. Nozdryov only supports the rumor that he was going to help Chichikov kidnap the governor's daughter (and his phallic character is manifested in this rumor: he is the one who should connect the hero with the lady), in fact, he (along with Mrs Korobochka) turns out to be the main reason for Chichikov's failure.

Nozdryov, by the way, has the usual familiarity of a double or a devil (“Chichikov recognized Nozdryov, the very one with whom he had dined at the prosecutor’s and who within a few minutes had got on such an intimate footing with him that he had even begun to address him familiarly, though, incidentally, he had given no occasion for it on his side.”). Why shouldn't the double be familiar if he and the hero are one person? For example, John's double in Maturin's novel “Melmoth the Wanderer” beckons him with “frightening familiarity”, Golyadkin junior is intolerably familiar in Dostoevsky's novel “The Double” (“ ‘Give me a kiss, darling!’ he went on with intolerable familiarity”), Smerdyakov is familiar in Dostoevsky's novel “The Brothers Karamazov” (“But what finally irritated Ivan most and confirmed his dislike for him was the peculiar, revolting familiarity which Smerdyakov began to show more and more markedly”), familiar is the devil who appears to the hero in Thomas Mann's novel “Doctor Faustus” (“I am prepared for everything, can get used to everything. Get used to your shamelessness, your theeing and thouing and trusty fereing, which soothly always go particularly against the wood. After all I say ‘thou’ only to myself, which of likelihood explains why you do.”). We see a similar familiarity (impudence) of the double in the poem by Alexander Blok “The Double” (1909):

*Suddenly—he smiled cheekily,—
And there is no one near me...
Sad image,
Somewhere I saw him...
Perhaps himself
I met on the surface of the mirror?⁴*

Mrs Korobochka did not laugh, but Nozdryov laughs with might and main — that's where the laughter apparently went:

“Here Nozdryov guffawed with that ringing laughter into which only a fresh, healthy man can dissolve, showing all his teeth, white as sugar, to the last one; his cheeks quiver and shake, and his neighbor, two doors away, in the third room, jumps up from his sleep, goggling his eyes, and saying: ‘Eh, how he carries on!’ ‘What’s so funny?’ said Chichikov, somewhat displeased by this laughter. But Nozdryov went on guffawing at the top of his lungs, all the while saying: ‘Oh, spare me, really, I’ll split my sides!’ ”

There it is, the ritual laughter, but also the devil's laughter. The laughter of a god or a devil.

If to the “old witch” (to Mrs Korobochka) Chichikov shows himself — naked, to the “young witch” (the governor's daughter) he shows Nozdryov. Chichikov tries to cheer up the girl — and Nozdryov appears:

“And meanwhile a most unpleasant surprise was being prepared for our hero: while the girl yawned, and he went on telling her little stories of some sort that had happened at various times, even touching on the Greek philosopher Diogenes, Nozdryov emerged from the end room.”

⁴ Вдруг — он улыбнулся нахально,
И нет близ меня никого...
Знаком этот образ печальный,
И где-то я видел его...
Быть может, себя самого
Я встретил на глади зеркальной?

The result of Nozdrev's appearance was Chichikov's fall, echoing his fall into the mud before visiting Mrs Korobochka:

“He began to feel uneasy, ungainly—exactly as if he had suddenly stepped with a beautifully polished shoe into a dirty, stinking puddle ...”

“He was mainly vexed not at the ball, but at the fact that he had happened to trip up, that he had suddenly appeared before everyone looking like God knows what, that he had played some strange, ambiguous role.”

Everyone in the city suddenly realized that Chichikov (and at the same time his nose, since the nose is his double) is not good (“Word is going around that he’s good-looking, but he’s not good-looking at all, not at all, and his nose ... a most disagreeable nose”).

In Dostoevsky's novel “The Double”, Goliadkin, being, like Chichikov, disgraced at a ball and being on the street, loses both his galoshes in the mud:

“The galosh that fell off Mr Golyadkin’s right foot remained where it was in the mud and slush on the Fontanka pavement ... <...> At last, drained of all strength, Mr Golyadkin stopped, leaned his arms on the parapet of the embankment in the attitude of a man whose nose has suddenly and unexpectedly begun to bleed, and gazed fixedly into the seething black waters of the Fontanka. <...> twice he stumbled and nearly fell—and this caused the orphaning of his other shoe, when its galosh too abandoned it.”

Golyadkin and Chichikov are united by the fact that they are both served by Petrushka, and the fact that both at some point were “ordered not to be received” in the house of an important person, they are united by the unfulfilled story of the abduction of a girl (Dostoevsky's Clara is the daughter of a State Councillor and "Mr. Golyadkin's benefactor" — allegedly writes to Golyadkin: “Wait in your carriage at the door. I will fly to the shelter of your arms at exactly two a.m.”, pay attention to the word ‘two’, which is generally quite common in narratives about doubles, — we've just read, for instance: "twice he stumbled and nearly fell", and we've already talked about the fall heralding the meeting with the double).

Dostoevsky used for the plot of “The Double” (1846) not only Gogol's story “The

Nose” (1836) and other Petersburg stories by Gogol (as well as the story “Little Zaches” (1819) by Hoffman), but also the poem “Dead Souls” (1842). (The story “The Double”, by the way, is subtitled: “The Petersburg Poem”.) Dostoevsky, as it were, continued to write a collective work about the antipodean double — partly parodying his predecessors.

Let's return to Nozdryov the phallus. An interesting version of Nozdrev meets the protagonist of Federico Fellini's film “City of Women” (1980). This is Dr Cazzone (whose name means ‘big dick’):



The protagonist gets to him by chance, at night, fleeing from persecution and losing his way. In front of the doctor's house, he falls to the ground In front of the doctor's house, he falls to the ground (“Look how they've mucked you up. Change your clothes! Shall I give you a dressing gown?”) The doctor himself is wearing a dressing gown. (That is, the doctor shares his dressing gown with the protagonist — shares his skin, so to speak.) Cazzone collects women, weapons and models of phalluses, , as well as any phallus-like objects (one of the phalluses the protagonist starts and, unable to switch it off, locks it in a black box). The doctor also loves dogs (“Come on, come on. Don't be afraid of these puppies.”). He owns two greyhounds — white with black spots (one of them is later killed). (White and black spots symbolise life and death, and we will talk more about the spotted animal accompanying the hero to the world of death).

Let us say a word about the dressing gown (or the bathrobe) as a typical attire of an antipodean double. The bathrobe, for instance, we see on Clare Quilty — the double-antipode of Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's *Lolita*:

“Gray-faced, baggy-eyed, fluffily disheveled in a scanty balding way, but still perfectly recognizable, he swept by me in a purple bathrobe, very like one I had.”

The bathrobe plays the role of a removable skin — easily discarded and exchangeable. Or maybe it is a variant of a cloak — a wide dark garment that hides the double, making him a “shadow” of the hero. Such a cloak is worn by a double in Edgar Poe's short story “William Wilson” (1839), in which there is also an exchange of cloaks, unexpected for the protagonist:

“Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have resented this galling language by immediate personal violence, had not my whole attention been at the moment arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry, in matters of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding-doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it,) and that the one presented me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being who had so disastrously exposed me, had been muffled, I remembered, in a cloak; and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party, with the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered me by Preston; placed it, unnoticed, over my own; left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance...”

A dressing gown can also be a variant of an overcoat, that is, a long and also figure-hiding garment that even empty can sometimes be mistaken for a person. For example, this happens in the story of Ryunosuke Akutagawa “Spinning Gears”

(1927), where the coat is directly correlated with a double (whose appearance — I remind you — in myth and folk beliefs means an early death):

“Hanging on the wall, the coat looked to me like my own standing figure. I hurriedly threw it into a corner wardrobe. Then I went to the mirror and stared at my reflection. My face in the mirror revealed the bones beneath the skin. Into the memory contained in this skull of mine leaped a vivid image of the maggot.”

Also Chichikov and Nozdryov appear before us in dressing gowns:

“The host himself, who was not slow to come in, had nothing under his dressing gown except a bare chest on which some sort of beard was growing.”

“He woke up early in the morning. The first thing he did after putting on his dressing gown and boots was go across the yard to the stables and order Selifan to harness the britzka at once. Coming back across the yard, he met with Nozdryov, who was also in his dressing gown, a pipe clenched in his teeth.”

Look also at Plyushkin's dressing gown, which Chichikov takes for a female housekeeper at the first meeting:

“... Chichikov concluded that this must be the housekeeper.

“Listen, dearie,” he said, getting out of the britzka, “about the master ...”

“Not home,” the housekeeper interrupted, without waiting for the end of the question, and then, after a minute, she added: “What do you want?”

“It’s business.”

“Go in!” said the housekeeper, turning away and showing him her back, dusted with flour, with a big rip lower down.

He stepped into the dark, wide front hall, from which cold air blew as from a cellar.”

Do you remember the “grandmother” from the American myth, whose back was sagging? And the darkness, cold air, cellar speak here about the entrance to the world of death. (Plyushkin is Baba Yaga and Polyphemus in one person. Compare with a curious fact: among the Marind-Anim tribe, the initiators of the rite of initiation are men disguised as old women.) As for being dusted with flour, we'll talk about that later. And about the big rip, too.

So, after Mrs Korobochka Chichikov meets Nozdryov, after Nozdryov — the governor's daughter: Chichikov's britzka bumped into the coach in which the governor's wife was riding with her beautiful daughter (“One was an old lady, the other a young girl”) — we have already talked about the fact that the governor's wife, as it were, replaces Mrs Korobochka), and the harnesses got mixed up. Governor's daughter is “like something resembling a vision” for Chichikov. A plot similar to Gogol's (the fall of the hero and his subsequent arrival to the “mistress of the beasts”, who directs him to her daughter) is in the Finnish epic “Kalevala”. Väinämöinen goes to get a wife “into the North Farm” (Pohjola) — into the realm of death. Joukahainen, his rival in sorcery, sets up an ambush and hits Väinämöinen with an arrow (“Then old Väinämöinen / plunged straight into the water, / tipped over right into the billows, / went right into the breakers from the back of the blue elk, / of the peastalk horse.”). Väinämöinen is carried on the sea for a long time and shaken by the waves, then an eagle appears and carries the hero on his back to the limits of the “land of mist”, then the maid of the mistress of Pohjola hears the wailing of Väinämöinen, who got lost (“He wept two nights, three, / the same number of days, too; / he did not indeed know what way to go...”) and was beaten (“with a hundred wounds in his side, a thousand lashes from the wind”: beating, lacerating the hero is an important element of the initiation rite, in this case, initiation into shamans). Louhi, mistress of North Farm, of “the dark kingdom”, of “the country of ogres”, treats Väinämöinen the same way as Mrs Korobochka treats Chichikov (“She fed the famished man, / dried the drenched person, / then for a long time rubs him down, / rubs him down, bathes him with warm water. / She made the man well, / the fellow better”). Louhi promises Väinämöinen her daughter if he can make a Sampo — a magic mill that gives abundance (“If you have the skill to forge a Sampo, / to beat out a lid of many colors / <...> / then I will give you my girl, / will put up the maiden as your reward ...”). Väinämöinen leaves Louhi and meets Louhi's daughter, the heavenly virgin (“Steadfast old Väinämöinen / is rattling along from gloomy North Farm, / from dark Sedgy Farm. / He drove a bit of a way, / went on a little. / He heard the whirl of the shuttle / high above his head. / At this he raised his

head, / glanced up to the heavens. / There is a beautiful rainbow in the heavens, / a maiden on the edge of the rainbow / is weaving cloth of gold, / with easy motions is weaving cloth of silver.”).

The main plot of “Kalevala” is based on a rite of initiation — but not on a youthful one, but on a similar and much more difficult shamanic one. Speaking about shamanism, Propp in the chapter “Climbing the Tree” of the book “Historical Roots of the Wondertale” quotes the work of Lev Sternberg (1862—1927) on the cult of the eagle among the Siberian peoples:

"The most interesting thing for us is that the idea of an intermediary tree is connected with the idea of a bird. Among the Yakuts, every shaman has a "shamanic tree", that is, a high pole with rungs like a ladder and with an image of an eagle on top. This tree is associated with initiation into shamans. "It's amazing," Sternberg writes [in the book "Primitive Religion in the Light of Ethnography"], — that the central moment of initiation into shamans among the Buryats is the ascent of a specially erected tree, and its highest communion with the deities takes place through marriage with the heavenly virgin ... The same smaller tree is being erected in his yurt. The breastplate of the Oroch shaman depicts three worlds — upper, middle and lower. It features a world tree — a larch, on which the shaman climbs to the upper world. The shaman's fall down from this tree will lead to the death of the whole world." Sternberg examines the name of this tree among different Siberian peoples and comes to the conclusion that it means 'road'."

Shamanic “three worlds” resemble the construction of Dante's “Divine Comedy” — and, perhaps, Gogol's idea of a poem about “dead souls” and their rebirth. It is especially interesting (in relation to Gogol's poem) that a road can act as a variant of the “world tree”. As for the shamanic “idea of a bird”, let us recall the amazing birch tree with a dark fracture at the top, resembling a bird, which Chichikov (or Gogol himself) so spellboundly contemplates in Plyushkin's garden (“The colossal white trunk of a birch, deprived of its crown, broken off in a tempest or thunderstorm, rose out of this green thickness and rounded in the air like a regular, gleaming marble column; the sharp, slanting break that topped it instead of a capital showed dark

against its snowy whiteness, like a hat or a black bird.”) The eagle in the “Kalevala” is also linked to the birch. This eagle takes Väinämöinen to the limits of another world out of gratitude to the hero (“You left a birch growing, / a lovely tree standing / as a resting place for birds, / as a place for myself to perch on.”).

The poem “Dead Souls” combines two shamanic “plots”: shamanic transportation of the souls of the dead into the other world and the shaman’s matchmaking to the “heavenly virgin” (“The dead souls!... <...> That was simply invented as a cover, and here’s the real thing: he wants to carry off the governor’s daughter”). Nothing comes out of both enterprises (and this, perhaps, is the essence of the poem about Russia in its sad modernity).

Tell any non-Russian inhabitant of Siberia, who has not read Gogol's poem, briefly its plot: one person collects dead souls, carries them in his britzka, which turns into a “bird-troika”⁵ and flies (“Ah, troika! bird troika, who invented you?”). He will say: “This is a completely ordinary thing! The shaman seats (during large commemorations held once a year) the souls of the deceased on a sled and takes them to the other world.”

There is another interesting coincidence of the plot of the poem with the shamanic action. Anna Smolyak in the book “Shaman: Personality, Functions, Worldview” (1991) writes that the Nanai shaman before the “big wake” “revived” the souls of the deceased: he had to tell their relatives about the deceased, that is, he had to “see” the deceased, whom he personally might not know, had to “guess them.” If the story came out unreliable, the shaman was scolded or even beaten. Chichikov also “revives” the souls of the dead, pondering over the list of them, imagining the dead peasants alive.

Chichikov's “bird-troika” is also interesting insofar as it corresponds to the winged horse of the fairy tale. The winged horse, as Propp shows in the book “Historical Roots of the Wondertale”, is a later version of the magic bird on which the hero enters another world: “We will see that our hero does not come out of the hut, but flies out either on a horse, or on an eagle, or having turned into an eagle.” Compare

⁵ Troika — three horses harnessed abreast.

also Chichikov's journey with the dialogue in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead": "— Open to me! — And who are you? Where are you going? What is your name? — I am one of you, the name of my boat is Soul Collector... May vessels of milk be given to me with cakes, loaves... and pieces of meat... May these things be given to me completely... May it be done to me so that I can move on like the Bennu bird..."

Let's return to our erotic topic. Chichikov's dream is naturally directed at the governor's daughter — the young hypostasis of a witch (or goddess). The old hypostasis of the "mistress of the beasts" is, of course, unattractive, but there is also usually an erotic connotation (since the myth requires it). Let's recall, for example, the witch from Gogol's story "Viy" (1835):

"The old woman got the students installed: the rhetorician was put in the cottage, the theologian was shut up in an empty closet, the philosopher was assigned to the sheep pen, also empty.

The philosopher, left alone, ate the carp in one minute, examined the wattled sides of the pen, shoved his foot into the curious snout that a pig had poked through from the next pen, and rolled over on his other side in order to fall into a dead sleep. Suddenly the low door opened and the old woman, stooping down, came into the pen.

"Well, granny, what do you want?" said the philosopher.

But the old woman came toward him with outspread arms.

"Oh-ho!" thought the philosopher. "Only no, dearie, you're obsolete!" He moved slightly further off, but again the old woman unceremoniously came toward him."

Mrs Korobochka also correlates Chichikov with her late husband:

" 'Well, there's your bed made up for you,' said the mistress. 'Good-bye, dearie, I wish you a good night. Is there anything else you need? Perhaps, my dear, you're used to having your heels scratched before bed? My late husband could never fall asleep without it.' "

The "erotic" relationship between Chichikov and Mrs Korobochka finds an echo in the conversation of the two ladies ("the simply agreeable lady" and "the lady agreeable in all respects"):

“ ‘And this Korobochka is what, young and good-looking?’ ‘Not a whit, an old crone.’ ‘Ah, how charming! So he’s taken up with an old crone. ...’ ”

In Stanley Kubrick's film “A Clockwork Orange” (1971), Alex, the protagonist, comes (for the purpose of robbery) to the “mistress of the beasts” (“Catlady” — beasts are represented by cats living in the house). This is a rich old woman who tries to look young — “baboochka” (“What a beauty you are, you filthy old soomka⁶!”). The walls of the room are hung with erotic paintings. Alex kills the old woman in a scuffle by hitting her in the head with the porcelain phallus you see in the still — and which so aptly echoes the nose of the mask:



This plot resembles Hermann's meeting with the old countess (the former “Moscow Venus”) in Pushkin's story “The Queen of Spades” (1834): Hermann, like a lover, sneaks into the countess's bedroom and kills her by pointing a gun at her — so to speak, instead of a phallus. (“The old woman answered not a word. Hermann rose to his feet. ‘You old hag!’ he said, grinding his teeth. ‘Then I will make you speak....’ With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket.”) And also, of course, Raskolnikov's fateful meeting with an old woman (a pawn-broker) in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment. (At the same time, both injured old women of Russian literature have by their side their young and, one might say,

⁶ ‘Soomka’ the Russian word for ‘bag’.

erotic hypostasis: Liza and Lizaveta, respectively. In “Crime and Punishment,” Koch shouts through the door to the already murdered sisters: “What's up in there, are they snoring, or has somebody wrung their necks? Cur-r-rse it!” he bellowed, as if from a barrel. “Hey, Alyona Ivanovna, you old witch! Lizaveta Ivanovna, you indescribable beauty! Open up! Ohh, curse it all! Are they asleep, or what?” Lizaveta, of course, is called a beauty ironically, but her eroticism is expressed in the fact that she gets pregnant all the time from various unknown men.) It also resembles a scene from Gogol's story “Viy”: Thomas Brutus kills the witch (who immediately turns into a dying beauty) with a billet:

“He snatched up a billet lying in the road and started beating the old woman as hard as he could with it. She let out wild screams; first they were angry and threatening, then they turned weaker, more pleasant, pure, and then soft, barely ringing, like fine silver bells, penetrating his soul. A thought flashed inadvertently in his head: Is this really an old woman? ‘Oh, I can’t take any more!’ she said in exhaustion and fell to the ground.

He got to his feet and looked into her eyes: dawn was breaking and the golden domes of the Kievan churches shone in the distance. Before him lay a beauty with a disheveled, luxurious braid and long, pointy eyelashes. Insensibly, she spread her bare white arms and moaned, looking up with tear-filled eyes.”

The description of the murder here is similar to the description of a sexual act. The billet of Thomas Brutus is both a murder weapon and a phallus.

* * *

It is curious that an ogre can appear in the form of a phallus (why not, because he is not only the “source of life and death”, but also an antipodean double). This is how Carl Gustav Jung describes an encounter with a ritual man-eating phallus (while diving into an “underground temple”) in the book “Memories, Dreams, Reflections” (1961):

“At about the same time <...> I had the earliest dream I can remember, a dream which was to preoccupy me all my life. I was then between three and four years old.

The vicarage stood quite alone near Laufen castle, and there was a big meadow stretching back from the sexton’s farm. In the dream I was in this meadow.

Suddenly I discovered a dark, rectangular, stone-lined hole in the ground. I had never seen it before. I ran forward curiously and peered down into it. Then I saw a stone stairway leading down. Hesitantly and fearfully, I descended. At the bottom was a doorway with a round arch, closed off by a green curtain. It was a big, heavy curtain of worked stuff like brocade, and it looked very sumptuous. Curious to see what might be hidden behind, I pushed it aside. I saw before me in the dim light a rectangular chamber about thirty feet long. The ceiling was arched and of hewn stone. The floor was laid with flagstones, and in the center a red carpet ran from the entrance to a low platform. On this platform stood a wonderfully rich golden throne. I am not certain, but perhaps a red cushion lay on the seat. It was a magnificent throne, a real king’s throne in a fairy tale. Something was standing on it which I thought at first was a tree trunk twelve to fifteen feet high and about one and a half to two feet thick. It was a huge thing, reaching almost to the ceiling. But it was of a curious composition: it was made of skin and naked flesh, and on top there was something like a rounded head with no face and no hair. On the very top of the head was a single eye, gazing motionlessly upward.

It was fairly light in the room, although there were no windows and no apparent source of light. Above the head, however, was an aura of brightness. The thing did not move, yet I had the feeling that it might at any moment crawl off the throne like a worm and creep toward me. I was paralyzed with terror. At that moment I heard from outside and above me my mother’s voice. She called out, ‘Yes, just look at him. That is the man-eater!’ That intensified my terror still more, and I awoke sweating and scared to death. For many nights afterward I was afraid to go to sleep, because I feared I might have another dream like that.

This dream haunted me for years. Only much later did I realize that what I had seen was a phallus, and it was decades before I understood that it was a ritual phallus.” Gogol, perhaps, also dreamed of such a ritual phallus — and he created his horror story “Viy”:

“... with a sidelong glance he saw them leading in some squat, hefty, splay-footed man. He was black earth all over. His earth-covered legs and arms stuck out like strong, sinewy roots. Heavily he trod, stumbling all the time. His long eyelids were lowered to the ground. With horror Thomas noticed that the face on him was made of iron. He was brought in under the arms and put right by the place where Thomas stood. ‘Lift my eyelids, I can’t see!’ Viy said in a subterranean voice—and the entire host rushed to lift his eyelids. ‘Don’t look!’ some inner voice whispered to the philosopher. He could not help himself and looked. “There he is!” Viy cried and fixed an iron finger on him.”

* * *

So, the “mistress of the beasts” — along with a mythical beast and some element of nature — represents the “source of life and death” through which the hero (the initiate) passes. We also noticed that, for example, Circe is depicted with two panthers. They are needed, of course, in order to point out her role as the “mistress of the beasts”. But why are there two of them, and not, say, three or five?

The answer to this is simple: when depicting the goddess in full face, it is convenient to place the beasts side by side — one near each hand (Circe in the Burne-Jones painting is depicted in profile, but — according to tradition — with two beasts). This is how we usually see the various “mistresses of the beasts”, here is the oldest of them — the “Great Goddess” (conditional name) with two leopards (or lions) from Çatalhöyük (from the 8th millennium BC.):



However, I think that it's not just about the convenience of a symbolic image. Most likely, the two beasts on the sides of the goddess symbolize the mouth of a mythical beast — like the doors of the “hut on chicken legs” in Russian fairy tales. Vladimir Propp in his book “Historical Roots the Wondertale” writes:

“A hut standing on the verge of two worlds [the world of life and the world of death], in the rite has the form of an animal, in the myth there is often no hut at all, but only an animal, or the hut has pronounced zoomorphic features. <...> Doors especially often have an animal appearance.”

“Here the hero has to be swallowed, eaten. <...> Yaga, both by her dwelling and by her words, appears to be a cannibal. “There was a dense forest near this house, and there was a hut in a clearing in the forest, and Baba Yaga lived in the hut; she did not let anyone near her, and ate people like chickens.” “The fence around the hut is made of human bones, human skulls with eyes stick out on the fence; instead of pillars of the gate, human legs, instead of latches, hands, instead of a lock, a mouth with sharp teeth.” <....> the door of the hut bites, i.e. it is a mouth <....>. Thus, we

see that this type of hut corresponds to the hut in which circumcision and initiation were performed.”

Yaga and her “animal” hut are one and the same (a man-eating beast), and the two beasts on the sides of the “Great Goddess” apparently represent the zoomorphic door of the hut, they are Yaga's mouth. The mouth of the mythical beast first turned into a door with two pillars of an animal type, and then into two separate animals (compare, for example, with two lions at the entrance to some palace). In Propp's words, “what was once the hut itself (the beast) becomes an attribute of the hut and duplicates it, is carried out to the exit of the hut.” And more:

“Animals also come from here — mainly lions and snakes guarding the entrance to the palace. The hero needs to throw them a cake or get them drunk so that they let him pass. Throwing an object into the mouth as a later replacement for jumping into the mouth is also already known to us.”

In one Kazakh fairy tale, the hero falls into an underground country, after which he must enter the headquarters of the Khan of the Snakes, where “from two pillars two terrible spotted snakes will crawl hissing, but don't be afraid — these are the servants of the snake khan, guarding the entrance.” (What such spotting means is discussed ahead.)

The image of the “mistress of the beasts” with two animals (or birds) on each side is often used in literature and in art. So, August Strindberg in the story “Alone” writes: *“I also have an old lady friend, she has two dogs who often take her for a walk. <...> To myself, I call her the Mistress of the World or even the Defender of the Universe — that's the way she looks: she walks with her head arrogantly thrown up, but at the same time does not take her eyes off the ground.”*

Let's go through several images of the “mistress of the beasts”. Here is Artemis, depicted as the “misstress of the beasts” (with two bears):



Artemis is the ancient Greek goddess of hunting and at the same time the patroness of young animals and women in labor, that is, quite a “source of life and death”.

Here is the Phoenician Astarte:



Astarte (aka the Akkadian goddess Ishtar) is the goddess of love and fertility, but pay attention to the skulls under her feet. She is also the goddess of war.

Here is the “snake goddess” (conditional name) from the island of Crete (snakes are a common symbol when depicting a chthonic deity — the deity of the earth):



Such a traditional image of the goddess, of course, is often played out in art. For example, in Alexey Venetsianov's painting “On field. Spring” (1820s) in the image of a peasant woman leading two horses, the goddess of the earth and fertility, the patroness of agriculture (Demeter) is revealed to us:



In Lado Gudiashvili's symbolist painting “In the waves of Tskhenis Tskali” (1925), we see the goddess of the river (the goddess of waves, who is a wave herself) and at the same time the “mistress of the beasts”:



Here is a similar image in cinema — the car of the Princess of Death from Jean Cocteau's film “Orpheus” (1950), based on the play of the same name (1926):



Inside is a dead Orpheus (who will then rise again). The car is driven by the “living dead” Heurtebise. The motorcyclists on the sides (replacing the two beasts traditionally accompanying the goddess) are the assistants of the Princess of Death (Azrael and Raphael).

In Federico Fellini's film “Casanova” (1976), the protagonist, intending to drown himself in the Thames and having already entered the water, suddenly sees on the other side, through the fog, a giantess (seven feet tall, as it turns out later) with two dwarfs on each side (who also replace two beasts here) — and decides to stay alive:



The hands of the goddess often duplicate two animals (as we saw in the image of Astarte, of the “snake goddess”, of Artemis, of the “goddess of waves”). Sometimes there are no animals at all — they are signalled, they are replaced by the hands themselves — for example, in the Egyptian ceramic figurine of a “bird woman” (3500—3400 BC):



A similar image (the goddess's arms spread or raised) we also often meet in art — for example, Justin appears like this in Lars von Trier's film “Melancholy” (2011), raising her hands to the sky and receiving electric discharges on them:



Let us recall in this connection Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's painting "Our Lady of the Softening of Evil Hearts" (1914—1915):



In Andrey Tarkovsky's film "The Mirror" (1976), Alexey dreams of his mother lowering her hair into a round basin of water:



The viewer's attention is directed to the naked hands, which move unmotivated, as if independently of her body (like two animals). At the same time, the dark room begins to collapse, decompose: under the influence of the water element, soaked pieces of the ceiling fall down. The mother appears as the “goddess of life and death”, the embodiment of the elements. Her face is hidden. It is hidden by the hair lowered into the water (her loose hair represents water — this is a common poetic image).

The goddess between two beasts (or birds) can be replaced by some other “source of life and death”. Here, for example, is a Christian sarcophagus from Ravenna (V century), in the center of which are the initials of Jesus Christ (as well as alpha and omega — the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, meaning the beginning and end of the world), and on the sides are peacocks (symbols of eternal life):



The Christian crucifixion also acts as a “source of life and death”. The robbers on the sides of the crucified Jesus replace the traditional zoomorphic pair. So, in Antonello da Messina's painting “The Crucifixion with Mary and John” (1475), it is not difficult to recognize the same cultural code:



The fact that there is the same code here is confirmed by the picture “The Vision of St. Eustace” (from an English manuscript of the XIII century):



In this vision, the robbers crucified with Jesus Christ are replaced by the horns of a sacrificial animal — that is, a kind of doubled animal. The robbers have returned here to their zoomorphic essence. (Horns, by the way, are a common sacred object. For example, images of bull heads with horns have been preserved in Çatalhöyük. A bull's head with horns is quite our code, in which the animal's skull acts as the centrepiece.)

Let's take a small step aside and note that the figure on the head of a deer in the “Vision of St. Eustace” in a funny way, but not by chance, resembles the Soviet coat of arms:



The point is that that coat of arms is based on the same code picture — and apparently the Egyptian image of the sacred scarab beetle was also used:



A beetle pushing and rolling the sun (replaced by a star in the Soviet coat of arms) is the “source of life and death”, and instead of beasts or birds on the sides are its two wings (replaced by bundles of ears in the coat of arms). By the way, in the centre of the coat of arms it is easy to notice the ancient symbol of the cross in a circle — crossed sickle and hammer on the background of a globe.

Let's go back to the crucifixion. The Christian cross is a mythological variety of the “world tree” and the of “tree of life” (there are, for example, images of Jesus

crucified on the “tree of life”). Thus, in the Russian spiritual verse “The Dream of the Virgin” the cross manifests itself in the cypress tree:

*Over the river like a Jordan
A cypress tree grew up,
And on this worthy tree
The Holy Cross manifested,
Like a crucified child,
Nailed at the hands and feet, <...>
Between two robbers,
Between two malefactors.*

“World Tree” (with two birds and one animal pair) we also meet at the very beginning of the Altai epic “Maadai-kara”:

*At the top of a seven-knuckled eternal poplar tree
Two identical golden cuckoos, the size of a horse's head,
Day and night, loudly cooing,
Calling to each other, are sitting. <...>
In the middle of a seven-knuckled iron poplar
Two identical black golden eagles are sitting ... <...>
Under the seven-knuckled iron poplar
Two identical black dogs
Now, as it turns out, are lying.*

Look at the “tree of life” in Russian folk embroidery:

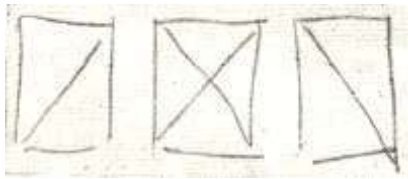


Let's look at another interesting example of our code picture. Andrey Tarkovsky's film "Andrey Rublev" (1966) ends with an icon of Rublev's "Holy Trinity". First we look at the icon, and then we see the horses on the spit, protruding into the lake, in the rain:



Two horses are standing on the sides, looking in opposite directions, and in the middle two horses are standing as if in an embrace, perpendicular to each other. Compare this with the drawing of film director Sergei Eisenstein from the essay

“Odd and Even” (conveying the “more than modest, unsophisticated backbone of the construction” of one of Utamaro's triptychs — “Oyster Divers”):



The scene with horses at the end of the film shows us a kind of equine trinity, in which the “source of life” is represented by crossed horses in the middle.

* * *

In Boris Pasternak's novel “Doctor Zhivago”, the tree of life appears to Yurii Zhivago in the form of a “a splendid, solitary, rust-colored rowan tree”:

“The forest was autumnally bare, so that you could see into it as through an open gate; here a splendid, solitary, rust-colored rowan tree had alone kept its leaves. Growing on a mound that rose above the low, squelchy, hummocky marsh, it reached into the very sky holding up the flat round shields of its hard crimson berries against the leaden, late-autumn sky. Small birds with feathers as bright as frosty dawns—bullfinches and tomtits—settled on the rowan tree and picked the largest berries, stretching out their necks and throwing back their heads to swallow them.

There seemed to be a living intimacy between the birds and the tree, as if it had watched them for a long time refusing to do anything, but in the end had had pity on them and given in and fed them like a nurse unbuttoning her blouse to give breast to a baby. ‘Well, all right, all right,’ it seemed to be saying with a smile, ‘eat me, have your fill.’ ”

This is, quite obviously, the “world tree”, stretching its berries “into the very sky”. But at the same time it is also the “mistress of beasts and birds”: “There seemed to be a living intimacy between the birds and the tree.” Rowan tree gives breast to birds, “like a wet nurse <...> to a baby”: “Eat me, have your fill.”

The “rust-colored rowan tree” appears before Yurii Zhivago when the hero needs to change his life: to break free from the partisan camp in which he is forcibly detained. This tree grows on the very border of the camp, that is, on the border between the world of unfreedom (necessity) and the world of freedom.

And so Zhivago hears a song near the rowan tree:

“He was on his way back to the camp. Near the clearing where the mound and the rowan tree marked the camp boundary, he heard the bold, challenging voice of Kubarikha, his ‘rival’ as he jokingly called the cattle healer. She was singing a gay jingle and her voice had a raucous, boisterous screech in it. Judging by the peals of approving laughter that kept interrupting her, there was a crowd of men and women listening. Then came silence. The people must have dispersed.

Thinking herself alone, Kubarikha sang a different song, softly, as if to herself. Yurii Andreyevich, who was cautiously making his way in the dusk along the footpath that skirted the swamp in front of the rowan tree, stopped in his tracks. Kubarikha was singing an old Russian song, but he did not know it. Or she was improvising it? <...> Kubarikha half sang and half recited:

*As a hare was running about the wide world,
About the wide world, “over the white snow,
He ran, the lop-eared hare, past a rowan tree,
Past a rowan tree, and complained to it:
Have I not, he said, a timorous heart,
A timorous heart, so faint and weak?
I am frightened, he said, of the wild beast’s tracks,
Wild beast’s tracks, the wolf’s hungry belly.
Pity me, O rowan bush! O fair rowan tree!
Do not give thy beauty to the wicked enemy,
The wicked enemy, the wicked raven.
Scatter thy red berries to the wind,
To the wind, over the wide world, over the white snow.
Fling them, roll them to my native town,*

*To the far end of the street, the last house,
The last house in the street, the last window, the room
Where she has shut herself in,
My beloved, my longed-for love.
Whisper to my grieving love, my bride,
A warm, an ardent word.
I, a soldier, languish in captivity,
Homesick, I am, poor soldier, kept in foreign parts.
I'll break from durance bitter,
I'll go to my red berry, to my lovely bride."*

Yurii Zhivago perceives this song, which Kubarikha sings not for him at all, but for herself ("thinking herself alone"), as addressed specifically to him. Addressed by whom? Obviously, by the "mistress of the beasts".

And he obeys her — as if he turns into the "lop-eared hare" of the song (that is, as if he is inside the song) and escapes "from durance bitter":

"Long ago he had cached a pair of skis, a bag of biscuits, and other things he would need if a chance to make his escape should ever come. He had buried them in the snow just outside the camp, at the foot of a tall pine. To make doubly sure of finding it he had marked the tree with a notch. Now he turned and walked along the footpath trodden between the snowdrifts in the direction of his buried treasure. It was a clear night with a full moon. He knew where the sentries were posted and at first avoided them successfully. But when he came to the clearing with the mound and rowan tree a sentry hailed him from a distance, took a run on his skis, and standing straight up on them glided swiftly toward him.

'Halt or I shoot! Who are you? Password.'

'What's come over you, man? Don't you know me? I'm the camp doctor, Zhivago.'

'Sorry, Comrade Zhelvak. I didn't recognize you, no offense meant. All the same, Zhelvak or not, I'm not letting you go any farther. Orders are orders.'

'As you wish. The password is 'Red Siberia,' and the reply, 'Down with the Interventionists.' '

'That's better. Go ahead. What are you chasing after at this time of night? Anyone sick?'

'I was thirsty and I couldn't sleep. I thought I'd go out for a breath of air and eat some snow. Then I saw the rowan tree with iced berries on it. I want to go and pick a few.'

'If that isn't just like a gentleman's notion! Who's ever heard of picking berries in winter! Three years we've been beating the nonsense out of you others but you're still the same. All right, go and pick your berries, you lunatic. What do I care.'

And as swiftly as he had come, the sentry took a run, stood straight up on his long skis, and whistled over the untrodden snow into the distance beyond the bare winter shrubs as thin as thinning hair.

The footpath brought the doctor to the foot of the rowan tree, whose name he had just spoken. It was half in snow, half in frozen leaves and berries, and it held out two white branches toward him. He remembered Lara's strong white arms and seized the branches and pulled them to him. As if in answer, the tree shook snow all over him. He muttered without realizing what he was saying, and completely beside himself: 'I'll find you, my beauty, my love, my rowan tree, my own flesh and blood.'

It was a clear night with a full moon. He made his way farther into the taiga, to the marked tree, unearthed his things, and left the camp."

Yurii Zhivago prays to the "mistress of beasts and birds", and her image coincides for him with his beloved — with Lara. The two snow-covered branches of the rowan tree are Lara's "strong white arms". Look at the image of Isis in the form of a sacred tree (with hand and breast) and Pharaoh (wall painting from the tomb of Thutmose III in Thebes, the inscription says that the king is "nursed by his mother Isis"):



Isis was originally an Egyptian goddess who personified the fertility of the Nile Valley. With the spread of her cult beyond the borders of Egypt, she becomes in the eyes of her admirers the supreme mistress of all things. (In literature, her image was especially popular with romantics.) Here is an Egyptian image of this universal goddess (a painted relief from the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, circa 1360 BC):



An amazing thing: a person who meets the “mistress of the beasts” (with Isis or another goddess playing this role) usually sees his double. Let's see how the phenomenon of Isis, and then the double, is described in Gérard de Nerval's romantic story “Aurélia” (1855):

“Lying on a cot, I seemed to see the heavens unveiled and opened, revealing a thousand vistas of unparalleled magnificence. It seemed that the destiny of the liberated Soul was being revealed to me, as if to make me regret having willed with all my might to regain a foothold on this earth which I was about to depart...

Immense circles were traced in the infinite, like the spherical shapes water takes when it is displaced by a falling body; each separate region, peopled by radiant figures, took on color, moved, then dissolved in its turn; and a female Deity, always the same one, smilingly removed, one after another, the fleeting masks of her various incarnations, and finally disappeared, inscrutable, into the mystic splendors of the sky of Asia.

This celestial vision, by one of those phenomena which everyone has experienced in certain dreams, did not keep me from being fully aware of everything that was going on around me. Lying on a cot, I heard the soldiers talking about an unidentified individual, under arrest like me, whose voice had echoed in that very room. By an odd effect of sympathetic vibration, it seemed to me that that voice was resonating within my breast, and that my soul was somehow being split in two,

divided cleanly between vision and reality. For an instant I thought about turning around abruptly to face that person they were discussing; then with a shudder I remembered a tradition, widespread in Germany, which says that every man has a double, and that when he sees him, death is imminent. I closed my eyes and lapsed into a confused state of mind in which the figures around me, real or imaginary, broke up into a thousand fleeting images. At one moment, I saw close at hand two friends of mine coming to get me, and the soldiers pointing me out; then the door opened, and someone just my size, whose face I could not see, went out with my friends, whom I tried vainly to call back. 'You're making a mistake!' I shouted. 'I'm the one they came for, and it's someone else who's leaving!' I raised such a row that they locked me in a cell".

"The same Spirit <..> passed me by <..> in the garb of an Oriental prince. I sprang after him threateningly, but he calmly turned round to face me. O terror! O rage! It was my own face, my own body, idealized and enlarged ... Then I remembered that fellow who had been arrested the same night I was, and who I thought had been released from the guard-house under my name, when my two friends had come to get me."

(Gérard de Nerval, being mentally ill, in his moments of return from the fantastic world of his visions, tried to describe what he had experienced: "I shall attempt to transcribe my impressions of a lingering malady which has run its course entirely within the mysterious confines of my mind; yet I do not know why I use the term 'malady', for so far as I myself am concerned, I have never felt healthier. At times I have felt that my strength and energy were doubled; I have seemed to know everything, comprehend everything; imagination has brought me infinite delights. When I recover what men call my reason, shall I be obliged to regret having lost these pleasures?")

In the episode from the story "Aurélia" we still have the same cultural code: Isis in the middle, and on both sides of her — instead of beasts — the hero and his double. But an important thing has happened: this code is now unfolded in time: first the hero (the initiate), then the "source of life and death", and then the double.

This, of course, is quite logical, because we are dealing with a narrative (with a progressive unfolding of the content), and not with a description of the vision.

“Aurélia” ends with the appearance of another double, whom the protagonist of the story (the author himself) meets in an asylum for the mentally ill:

“Among the patients was a young man, a former soldier from Africa, who for six weeks had been refusing to take any nourishment. By means of a long rubber tube introduced into his stomach, he was being forced to swallow nutritive liquids. In addition to this, he could neither see nor speak.

This spectacle made a strong impression on me. Absorbed thus far in the monotonous cycle of my own feelings or mental agonies, I found here an indefinable, enigmatic being, silent and long-suffering, sitting like a sphinx at the supreme portals of existence. I began to love him for his state of wretchedness and abandonment, and I felt myself uplifted by this feeling of sympathy and pity.

Situated thus halfway between life and death, he seemed to me a kind of sublime interpreter, a confessor predestined to hear those secrets of the soul which the spoken word would not dare convey or could not successfully render. He was the ear of God, without any admixture of another person's thought. I spent whole hours mentally examining myself, with my head bent over his and his hands in mine. It seemed to me that there was a certain magnetic force uniting our two spirits, and I was absolutely delighted when, for the first time, a word came out of his mouth. People just couldn't believe it; and I attributed this beginning of a cure to my having willed it so ardently. That night I had a delightful dream, my first such dream in a very long time. I was in a tower, dug so deeply into the earth and soaring so high into the sky that my whole existence seemed destined to be consumed in climbing up and down. My strength had already flagged and I was about to lose heart, when a side door suddenly opened; a spirit appeared and said to me: "Come, brother!..." For some reason, it occurred to me that his name was Saturnin. His features were those of the poor patient, but transfigured and intelligent. We were out in open country, at night, with the stars shining brightly above us. We stopped to contemplate this spectacle, and the spirit put his hand on

my forehead, as I had done the day before in seeking to magnetize my companion; thereupon one of the stars I saw in the sky began to grow larger, and the female Deity of my dreams appeared to me, smiling, dressed in an almost Indian costume, as I had seen her long before. She walked between us, and the fields turned green, and flowers and vegetation sprang up from the ground wherever her feet had trod..."

"She walked between us" — here it is, that cultural code: between the hero and his antipodean double (African soldier) is Isis, of whom, at another point in the story, Gérard de Nerval says the following:

"I turned again in my thoughts to the eternal Isis, the sacred wife and mother; all my hopes and prayers merged into that magical name; I felt myself coming alive again in her, and sometimes she appeared to me in the guise of the Venus of antiquity, sometimes also with the features of the Christians' Virgin."

Let's return to Pasternak's novel. The double (more precisely: the double-antipode) of Yuri Zhivago (by the way, the speaking surname: "the one who lives — or the one who revives") is Pasha (Pavel) Antipov, who turned into Strelnikov (speaking surname: "the one who shoots"), a commander in the Red Army (he is not the only double of Zhivago, but we will talk about this later). There are several interesting points that indicate that Strelnikov is a double (in addition to the main feature of the antipodean double, namely substantial influence on the hero's fate). For example, Zhivago says that he feels for Strelnikov not jealousy, not rivalry, but "a feeling of sad brotherhood with him." Their first meeting is also noteworthy. There was no meeting, as a matter of fact, but there was a strange, peeping look of a thawed little circle in the window (such a look of an invisible person, felt by the hero, is one of the signs of the presence of an antipodean double). Lara and Pasha were in the room outside the window, and Yura drove past the house and saw this circle — and a candle in it:

"As they drove through Kamerger Street Yura noticed that a candle had melted a black circle in the icy crust on one of the windows. The light seemed to look into

the street almost consciously, as if it were watching the passing carriages and waiting for someone.

'A candle burned on the table, a candle burned ..., ' he whispered to himself—the beginning of something confused, formless; he hoped that it would take shape of itself. But nothing more came to him'.

(The black circle in the icy crust on one of the windows is, in a mythical sense, the same as the eye of Polyphemus or the eye on top of the ritual phallus from Jung's dream. And it gives the hero poetic inspiration.)

At the end of the novel, a conversation between Lara and Evgraf (immediately after Zhivago's death) reveals that the last apartment that Evgraf (his other double-antipode) got for Yura was the apartment of Pasha Antipov — from which a candle light had once watched Yura:

“ ‘You say you didn't understand what I said. What is there to understand? I arrived in Moscow, checked my things at the station, and went for a walk through some old Moscow streets. Half of it I couldn't recognize, I've been away so long I'd forgotten. Well, I walked and walked, down Kuznetsky Most and up Kuznetsky Pereulok, and suddenly I saw something terribly, extraordinarily familiar—Kamerger Street. That was where my husband, Antipov, who was shot, used to live as a student—in this house and in this very room where you and I are sitting now. I'll go in, I thought; who knows, the old tenants might still be there, I'll look them up. You see, I didn't know it had all changed—no one so much as remembers their name—I didn't find that out till later, the day after and today, gradually, by asking people. But you were there, I don't know why I'm telling you. I was thunderstruck—the door wide open, people all over the place, a coffin in the room, a dead man. Who is it? I come in, I come up and look. I thought I had lost my mind. But you were there, you saw me, didn't you? Why on earth am I telling you?’ ‘Wait a moment, Larisa Feodorovna, I must interrupt you. I've already told you, neither my brother nor I ever suspected that there was anything extraordinary about this room—for instance, that Antipov once lived here.’ ”

And more:

“She strained her memory to reconstruct that Christmas conversation with Pasha, but she could remember nothing except the candle burning on the window sill and melting a round patch in the icy crust on the glass.

Did she divine that Yurii, whose dead body was lying on the table, had seen the candle as he was driving past, and noticed it, and that from the moment of his seeing its light from the street (‘A candle burned on the table, a candle burned ...’) his life took on his fate?”

“His fate” (in the Russian text: “his predestination”) — his meeting with Lara and Pasha (with Isis and the double-antipode) initiated Yurii Zhivago as a poet.

The antipodean double of the hero often dies. (This seems to reflect the aspect of the initiation rite that the hero goes through death.) Strelnikov dies, and Zhivago ends up in Strelnikov's apartment. In Melville's novel “Moby Dick, or the White Whale”, Queequeg the native is killed, and Ishmael swims out and escapes in a very specific boat made at Queequeg's request. (Having fallen ill, Queequeg instructs the ship's carpenter to make an unsinkable coffin for himself, a coffin-boat. Moreover, Queequeg, in order to check whether it will be comfortable for him to lie in it, lies down in a coffin — like the Russian bogatyr Svyatogor — and asks to close it for a while with a lid. After that, Queequeg recovers, but the coffin, later converted into a rescue buoy, is useful to Ishmael: when the White Whale sinks the ship, Ishmael escapes on this Queequeg's coffin-boat.)

Strelnikov shot himself, Zhivago finds him and sees the following:

“He lit the kitchen range, picked up a bucket, and started toward the well. A few yards from the door, Strelnikov lay across the path with his head in a snowdrift. He had shot himself. The snow was a red lump under his left temple where he had bled. Drops of spurting blood that had mixed with the snow formed red beads that looked like rowanberries.”

Such is a terrible greeting from the “rust-colored rowan tree”, from the “mistress of the beasts” — the giver of both life and death.

Strelnikov's doubleness is emphasized by the tautology of first name and patronymic (Pavel Pavlovich).

* * *

The twin-antipode is often a brother, a half-brother (for example, Evgraf in the novel “Doctor Zhivago”), a cousin, a sworn brother of the hero. Or else the hero feels a deep “brotherhood” with this person — for example, in the novel “Moby Dick”, Ishmael at a certain point perceives Queequeg as his “own inseparable twin brother”: *“Being the savage’s bowsman, that is, the person who pulled the bow-oar in his boat (the second one from forward), it was my cheerful duty to attend upon him while taking that hard-scrabble scramble upon the dead whale’s back. You have seen Italian organ-boys holding a dancing-ape by a long cord. Just so, from the ship’s steep side, did I hold Queequeg down there in the sea, by what is technically called in the fishery a monkey-rope, attached to a strong strip of canvas belted round his waist.*

It was a humorously perilous business for both of us. For, before we proceed further, it must be said that the monkey-rope was fast at both ends; fast to Queequeg’s broad canvas belt, and fast to my narrow leather one. So that for better or for worse, we two, for the time, were wedded; and should poor Queequeg sink to rise no more, then both usage and honour demanded, that instead of cutting the cord, it should drag me down in his wake. So, then, an elongated Siamese ligature united us. Queequeg was my own inseparable twin brother; nor could I any way get rid of the dangerous liabilities which the hempen bond entailed.”

And now the word ‘twin’ has come up. In the so-called twin myths, twins are often zoomorphic. Lev Sternberg was a pioneer in the study of the cult of twins. In his article “The Ancient Cult of Twins in the Light of Ethnography” (printed in the book “Primitive Religion in the Light of Ethnography”, 1936) he gives the following example of twin animal-like nature:

“The Kwakiutl Indian tribe believes that twins are salmon that have turned into humans; therefore, they are not allowed to walk near the water, otherwise they run the risk of turning into fish again. As former salmon, the twins provide their earthly

kin with an abundance of fish. <...> Curiously, such a view of twins has survived even among Muslim peoples. Among the Arab population of Egypt, there is still a belief that at night, twins up to 11-12 years old, if they are hungry, wander in the form of cats, while their bodies, as if dead, remain lying at home."

Let's add goddess to the twins. In the novel "My Michael" (1968) by the Israeli writer Amos Oz, the main character, a Jewish woman, recalls the two Arab twin boys with whom she played as a child. The twins become mythical figures for her, the very important content of her life. The heroine feels herself at the centre of the "main cultural code", feels herself to be a "Princess" and a Snow Queen:

"I was cold. Flooded. Men are born for water, to flood cold and violent in the depths on the plains on snowy open steppes and among the stars. Men are born for snow. To be and not to rest to shout and not to whisper to touch and not to watch to flood and not to yearn. I am made of ice, my city is made of ice, and my subjects too shall be of ice. Every one. The Princess has spoken".

She perceives herself to be the "source of life and death", namely a goddess flanked by two twins (and they are also her hands):

"The twins were Arabs, Halil and Aziz, the sons of Rashid Shahada. I was a princess and they were my bodyguard, I was a conqueror and they my officers, I was an explorer and they my native bearers, a captain and they my crew, a master spy and they my henchmen."

"If only I could overpower the engine and be the princess of the train, manipulate two lissom twins as if they were extensions of me, left hand and right hand."

Unsatisfied with the restricted, unfree life she lives, the woman dreams of unleashing two obedient terrorists who will be able to destroy this fake life:

"But I have more left than mere words. I am still able to unfasten a heavy padlock. To part the iron gates. To set free two twin brothers, who will slip out into the vast night to do my bidding. I shall urge them on."

The zoomorphic character of the twins (tinged also by the fact that the twins belong to a different nationality, that is, as it were, a different breed) is clearly visible in these words.

(If a male character in a work of fiction undergoes a rite of passage, the main female character is often portrayed as the second element of the cultural code — as the “mistress of the beasts”, the “goddess of life and death”. This is also how female poets usually perceive themselves: as an element of nature, as a “Great Mother”, as a goddess or a statue of a goddess, as a “tree of life”, etc. However, there are times when a woman undergoes a rite of passage along male lines. For example, in Krzysztof Kieślowski's film “The Double Life of Veronique” (1991) we see the very real doubles, two Veroniques. And one of them invisibly helps the other, who, sensing this, says: “All my life I've felt I was in two places at the same time. Here and somewhere else. It's hard to explain. But I know... I always sense what I have to do.” It is noteworthy that the “source of life and death” situated (according to the plot) between these female doubles is a man — the puppeteer and storyteller Alexander).

With mythical twins, we often see their mother goddess: for example, in the Armenian epic we read about the maiden Tsovinar (who in the original myth was obviously the “mistress of water”: ‘tsov’ means ‘sea’), who conceived twins Sanasar and Bagdasar from a spring, which appeared by the will of God on the place of the sea surf that had parted (that is, the immaculate conception, so usual for the myth, happened). The mother of Romulus and Remus was a vestal (a servant of the goddess of fire Vesta, obliged on pain of death to remain a virgin) Rhea Silvia, who conceived twins from the god Mars (the god of vegetation, the god of wild nature and everything unknown and dangerous outside the settlement, as well as the god of war). Notably, the mother of the Olympian gods also bears the name ‘Rhea’. The she-wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus is also the hypostasis of the (zoomorphic) mythical mother.

Even if the mother of twins is not a goddess, their father is usually a god. So Leda, not being a goddess herself, gave birth to Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) by Zeus the swan (formally they are children of Leda's husband, King Tyndareus of Sparta, that is, Tyndaridai). Dioscuri are quite “animal” twins, for initially they are horses and only later turn into tamers of horses. In the antique hymn dedicated to them it is said:

*Sing, Muse,
in your clear voice.
Sing of Castor and Pollux,
the Tyndaridai,
who were born
from Olympian Zeus.
The noble Leda
gave birth to them
under the peak
of Mount Taygetos
when secretly
she yielded
to the Son of Kronos
in his black clouds.
Greetings, Tyndaridai,
riders on swift horses.*

They were usually depicted with horses, look, for example, at the Roman statuettes of the Dioscuri (III century AD):



Of the mythical twins, usually one dies. So, Romulus remains alive, and Remus dies. Or one of them is immortal and the other is mortal. According to one version of the myth of the Dioscuri, Zeus was the father of Pollux (Polydeucus), and Castor's father was his legitimate father Tyndareus. Aza Takho-Godi in her encyclopedic article "Dioscuri" writes:

"The immortal Polydeucus was taken by Zeus to Olympus, but out of love for his brother Zeus gave him part of his immortality, they both alternately appear in the sky in the form of a morning and evening star in the constellation Gemini. <...> In Sparta, the Dioscuri were revered in the form of archaic fetishes — two logs tightly connected to each other."

"Popol Vuh", the Sacred Book of the Quiché Maya People, tells the story of the twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who are summoned to the inhabitants of Xibalba (Xibalbá — the underground kingdom of death) to be destroyed, but successfully pass all the tests. They are invited to sit on a red-hot rock, they are taken to the House of Knives, the House of Cold, the House of Jaguars and similar cosy places. The inhabitants of Xibalba only marvel after each such ordeal:

" 'What is this? Haven't they died?' asked the lords of Xibalba.

And again they marveled at the deeds of the boys, Hunahpu and Xbalanque."

Then Hunahpu nevertheless succumbs to the deception of the inhabitants of Xibalba, resulting in his head being cut off. This happens very inconveniently, because the next day they will have to continue playing ball with Xibalba's team. However, fortunately, the absence of the head can be hidden:

"... the coati arrived last of all bringing a chilacayote squash. She came rolling it along with her nose. This was to be transformed into the head of Hunahpu."

The Lords of Xibalba did not notice the substitution. So, one of the twins was killed, but revived, and his head was replaced with a squash. We will talk about the severed head later (as well as about the ball game).

We already know what the symbolic meaning of the death of the antipodean double is: he shows the hero the way to death, the path through death.

Such a path through death is narrated, for example, by the Evenk myth of shamanic election, cited by A. F. Anisimov in his book “Cosmological Representations of the Peoples of the North” (1959). According to the views of the Evenks, spirits bring the anthropomorphic soul of the initiate into shamans to the ancestral shamanic tree located in the lower world. “There the soul is met by the shaman's mother-beast (moose or female deer) lying at the roots of the tree. The mother-beast eats the anthropomorphic soul of the shaman, giving birth instead to the main shaman soul — the animal double of the shaman, capable of taking any zoomorphic form.”

In the Sumero-Akkadian tale of Gilgamesh, his animal double is represented by his sworn brother Enkidu. Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven, sent by the supreme sky god Anu⁷ at the instigation of the goddess Ishtar⁸. They kill the Bull, by the way, coming to him from two sides:

“Enkidu rushed round to the rear of the Bull, / he seized it by the tuft of the tail. / He set his foot on the back of its leg / Then Gilgamesh like a butcher, brave and skilful, / between the yoke of the horns and the slaughter-spot he thrust / in his knife.”



⁷ Anu — the father of the gods, the god of the sky, but also resident in Uruk, where he is Ishtar's father.

⁸ Ishtar — deity of the city of Uruk, the goddess of sexual love and war, daughter of Anu. Sometimes she is a mature woman, sometimes an impetuous young virgin. In heaven she is Venus, daughter of the Moon God.

Before that, Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the ogre — the monstrous guardian of the Forest of Cedar:



The code picture is still the same: in the middle is either an ogre, or the Bull of Heaven sent by the “mistress of the beasts”, and on the sides of this “source of life and death” is the hero and his antipodean double (and, as we have already discussed, this is not only because it is so convenient to portray). Both the ogre and the Bull of Heaven are synonyms of the mythical beast devouring the hero. In myth, killing a hero by a mythical beast is easily replaced by killing a mythical beast by a hero. For the myth, it does not matter who kills or absorbs whom: what matters is that the hero merges with the beast, and then death and rebirth occur. So, the whale absorbs Jonah — and everyone remains unharmed, but Hiawatha kills “the sturgeon Nahma, Mishe-Nahma, King of Fishes” by squeezing his heart (in Longfellow's poem “The Song of Hiawatha”, 1855):

*And again the sturgeon, Nahma,
Heard the shout of Hiawatha,
Heard his challenge of defiance,
The unnecessary tumult,
Ringing far across the water.*

*From the white sand of the bottom
Up he rose with angry gesture,
Quivering in each nerve and fibre,
Clashing all his plates of armor,
Gleaming bright with all his war-paint;
In his wrath he darted upward,
Flashing leaped into the sunshine,
Opened his great jaws, and swallowed
Both canoe and Hiawatha.*

*Down into that darksome cavern
Plunged the headlong Hiawatha,
As a log on some black river
Shoots and plunges down the rapids,
Found himself in utter darkness,
Groped about in helpless wonder,
Till he felt a great heart beating,
Throbbing in that utter darkness.*

*And he smote it in his anger,
With his fist, the heart of Nahma,
Felt the mighty King of Fishes
Shudder through each nerve and fibre,
Heard the water gurgle round him
As he leaped and staggered through it,
Sick at heart, and faint and weary.*

It is not a long way from killing the Great Sturgeon to eating him (and this is perhaps the root of the sacrifice: the hero unites with the spirit of the beast).

Enkidu is a man-beast created to oppose Gilgamesh, the disorderly king of Uruk (and in the mythological sense Enkidu is a zoomorphic double-antipode who guides the hero through the belly of the mythical beast and symbolises the hero's joining the world of beasts):

“They summoned Aruru [Aruru — The Mother Goddess], the great one: / ‘You, Aruru, created mankind: / now fashion what Anu has thought of! / Let him be a match for the storm of his heart, / let them vie with each other, so Uruk may be rested!’ / The goddess Aruru heard these words, / what Anu had thought of she fashioned within her. / The goddess Aruru, she washed her hands, / took a pinch of clay, threw it down in the wild. / In the wild she created Enkidu, the hero, / offspring of silence, knit strong by Ninurta. / All his body is matted with hair, / he bears long tresses like those of a woman: / the hair of his head grows thickly as barley, / he knows not a people, nor even a country. / Coated in hair like the god of the animals, / with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, / joining the throng with the game at the water-hole, / his heart delighting with the beasts in the water.”

Enkidu appears to Gilgamesh twice in a dream, and then there is a rendezvous in real life:

“The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder, / in the street Gilgamesh and Enkidu joined combat, in the Square of the Land. / The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder. / Gilgamesh knelt, one foot on the ground, / his anger subsided, he broke off from the fight.”

Meeting Enkidu corrects Gilgamesh (makes him a worthy ruler of Uruk), after which Enkidu becomes his friend and brother. Before the battle with Humbaba, Gilgamesh addresses Enkidu in this way:

“Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, / saying to Gilgamesh: / ‘My friend, Humbaba, / one-to-one / Two garments, however, , / even a glacis-slope two climbing can conquer. / Two / a three-ply rope is not easily broken. / Even a mighty lion two cubs can overcome.’”

“Two lion cubs” is a significant comparison of the hero and his double with the two beasts.

For killing the Bull of Heaven, the gods decide to punish one of the heroes — and Enkidu dies:

“... and Anu spoke unto Enlil: ‘These, because they slew / the Bull of Heaven, and slew Humbaba that guarded the mountains dense-wooded with cedar,’ so said Anu, ‘between these two let one of them die!’ And Enlil said: ‘Let Enkidu die, but let not Gilgamesh die!’ ”

(Enlil — ‘Lord Wind’: the divine ruler of Earth and its human inhabitants.)

Gilgamesh grieves for his friend, observes the decomposition of his body (so he learns death), then buries Enkidu and sets out to seek the secret of eternal life:

“How can I keep silent? How can I stay quiet? / My friend, whom I loved, has turned to clay, / my friend Enkidu, whom I loved, has turned to clay. / Shall I not be like him, and also lie down, / never to rise again, through all eternity?”

Enkidu dies instead of Gilgamesh, since the meaning of the rite is to pass through death. Enkidu's death is a symbolic death of Gilgamesh himself, after which he goes in search of eternal life (even if Gilgamesh does not achieve immortality in the end, he manages to do a lot of good for Uruk and leave a good memory).

* * *

There are similar “brothers” (dying and immortal) in Christian Scripture: John the Baptist dies, but Jesus lives (dies and rises from the dead). John, of course, is not at all the brother (much less the twin) of Jesus. He is, as the beginning of Luke's Gospel tells us, the son of Zechariah (a priest) and Elizabeth. However, the accounts of the conception of John and Jesus are parallel in the text: first the archangel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and informs him that Elizabeth, despite her advanced age and lack of children, will bear a son who “will be great in the sight of the Lord”, and then (“in the sixth month”) the archangel Gabriel informs Mary that she will have a

son whom she should name Jesus. To her question: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” — the archangel replies:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

After this message, Mary visits Elizabeth:

“In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ...’ ”

In other words, the Scriptures bring Jesus and John closer together, making John as if he were Jesus' older brother. This rapprochement is especially noticeable in art. Let's look, for example, at a painting by Raphael Santi “La Belle Jardinière”⁹ (Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist, 1507):

⁹ which is French for “The Beautiful Lady Gardener”.



Yes, we still have the same coded image: the goddess with a pair of living beings on her sides. Here it is also curious that the cross — the ancient symbol of the “world tree” — not only divides (and unites) the opposing boys, but also reflects the face of the Virgin Mary (the parting of her hair, eyebrows, nose). Because of this, the whole picture is like a big face, on which Jesus and John are the eyes.

The beginning of Mark's Gospel tells of the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist:

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’ ”

The Christian tradition sees in this event, in this picture, the manifestation of the Trinity, which is organised as follows: God the Son ↔ Holy Spirit ↔ God the Father. But there is yet another Trinity here, a different Trinity (so to speak, a pagan

Trinity), which we will deal with. Let us look at the picture of Jesus' baptism not vertically, but horizontally. Then we can see the following construction: Jesus Christ ↔ the Jordan River ↔ John the Baptist. Behind this Trinity is the initiation rite: the immersion of the initiate in some element of nature (his symbolic death).

(Jesus is to undergo another immersion in an element: immersion in the earth. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".)

John performs "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," that is, he washes away the sins of those who come to him with the water of the Jordan. But behind this baptism is another baptism, of which John, predicting the appearance of Christ, says: "I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit." What is this baptism? It is the "baptism into death" of which the apostle Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Romans:

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

The role of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus is a fate-shaping one: he is preparing "the way of the Lord", John baptises Jesus, after baptism Jesus stays in the desert (like John), after John's murder people take Jesus for John the Baptist. Thus, in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Mark we read:

"But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'"

The appearance of John and his way of life are remarkable:

"Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey."

We see the "animal-like" clothes and "animal-like" way of life characteristic of the animal-like antipodean double. It is not by chance that on icons John the Baptist is often depicted as curly-haired, shaggy, and clothed in skin, for example, on this Macedonian icon of the 14th century:



In some folk traditions, John the Baptist is revered as the patron saint of animals, that is, the “master of the beasts”.

The portrayal of John the Baptist as a “master of the beasts” is also found in Russian folk culture. Thus, in Ivan Bunin's story “The Village” (1910) Ivanushka (affectionate variant of the name ‘Ivan’, that is, John) “... narrated in his clumsy, ancient language <...> that John the Baptist was as shaggy as a ram when he was born, and that, when baptising, he beat his godchild over the head with his iron crutch, in order that the man might ‘come to his senses’...” Ivanushka himself resembles the image he describes of John the Baptist — by his animal-like nature (he resembles a bear), and by the subordination of other animals (in this case, dogs) to him:

“During the Christmas holidays Ivanushka, from Basovka, dropped in to see Kuzma. He was an old-fashioned peasant who had grown foolish from old age, although once on a time he had been renowned for his bear-like strength. Thickset, bent into a bow, he never lifted his shaggy dark brown head. He always walked with his toes

turned inward. <...> He strode lightly, in his bandy-legged way, across the farmyard, with his cap and his staff in his left hand, a bag in his right, and his head, on which the snow shone white, uncovered—and for some reason or other the sheep dogs did not growl at him. <...> Kuzma dropped his book and in amazement stared timidly at him over his eyeglasses, as if he had been some wild beast from the steppe, whose presence inside a house was a prodigy.”

The beheading of John the Baptist also reveals an antipodean double in him (both the fact of the double's death and the type of execution are important here). Moreover, this head, separated from the body, is not just one part of a dead body: it is as if it were alive, at least as an image in cultural tradition. Look, for example, at Lucas Cranach the Elder's painting “Salome with the Head of John the Baptist” (1530) — doesn't the head of John the Baptist look at us, doesn't it want to tell us something?



The reviving head represents one of the variants of the double-antipode. Thus, in the “Poetic Edda” it is said: “Odin speaks / with Mimir's head.” In Rider Haggard's novel “Her”, the hero's encounter with the immortal Aesha and the dead double is preceded by a depiction like this (chapter “The Head of the Ethiopian”):

“I still continued, however, to stare at the rock, absently enough, till presently it became edged with the fire of the growing light behind it, and then I started, as well I might, for I perceived that the top of the peak, which was about eighty feet high by one hundred and fifty feet thick at its base, was shaped like a negro's head and face, whereon was stamped a most fiendish and terrifying expression. There was no doubt about it; there were the thick lips, the fat cheeks, and the squat nose standing out with startling clearness against the flaming background. There, too, was the round skull, washed into shape perhaps by thousands of years of wind and weather, and, to complete the resemblance, there was a scrubby growth of weeds or lichen upon it, which against the sun looked for all the world like the wool on a colossal negro's head.”

Another example: in Melville's novel “Moby Dick”, Captain Ahab questions a severed whale's head suspended from the side of a whaling ship:

“It was a black and hooded head; and hanging there in the midst of so intense a calm, it seemed the Sphinx's in the desert. ‘Speak, thou vast and venerable head,’ muttered Ahab, ‘which, though ungarnished with a beard, yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses; speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest. That head upon which the upper sun now gleams, has moved amid this world's foundations...’ ”

We see a shaggy, scraggly head (like Ivanushka's shaggy head from Bunin's story) — “hoary with mosses” (compare with the head from Haggard's novel: “There was a scrubby growth of weeds or lichen upon it.”).

The comparison preceding this text is also curious: “there, that blood-dripping head hung to the Pequod's waist [Pequod — a whale-ship] like the giant Holofernes's from the girdle of Judith.” (In the cultural tradition, we see two mirror

images of ladies with the head of an enemy: Judith is a good woman with the head of a murderous warrior, Salome is a bad woman with the head of a saint.)

So, John the Baptist has a number of features of Jesus' double-antipode: he is like his brother, he has traces of zoomorphism, he dies, losing his head (and as if turning into a head). But the main thing is that he is the Forerunner and baptises (dedicates) Jesus in water, that is, he is a fate-shaping figure for Jesus.

A fate-shaping figure may well be negative — for example, Mephistopheles in relation to Faust. Look at our code image — a still from the film “Faust” (1926) by Friedrich Murnau. Mephistopheles puts Faust to sleep and shows him Helena the Beautiful (“Was seh ich? Welch ein himmlisch Bild / Zeigt sich in diesem Zauberspiegel!” — What blissful image is revealed / To me behind this magic glass!):



Both the double-antipode and the goddess, the “Beautiful Lady”, often appear in a mirror, which is understandable: they are, after all, reflections of the hero's soul.

* * *

Let's look at one cinematic story. In Bernardo Bertolucci's film "1900" (1976) two boys are born on the same day — Two boys are born on the same day - Alfredo is born in the landlord's house, and Olmo is born to a peasant woman (from an unknown father — a sort of "immaculate conception"). The name 'Olmo' means 'elm' in Italian (and this is another sign of the double-antipode, who may appear as a tree or a bush — because he is seen by the hero through the "tree of life", through the "world tree"). Olmo is born a little earlier (moreover, the births of Alfredo and Olmo are shown as a competition). The boys' grandfathers then drink a bottle of wine in honour of this event ("Destiny. Both born on the same day. And destiny calls for a drink, right?").

Next we see the boys as teenagers. Alfredo comes to a river or canal (the size and general appearance of this river quite resembles the Jordan) in which Olmo is swimming and diving. Olmo catches frogs (to eat) and puts them on his hat. And when he takes off his hat, we notice a mop of curly hair — a sign of the zoomorphic double-antipode. (Later, the hair is partially shaved off because of lice — with the threat to shave it off completely. Naked haircut is quite an element of the initiation rite).



Olmo comes out of the water to meet Alfredo, the boys stand against each other and argue about who is stronger. Olmo does a somersault (another twin sign: the antipodean double in many works turns upside down at some point), Alfredo repeats

Olmo's action. Olmo gets into a fighting pose (arms bent at the elbows, arms up and out to the sides), Alfredo copies this pose. Olmo lies down on the ground and digs a hole, then puts his face in the hole and rubs it in the hole, smearing it with mud, then lies on the hole with his loins and begins to imitate sexual intercourse (in the language of myth these actions mean the transformation of the initiate into a phallus and his sinking into the ground and into death). Alfredo repeats everything, only at the last operation he asks: "What are you doing?" Olmo replies: "Screwing the earth." Then the boys go to the telegraph pole and stand on either side of it (thus building our code picture: hero ↔ "world tree" ↔ antipodean double). Olmo tells Alfredo that he hears his father's voice through the telegraph pole.



You see Alfredo on the left of the telegraph pole and Olmo on the right (note that in the other pictures Alfredo will also be on the left and Olmo on the right).

Olmo then lies down on the sleepers for the train to pass over him. Alfredo also lies down — next to Olmo (the road in myths is often synonymous with the "world tree", because the "world tree" is the path to heaven, and in myth and fairy tale any departure from home is the way to the "other world").



Olmo rolls over Alfredo (hugging and rolling over each other is also a sign of the hero's interaction with the double-antipode — in this way they are kind of intermingled). Alfredo jumps up and runs off to the side. The train passes over Olmo (the train is a “mythical beast”).

At the end of the film, Alfredo and Olmo are old men repeating the teenage scene (scuffle, telegraph pole, train). The difference is that this time it is Alfredo who lies under the train. During the scuffle, the old men's hats are on the ground: the light one (Alfredo) and the dark one (Olmo). As in the teenage scene, Alfredo is dressed in light-coloured clothes and Olmo in dark clothes (Olmo is Alfredo's “shadow”).

About halfway through the film, having met as adults, Alfredo and Olmo go into town and pick up a laundry girl carrying laundry in a basket. (White, the colour of death, the colour of the invisible world, will play an important role in the subsequent bed scene with this girl.) The instigator is now Alfredo (compare with the Gospel words: “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me”).

When the mates follow the girl up to the house, Alfredo jokingly declares that he and Olmo are twins:

“Signorina, I bet you'd never guess we're twins.” “Oh, you're lying. You're making fun of me.” “Oh, no, that's the truth. We share everything.” “What's his is mine, and what's mine is mine.”

The “twins” then find themselves in bed with the “signorina”. She sits between them and masturbates them. The “signorina” is very unusual, “out of this world”: the case

ends with her having an epileptic fit and the “twins” fleeing. We see Alfredo (Robert De Niro) on the left of the “signorina” and Olmo (Gérard Depardieu) on the right:



In this bold scene it is not difficult to recognise our code: the “mistress of the beasts” who holds two beasts in her hands.

Compare it with the Russian nursery song about Granny and her two geese:

There lived at Granny's house

Two jolly geese:

One was grey,

The other white —

Two merry geese.

Their necks stretched out —

Who's got the longest?

One grey

The other white —

Who's got the longest?

The geese were washing their feet

In a puddle by the ditch.

*One grey
The other white —
They hid in the ditch.*

*Here cries the Granny:
"Oh, the geese are gone!
One grey
The other white —
"My geese, my geese."*

*The geese came out,
They bowed to their Granny.
One grey one,
The other white —
They bowed to Granny.*

The geese hide in the groove ("Oh, the geese are gone!") and then come out of it, it is, they enter the underworld and come out — they die and are born again. The very combination of colours — grey and white — means the combination of life and death (or maybe both colours here mean the way into death, into invisibility). Apparently, this is not just a nursery song, but an ancient ritual song. And if you hear something unseemly in the words "Who's got the longest?", well, let that be on your conscience.

Our code picture is easily recognisable on the frame from Leonid Nosyrev's cartoon "Two Merry Geese" (1970):



* * *

To recognise an antipodean double (in a work of fiction or in one's own life), it is necessary to find not just one feature of such a double, but a set of them. The main sign is that the double-antipode is a fate-shaping character for the hero. Sometimes he directly guides the hero through death (or through mortal danger). In Pushkin's historical novel “The Captain's Daughter” (1836), Pugachev acts as such an antipodean double in relation to the protagonist, Pyotr Grinyov.

That Yemelyan Pugachev is a double in relation to Pyotr Grinyov seems to be supported by his very name, for he (as an impostor) is also Pyotr (Peter), namely Pyotr III.

Pugachev's appearance is heralded by a storm, as often happens in a fairy tale before the appearance of Baba-Yaga or the Serpent Gorynych (‘the Serpent from the Mountain’). Moreover, the hero plunges into the snowstorm (say: it swallows him) in order to meet his antipodean double in it:

“Just above the horizon I could indeed see a tiny white cloud that I had at first mistaken for a distant hill. The driver explained to me that this little cloud presaged a blizzard.

I had heard of the blizzards in these parts, and I knew that they sometimes buried whole caravans of sledges. Savelich [Pyotr Grinyov's elderly servant], like the

driver, advised me to turn back. But the wind did not seem at all strong; trusting we could reach the next post station in good time, I ordered the driver to press on. We drove on, the driver glancing repeatedly to the east. The horses galloped with a will. The wind, however, was growing stronger by the minute. The tiny cloud turned into a white storm cloud, which grew larger and climbed ponderously higher until it extended across the entire sky. A fine snow began to fall; then the air was full of huge flakes. The wind howled; the storm began. In a moment the dark sky merged with a sea of snow. Everything vanished. 'A real blizzard!' the driver yelled. 'We're in trouble.'

I peered out from under the sleigh's hood: nothing but darkness and whirlwind. There was such savagery, such expression in the howls of the wind that it seemed like something alive. Soon Savelich and I were both covered in snow; the horses slowed to a walk, then stopped. 'Why are you stopping?' I asked the driver. 'What else can I do?' he replied, climbing down off his box. 'Heaven knows where we are. The road's vanished, and it's pitch dark.' "

Our hero has lost his way — as Thomas Brutus and his comrades in Gogol's story "Viy" lose their way before spending the night at the witch's house, as Chichikov does in "Dead Souls" before spending the night at Mrs Korobochka's house. Pyotr Grinyov plunges into the "snowy sea" — into the world of death. (A little further on in the text, the image of the sea is repeated: "The sleigh moved slowly forward, ploughing through drifts, sinking into hollows and rolling first to one side, then to the other. It was like being in a ship on a stormy sea.")

And this element of nature is alive (on the level of metaphor), it is a beast ("There was such savagery, such expression in the howls of the wind that it seemed like something alive.")

The element of nature appearing in the form of a beast is one of Pushkin's favourite images, which can be found, for example, in the poem "The Bronze Horseman":

... The weather

Raged more fiercely, Neva swelled up and roared,

*Bubbling like a cauldron; suddenly
Hurled herself on the city like a beast.¹⁰*

And also in short poems, for example (literally translated):

*The storm covers the sky with a haze,
Swirling snowy whirlwinds:
Then like a beast it howls,
Then it cries like a child,
Then on the dilapidated roof
It rustles with thatch,
Then like a belated traveller,
It knocks at our window.¹¹*

Pushkin's image of a living storm is sometimes accompanied by the appearance of a strange figure from the depths of the storm. In the poem quoted above, it is a quite harmless “belated traveller” knocking on the window. However, a comparison with another poem (“Drowned”) shows us that we may well be talking about a dead man coming back to life — a spawn, an embodiment of one of the natural elements:

*And long the body, tossed by waves,
Rolled, floating, like a living thing;
The peasant watched it out of sight,
And then he thoughtful home returned.*

<...>

*From early morn the clouds hang low,
The night grows rough and wild with storm;*

¹⁰ «Погода пуще свирепела, / Нева вздувалась и ревела, / Котлом клокоча и клубясь, / И вдруг, как зверь остервенясь, / На город кинулась...»

¹¹ Буря мглою небо кроет, / Вихри снежные крутя: / То, как зверь, она завоет, / То заплачет, как дитя, / То по кровле обветшалой / Вдруг соломой зашумит, / То, как путник запоздалый, / К нам в окошко застучит.

*And lo! the dead man ceaseless knocks
At window first, and then at door.¹²*

Or in the tragedy “A Feast during the Plague”:

*Now Pestilence, that queen of dread,
In triumph rides among the dead.
And as her victims' ranks increase
Each day, each night her burial spade
Knocks at our windows without cease ...¹³*

The elements (snowstorm, water, plague) condense into a human (or animal) image and knock at the man's door. An antipodean double comes to visit the protagonist.

In the novel “The Captain's Daughter” the storm condenses into Pugachev:

*“Savelich went on grumbling; I looked in every direction, hoping to glimpse some sign of a track or a dwelling, but all I could make out was the opaque swirl of the snowstorm. Then I saw something black. ‘Hey, driver!’ I shouted. ‘What’s that over there? Look—that black thing!’ The driver stared into the falling snow. ‘Lord only knows, sir,’ he said, getting back onto his seat. ‘Not quite a cart, not quite a tree, and it looks like it’s moving. Must be either wolf or man.’
I told him to make for the unknown object, which at once began to move towards us. Two minutes later we were drawing level with a man.”*

“Must be either wolf or man” — we are dealing with a zoomorphic double-antipode. (Or maybe with a devil, with a demon, compare with Pushkin's short poem “Demons”: “We lurch in circles, strength declining; / Suddenly silent is the bell; / The team has halted ... ‘What's that shining?’ ... / ‘Tree-stump or wolf, sir — who

¹² «Долго мертвый меж волнами / Плыл качаясь, как живой; / Проводив его глазами, / Наш мужик пошел домой. / <...> Уж с утра погода злится, / Ночью буря настает, / И утопленник стучится / Под окном и у ворот».

¹³ «Царица грозная, Чума / Теперь идет на нас сама / И льстится жатвою богатой; / И к нам в окошко день и ночь / Стучит могильною лопатой....»

can tell?’ ”¹⁴ Pugachev's animal-like nature is emphasised in the novel by two epigraphs taken from poets contemporary to Pugachev — one from Sumarokov (comparison with a lion) and one from Kheraskov (comparison with an eagle). Here, for example, is an epigraph from Sumarokov:

The savage lion was sated then.

‘What means this visit to my den?’

He asked with gentle courtesy.

This werewolf, who has emerged (from a storm-beast), is soon revealed to possess animal instinct (the very quality that a future hunter must acquire during the initiation rite):

“I had already resolved to put my trust in God’s will and spend the night out on the steppe when the wayfarer suddenly jumped up onto the box and said to the driver, ‘There’s a house not far away, God be praised. Turn to the right, then keep straight on.’

“Why?” the driver asked crossly. ‘Can you really see a road? I know, I know: not your horses, not your sleigh—drive like a madman, you won’t have to pay!’ I too had my doubts. ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘what makes you so sure there’s a house nearby?’ ‘Because the wind changed,’ said the wayfarer, ‘and I smelt smoke. There’s a hamlet nearby.’ The man’s alertness and his keen sense of smell astonished me. I ordered the driver to follow his directions.”

The chapter of the novel in which Grinyov meets Pugachev is called “The Guide”. Pugachev, from the first encounter, assumes this role — to guide the protagonist. (This, incidentally, is also the role of Enkidu in relation to Gilgamesh: “Let Enkidu go before you, / he knows the journey to the Forest of Cedar”.) First he leads Pyotr Grinyov through a storm (and leads him to the inn), then through the horrors of the Russian rebellion — and leads him, as it eventually turns out, to a peaceful

¹⁴ «Сил нам нет кружиться доле; / Колокольчик вдруг умолк; / Кони стали... "Что там в поле?" — / "Кто их знает? пень иль волк?"»

landowner's life, but already as a different man, namely as a man who has undergone initiation ("But then unexpected events, which were to have a profound effect on my entire life, gave my soul a powerful and salutary shock."). Grinyov feels his deep bond with Pugachev:

"I also thought about the man in whose hands my destiny lay and to whom, by a strange confluence of events, I had become so mysteriously bound."

The primitive hunter received as a result of the initiation rite the animal instinct ("understanding the language of beasts and the language of birds"), the civilised man also receives something important: a sense of fate, a sense of magical connection, of surprising linkage of seemingly random circumstances:

"I could not but marvel at the strange links between one event and another. A child's coat, given as a gift to a tramp, had saved me from the hangman's noose..."

Let's return to the sleigh travelling (under the command an unexpected "guide") to the inn. Grinyov gets drowsy, then falls asleep and has a "prophetic" dream:

"I dreamed a dream I have never been able to forget and in which, when I compare it to the strange events of my life, I still see something prophetic. The reader will forgive me; probably he knows from experience how easily a man may surrender to superstition, however great his contempt for such foolishness.

I was in that mental and emotional state when reality, yielding to reverie, merges with it in the unclear visions of the beginning of sleep. I dreamed that the storm was still raging and that we were still lost on the snow-covered steppe. All of a sudden I saw a gateway, and I drove into the courtyard of our manor house. My first thought was that my father might be angered by my involuntary return and regard it as deliberate disobedience. Jumping down anxiously from the sleigh, I see my mother. She is coming out to meet me, a look of deep grief on her face.

'Hush,' she says, 'your father is mortally ill and wishes to say farewell to you.' I follow her fearfully into the bedroom. The room is dimly lit; around the bed are people with sad faces. I tiptoe up to the bed. Mother lifts a corner of the curtain and says, 'Andrey Petrovich, Petrusha has come. He heard of your illness and turned back. Give him your blessing.' I kneel down and look at the sick man. But ...

instead of my father, I see a peasant with a black beard lying on the bed, looking up at me cheerfully. I turn to Mother in bewilderment and say, 'What's going on? This isn't Father. Why should I ask a peasant for his blessing?' 'Never mind, Petrusha,' says Mother. 'He's taking Father's place at your wedding. Kiss his hand and let him give you his blessing.' I refuse. Then the peasant jumps out of bed, draws the ax that was tucked into his belt behind him and begins swinging it about in all directions. I want to run and I can't; the room fills with dead bodies; I stumble against the bodies and slip in pools of blood. The terrible peasant calls out to me gently, 'Don't be frightened. Come and receive my blessing.' Horror and bewilderment overwhelm me. At that moment I awoke. The horses had stopped; Savelich was tugging me by the arm and saying, 'Get out, sir, we've arrived.' 'Arrived where?' I asked, rubbing my eyes.

'At an inn. By the grace of God we knocked up against the fence. Hurry up, master. Get out of the sleigh and into the warm.' "

It should be noted that the double often appears in a dream or he appears before the waking hero as if in the continuation of the dream (because the antipodean double is a product of the hero's soul, he is inside the hero). This is how Lariosik appears to Nikolka Turbin, how Enkidu appears to Gilgamesh (in a dream: first as a stone falling from the sky, then as an axe falling from the sky), and how Svidrigailov appears to Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment":

"He drew a deep breath — but his dream seemed strangely to persist: his door was flung open and a man whom he had never seen stood in the doorway watching him intently.

Raskolnikov had hardly opened his eyes and he instantly closed them again. He lay on his back without stirring.

'Is it still a dream?' he wondered and again raised his eyelids hardly perceptibly; the stranger was standing in the same place, still watching him.' "

In the fairy tale, the hero gets to Baba-Yaga or an ogre. Grinyov sees in his dream an apparently fully reanimated dead man — instead of his dying father ("I see a peasant with a black beard lying on the bed, looking up at me cheerfully"). He "is

mortally ill”, but suddenly “jumps out of bed”. The dead man jumps up and begins to perform the most real initiation rite — with the help of his axe, multiplying dead bodies and bloody puddles. It is significant that he replaces the father here, is like another father (this is the role of the manager of this rite in primitive society). The axe is also noteworthy. The sacrificial axe (or sacrificial knife), which plays an important role in the rite, quite often accompanies the appearance of a double-antipode in a work of fiction (it can also be a sword, a spear or a harpoon). For example, in Alfred de Musset's poem “December Night” (1835) we see a double and a ritual knife (in this case, a sword):

*A youth who still in love believed,
I mourned one day my love deceived.
My trusting heart with anguish torn;
There sat beside me, still and sad,
A stranger in black garments clad.
As like me as my brother born.*

*With anxious brow and mournful eyes,
One hand he lifted to the skies,
From one a flashing sword did gleam;
But though he seemed to share my grief,
He said no word for my relief,
But sighed, and vanished like a dream.¹⁵*

¹⁵ À l'âge où l'on croit à l'amour,
J'étais seul dans ma chambre un jour,
Pleurant ma première misère.
Au coin de mon feu vint s'asseoir
Un étranger vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Il était morne et soucieux;
D'une main il montrait les cieux,
Et de l'autre il tenait un glaive.
De ma peine il semblait souffrir,
Mais il ne poussa qu'un soupir,
Et s'évanouit comme un rêve.

In Dostoevsky's story "The Double" Golyadkin junior takes away an important administrative paper from Golyadkin senior with the help of a trick with a penknife. (In José Saramago's novel "The Double", this is echoed in the words that the double says to the protagonist over the phone: "If you're afraid I'll kidnap you, for example, or eliminate you so that I can be alone in the world with this face that we both have, I can tell you now that I won't have any weapons on me, not even a penknife.")

We see a knife in the hand of the double in Hoffmann's "The Devil's Elixir" (1815):

"The prison-clock had struck twelve, when I again heard softly, and as if from a distance, the knocking which, on the preceding day, so much disturbed me. I had resolved that I would pay no attention to this noise; but it approached nearer, and became louder. There were again, at measured intervals, the same divertisements of knocking, laughing, and groaning. I struck my hand with great vehemence on the table— 'Be quiet!' cried I — 'Silence below there!' Thus I thought that I should banish my persecutor, and recover my composure, but in vain! On the contrary, there arose instantly a sound of shrill discordant laughter, and once more the same detestable voice — 'Brüd-er-lein!—Brüd-er-lein!'¹⁶ Up to thee! Open the door! Open the door!'

Then right under me commenced a vehement rasping and scratching in the floor, accompanied by continuous groans and cachinnation. In vain did I try to write, and persuading myself that these were but illusions of the arch enemy, determined to hold them in contempt. The noise always became more intolerable, and was diversified occasionally by ponderous blows, so that I momentarily expected the gaolers to enter in alarm.

I had risen up, and was walking with the lamp in my hand, when suddenly I felt the floor shake beneath my tread. I stepped aside, and then saw, on the spot whereon I had stood, a stone lift itself out of the pavement, and sink again. The phenomenon

¹⁶ My dear brother ('little brother').

was repeated, but at the second time I seized hold of the stone, and easily removed it from the flooring.

The aperture beneath was but narrow, and little or no light rose from the gulf. Suddenly, however, as I was gazing on it, a naked arm, emaciated, but muscular, with a knife, or dagger, in the hand, was stretched up towards me. Struck with the utmost horror, I recoiled from the sight. Then the stammering voice spoke from below — ‘Brother — brother Me-dar-dus is there — is there! — Take — take! — Break — break! — To the wood! — To the wood!’

Instantly all fear and apprehension were lost. I repeated to myself, ‘Take — take! — Break — break!’ for I thought only of the assistance thus offered me, and of flight! Accordingly I seized the weapon, which the hand willingly resigned to me, and began zealously to clear away the mortar and rubbish from the opening that had been made.

The spectral prisoner below laboured also with might and main, till we had dislodged four or five large stones from the vault, and laid them aside. I had been occupied in this latter purpose, that is, in placing the large stones in a corner of my room, that they might not interrupt my work; when, on turning round, I perceived that my horrible assistant had raised his naked body as far as the middle, through the aperture that we had made. The full glare of the lamp fell on his pale features, which were no longer obscured as formerly, by long matted locks, or the overgrown grizzly beard, for these had been closely shaven. It could no longer be said that I was in vigorous health, while he was emaciated, for in that respect we were now alike. He glared on me with the grin, the ghastly laughter, of madness on his visage. At the first glance I recognized myself, and losing all consciousness and self-possession, fell in a deadly swoon on the pavement.”

The knife also appears in Fritz Lang's film “Metropolis” (1927) — in connection with doubles. When Freder, the film's protagonist, shouts, pointing at False Mary, “You're not Mary!”, he is attacked by rioting workers, and one of them stabs him in the heart. However, Freder is saved by worker Number 11811 (with whom he has swapped roles at the beginning of the film, while hugging, kissing and calling

him brother). The labourer, who has covered Freder with himself, is stabbed in the heart and dies. It is also interesting to note that Freder is in white, the worker in black (life and death). If you look again at the worker's number (not as a number, but as an image), you will recognise our code in it.

The little robber-girl in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Snow Queen" (1845) is also wielding a knife, and Gerda's meeting with her can serve as an example of a girl's initiation, carried out according to the male model. The Little Robber possesses both the characteristics of the "mistress of the beasts" and those of an antipodean double (note her shadowy appearance: she is darker, broader, etc., her otherness, her knife, as well as her embrace with the heroine, their exchange of clothes, her threatening Gerda with death — and then helping Gerda):

" 'She shall play with me,' said the little robber-girl; 'she shall give me her muff and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed.' <...>

The little robber-girl was about the same size as Gerda, but stronger; she had broader shoulders and a darker skin; her eyes were quite black, and she had a mournful look. She clasped little Gerda round the waist, and said, —

'They shall not kill you as long as you don't make us vexed with you. I suppose you are a princess.'

'No,' said Gerda; and then she told her all her history, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber-girl looked earnestly at her, nodded her head slightly, and said, 'They sha 'nt kill you, even if I do get angry with you; for I will do it myself.' And then she wiped Gerda's eyes, and stuck her own hands in the beautiful muff which was so soft and warm. <...>

'You shall sleep with me and all my little animals to-night,' said the robber-girl, after they had had something to eat and drink. So she took Gerda to a corner of the hall, where some straw and carpets were laid down. Above them, on laths and perches, were more than a hundred pigeons, who all seemed to be asleep, although they moved slightly when the two little girls came near them. 'These all belong to me,' said the robber-girl; and she seized the nearest to her, held it by the feet, and

shook it till it flapped its wings. 'Kiss it,' cried she, flapping it in Gerda's face. 'There sit the wood-pigeons,' continued she, pointing to a number of laths and a cage which had been fixed into the walls, near one of the openings. 'Both rascals would fly away directly, if they were not closely locked up. And here is my old sweetheart 'Ba;' ' and she dragged out a reindeer by the horn; he wore a bright copper ring round his neck, and was tied up. 'We are obliged to hold him tight too, or else he would run away from us also. I tickle his neck every evening with my sharp knife, which frightens him very much.' And then the robber-girl drew a long knife from a chink in the wall, and let it slide gently over the reindeer's neck. The poor animal began to kick, and the little robber-girl laughed, and pulled down Gerda into bed with her.

'Will you have that knife with you while you are asleep?' asked Gerda, looking at it in great fright.

'I always sleep with the knife by me,' said the robber-girl. 'No one knows what may happen. But now tell me again all about little Kay, and why you went out into the world.'

Then Gerda repeated her story over again, while the wood-pigeons in the cage over her cooed, and the other pigeons slept. The little robber-girl put one arm across Gerda's neck, and held the knife in the other, and was soon fast asleep and snoring. But Gerda could not close her eyes at all; she knew not whether she was to live or die."

In a still from Akira Kurosawa's film "The Idiot" (1951), based on Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot" (1868), we see a knife placed between Kameda-Myshkin and Akamo-Rogozhin:



The characters talk about it as follows:

“— Do you use it to cut paper? — Yes. But it's not a paper-cutting knife, is it? — It's a butcher's knife. But I can cut anything I want with it.”

In Dostoevsky's early story “The Landlady” (1847) (artistically imperfect, but outlining all the main themes of his major novels), the future line of “The Idiot” is already visible. The hero of the story, Ordynov (the future Prince Myshkin), meets the half-crazed Katerina (the future Nastasia Filippovna) and an old man with a fiery look, the former Volga robber Murin, a “sorcerer” and “blacksmith” who, like Ordynov, suffers from “black infirmity” (epilepsy). Murin is the future Rogozhin. The hero, the “Beautiful Lady” and the double-antipode — there is nothing else in the story. The appearance of the knife is almost inevitable:

“A fixed laugh, that froze Ordynov's whole being, remained upon Katerina's face. Its boundless irony rent his heart. Not knowing what he was doing, hardly conscious, he leaned against the wall and took from a nail the old man's expensive old-fashioned knife. A look of amazement seemed to come into Katerina's face, but at the same time anger and contempt were reflected with the same force in her eyes. Ordynov turned sick, looking at her... he felt as though someone were thrusting, urging his frenzied hand to madness. He drew out the knife... Katerina watched him, motionless, holding her breath....

He glanced at the old man.

At that moment he fancied that one of the old man's eyes opened and looked at him, laughing. [And here is one eye — is not Polyphemus before us?] Their eyes met. For some minutes Ordynov gazed at him fixedly.... Suddenly he fancied that the old man's whole face began laughing and that a diabolical, soul-freezing chuckle resounded at last through the room. A hideous, dark thought crawled like a snake into his head. He shuddered; the knife fell from his hands and dropped with a clang upon the floor. Katerina uttered a shriek as though awaking from oblivion, from a nightmare, from a heavy, immovable vision.... The old man, very pale, slowly got up from the bed and angrily kicked the knife into the corner of the room; Katerina stood pale, deathlike, immovable; her eyelids were closing; her face was convulsed by a vague, insufferable pain; she hid her face in her hands and, with a shriek that rent the heart, sank almost breathless at the old man's feet..."

Prior to this, Murin nearly kills Ordynov with a shotgun (shotgun being a modern synonym for a ritual knife), and also tells him that he once nearly stabbed Katerina to death:

" 'Yes! it's you,' said Murin, raising himself up and sitting on the bed. 'You are my lodger. I must beg your pardon, sir; I have sinned and wronged you all unknowingly, playing tricks with my gun the other day. Who could tell that you, too, were stricken by grievous sickness? It happens to me at times,' he added in a hoarse, ailing voice, frowning and unconsciously looking away from Ordynov. 'My trouble comes upon me like a thief in the night without knocking at the gate! I almost thrust a knife into her bosom the other day...' he brought out, nodding towards Katerina. 'I am ill, a fit comes, seizes me — well, that's enough. Sit down — you will be our guest.' "

Likewise, there is a similar late glimmer of Romantic Gothic narrative in Dostoevsky's last novel, "The Brothers Karamazov": "His passion flamed up at the sight of her asleep, and then vindictive, jealous anger took possession of his heart, and like a drunken man, beside himself, he thrust a knife into her heart..." It is also

noteworthy that the story of the elder Zosima about the “mysterious visitor” who killed his beloved girl has much in common with the story of Raskolnikov who killed the old woman. We will return to this theme of Eros and Thanatos. For now, let's return to Pushkin's “The Captain's Daughter”. It is worth paying attention to the “black beard” of the scary peasant. Firstly, he is the protagonist's “shadow”, his “black man”, hence the black colour. Black is the colour of death (as white sometimes is), a sign of the hero's inevitable blindness (as well as of his invisibility) when he enters the other world. (Compare: Prince Myshkin is “with very fair hair”, while Rogozhin is “with almost black curly hair”.) Secondly, the antipodean double is often characterised by emphasised hairiness: he either has a thick beard or the hair on his head is shaggy (or curly). After all, he is partly a beast.

Look, for example, at a still from Leos Carax's film “Holy motors” (2012). The hero stabs his double in the neck:



The double in this case is literal (an exact copy of the protagonist), differing from him only in his long hair, beard and glasses (the protagonist himself is bald — and then he cuts the killed double naked and shaves him). The double's name is Theo (which hints at his divine nature). Having been killed, he then comes back to life. The beastliness of the antipodean double is often emphasised by his clothing. For example, Rogozhin “was warmly dressed in a full, black, sheepskin-lined

overcoat”. (The “black overcoat” shows two features of the antipodean double at once.)

Look from this point of view at the appearance of the old man Murin from Dostoevsky's story “The Landlady” (it is remarkable that the beautiful woman and the old man seem to appear to the hero of the story in a dream — although he sees them in reality):

“In an access of profound depression and some stifled feeling Ordynov leaned against the wall in the darkest corner of the church, and for an instant sank into forgetfulness. He came to himself when the even, hollow sound of the footsteps of two persons resounded in the building. He raised his eyes and an indescribable curiosity took possession of him at the sight of the two advancing figures. They were an old man and a young woman. The old man was tall, still upright and hale-looking, but thin and of a sickly pallor. From his appearance he might have been taken for a merchant from some distant province. He was wearing a long black full-skirted coat trimmed with fur, evidently a holiday dress, and he wore it unbuttoned; under it could be seen some other long-skirted Russian garment, buttoned closely from top to bottom. His bare neck was covered with a bright red handkerchief carelessly knotted; in his hands he held a fur cap. His thin, long, grizzled beard fell down to his chest, and fiery, feverishly glowing eyes flashed a haughty, prolonged stare from under his frowning, overhanging brows. The woman was about twenty and wonderfully beautiful. She wore a splendid blue, fur-trimmed jacket, and her head was covered with a white satin kerchief tied under her chin. She walked with her eyes cast down, and a sort of melancholy dignity pervaded her whole figure and was vividly and mournfully reflected in the sweet contours of the childishly soft, mild lines of her face. There was something strange in this surprising couple.”

Once again we return to “The Captain's Daughter”. After an overnight stay, Grinyov gives his hare-skin coat to the guide (in gratitude for guiding the sleigh to the inn):

“But the hare-skin coat was produced. The peasant tried it on there and then. The coat, which even I had outgrown, was indeed rather tight on him. All the same, he

managed to get it on, ripping some of the seams. Savelich almost howled as he heard the threads snap. The vagabond was extremely pleased with my gift."

Later, during the rebellion, Pugachev gives Grinyov a sheepskin coat. There are two important moments in this exchange of coats that characterise the hero's relationship with his double-antipode. Firstly, the very fact of the exchange is significant, in this case reminiscent of fraternisation (as Prince Myshkin and Rogozhin exchange crosses). Secondly, what exactly they exchange is significant. Crosses are symbols of rebirth, of overcoming death; coats are animal skins. (Pugachev threatens Savelich: "A hare-skin coat! I'll give you a hare-skin coat. Yes, I'll flay the hide off your living body and have that made into a coat!") During the initiation rite, a young man could put on a skin, turning into his zoomorphic (animal-like) double. Grinyov and Pugachev exchange skins.

Pugachev dies at the end of the novel under the executioner's axe (as if the sacrificial axe with which he was multiplying dead bodies in Grinyov's dream ultimately kills him):

"Here end the memoirs of Pyotr Andreyevich Grinyov. Family tradition has it that <...> was present at the execution of Pugachov, who recognized him in the crowd and acknowledged him with a nod of the same head that, only a minute later, was to be held up aloft, bloody and lifeless, by the executioner. Soon afterwards Pyotr Andreyevich married Maria Ivanovna."

Pugachev appears here almost as a nodding dead head. A head detached from the body, talking to the hero and playing an important role in his fate, we meet, for example, in Pushkin's youth poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila" (1820). In a fairy-tale or romantic work, the protagonist may meet a dead man who comes back to life and gives him a sign with a nod. In a historical novel this cannot be the case. But Pushkin needs to emphasise the hero's living bond with his double-antipode, who has gone back to the other world (into the snowstorm from which he emerged). The way out of the situation is to bring nodding and death as close as possible. (You could, of course, just let the hero dream, but that's less interesting.)

It is characteristic of the double in general to nod to the protagonist — as, for example, we see in Dostoevsky's story “The Double”:

“The unknown, also still in hat and overcoat, was sitting before him, on his own bed, with a slight smile on his lips; narrowing his eyes a little, he gave him a friendly nod. Mr Golyadkin wanted to cry out but could not, to make some sort of protest but his strength failed him. His hair stood on end and he collapsed into a chair, insensible with horror. Mr Golyadkin had recognized his nocturnal acquaintance. Mr Golyadkin’s nocturnal acquaintance was none other than himself, Mr Golyadkin himself, another Mr Golyadkin, but exactly the same as himself — in short, in every respect what is called his double ...”

The novel “The Captain's Daughter” has the same nodding inanimate figure as Pushkin's tragedy “The Stone Guest”: “The statue nods its head to show agreement.”. (By the way, the statue of the knight-commander will later knock on the house, just like the drowned man in the poem of the same name: “What’s that knock outside? ...Oh, hide, Don Juan.”)

In Spanish tradition, there is another variant of Don Juan's encounter with the reanimated dead — namely, the encounter with the talking skull. For example, in the folk romance “Don Juan” (literally translated):

*A gallant was going to mass
Down the road towards the church,
not to hear mass
nor to be attentive to it,
he was going to see the ladies
who look beautiful and fresh.
In the middle of the road
he encountered a skull,
he looked at it very hard
and gave it a big kick;
it clenched its teeth*

as if it were laughing
— Skull, I'll toast you
at my feast tonight.
— Don't mock me, gentleman;
I pledge my word for it".¹⁷

Compare with a similar plot element in a Russian fairy tale, which Propp describes in the chapter “The Dead Head” of the book “Historical Roots of the Wondertale”:
“ *“He was walking and stumbled over the dead bogatyr's (great warrior's) head. Without thinking long, he pushed it with his foot. The head said: ‘Don't kick me, Ivan Turtygin! You'd better bury me in the sand.’ ” Ivan does bury his head in the sand, and the head shows him where to get magic berries, which will be useful to him in the course of the action.* ”

In short, the living head detached from the body — one of the varieties of the double-antipode — says something to the hero or gives him a sign (for example, nods).

The head of Queequeg (Ishmael's double-antipode in *Moby Dick*) is also very significant. It looks similar to a dead head which the former cannibal (by the way, “a dark complexioned chap” — that is, the hero's “shadow”) intends to sell:

“ ‘I'll break it for him,’ said I, now flying into a passion again at this unaccountable farrago of the landlord's.

‘It's broke a'ready,’ said he.

‘Broke,’ said I—‘BROKE, do you mean?’

‘Sartain, and that's the very reason he can't sell it, I guess.’ <...>

But be easy, be easy, this here harpooneer I have been tellin' you of has just arrived from the south seas, where he bought up a lot of 'balmed New Zealand heads (great curios, you know), and he's sold all on 'em but one, and that one he's trying to sell

¹⁷ *Don Juan*: Pa misa diba un galán / caminito de la iglesia, / no diba por oír misa / ni pa estar atento a ella, / que diba por ver las damas / las que ven guapas y frescas. En medio del camino / encontró una calavera, / mirárala muy mirada / y un gran puntapié le dió; / arregañaba los dientes / como si ella se riera. / —Calavera, yo te brindo / esta noche a la mi fiesta. / No hagas burla, el caballero; mi palabra doy por prenda—.”

to-night, cause to-morrow's Sunday, and it would not do to be sellin' human heads about the streets when folks is goin' to churches."

"...he then took the New Zealand head—a ghastly thing enough—and crammed it down into the bag. He now took off his hat—a new beaver hat—when I came nigh singing out with fresh surprise. There was no hair on his head—none to speak of at least—nothing but a small scalp-knot twisted up on his forehead. His bald purplish head now looked for all the world like a mildewed skull."

When encountering an antipodean double, the hat removed (from the double or from the protagonist) sometimes acts as a symbol of a detached, detachable head. Moreover, hats can be exchanged between the protagonist and the double — for example, in Vadim Abdrashitov's film "Fox Hunting" (1980):



Belov takes the hat off his double-antipode (Belikov) and throws it away. Then Belov takes out (from his motorbike) another hat and puts it on Belikov (it is a gift). Just before this he hit Belikov in the head (in the hat) with a snowball, then pushed him down, fell with him (in a hug), both hats fell off. (There are other signs in the film that Belov encounters his antipodean double, who changes Belov's fate — and quite involuntarily. For instance, Belov, in order to get permission to meet Belikov in the penal colony, says that the latter is his cousin. Moreover, Belov sees that the

shaggy, black-haired Belikov has been shaved in the colony. The very surname of the double-antipode here is an altered reflection of the hero's surname ('Belov', by the way, roughly means 'white man').

We find both a torso without a head and a head without a torso in Joseph Conrad's short story "The Secret Sharer" (1910). The double-antipode of the hero-narrator (the captain) appears from the sea (he is a fugitive, who appears to the captain, having reached his ship by swimming at night):

"The side of the ship made an opaque belt of shadow on the darkling glassy shimmer of the sea. But I saw at once something elongated and pale floating very close to the ladder. Before I could form a guess a faint flash of phosphorescent light, which seemed to issue suddenly from the naked body of a man, flickered in the sleeping water with the elusive, silent play of summer lightning in a night sky. With a gasp I saw revealed to my stare a pair of feet, the long legs, a broad livid back immersed right up to the neck in a greenish cadaverous glow. One hand, awash, clutched the bottom rung of the ladder. He was complete but for the head. A headless corpse! The cigar dropped out of my gaping mouth with a tiny plop and a short hiss quite audible in the absolute stillness of all things under heaven. At that I suppose he raised up his face, a dimly pale oval in the shadow of the ship's side. But even then I could only barely make out down there the shape of his black-haired head. However, it was enough for the horrid, frost-bound sensation which had gripped me about the chest to pass off. The moment of vain exclamations was past, too. I only climbed on the spare spar and leaned over the rail as far as I could, to bring my eyes nearer to that mystery floating alongside."

The appearance of the antipodean double in the story is preceded by the mysterious appearance of a scorpion aboard the ship, but we will discuss this sign of the double-antipode later. The double comes aboard and the captain dresses him in his own pyjamas:

"I got a sleeping suit out of my room and, coming back on deck, saw the naked man from the sea sitting on the main hatch, glimmering white in the darkness, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. In a moment he had concealed his damp body

in a sleeping suit of the same gray-stripe pattern as the one I was wearing and followed me like my double on the poop. <...> The shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly above the ghostly gray of my sleeping suit. It was, in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a somber and immense mirror.”

(Note the nodding.) At the end of the story, the captain gives the double-antipode who is about to swim away his hat, which, falling from the double's head into the sea, saves the captain and his ship:

“I snatched off my floppy hat and tried hurriedly in the dark to ram it on my other self. <...> I recognized my own floppy hat. It must have fallen off his head ... and he didn't bother. Now I had what I wanted—the saving mark for my eyes. <...> And I watched the hat—the expression of my sudden pity for his mere flesh. It had been meant to save his homeless head from the dangers of the sun. And now—behold—it was saving the ship, by serving me for a mark to help out the ignorance of my strangeness. Ha! It was drifting forward, warning me just in time that the ship had gathered sternaway.”

The hat here replaces the “detachable” head.

A statue (or painting) in a work of fiction that comes to life, nods or communicates something to the hero — what is it but an ordinary idol to which the person who believes in it turns and which responds to the address (and sometimes takes over the initiative of conversation). But what is an idol? It is a living dead man (or a dead man who comes to life when addressed), it is Koschey the Deathless (an archetypal fiend in Russian fairy tales).

We see something similar in Pushkin's poem “The Bronze Horseman”:

*It seemed, his face with angry glow
Aflame, the all-dread Tsar had turned,
And fixed on him his searching gaze...¹⁸*

¹⁸ «...Показалось / Ему, что грозного царя, / Мгновенно гневом возгоря, / Лицо тихонько обращалось...»

Just as Pugachev is a spawn of the ferocious element of the people's rebellion, so the statue of Peter the Great appears not only as a subduer of the free and destructive water element (who built St Petersburg among the Finnish swamps: "I love you, Peter's creation, I love your stern / Harmonious look, the Neva's majestic flow, / Her granite banks, the iron tracery / Of your railings..."¹⁹), but also as its product, its personification. The element tends to condense into a double — into Pugachev as a double of Pyotr Grinyov, into the Bronze Horseman as a double of Eugene (Eugene first threatens the Bronze Horseman — a statue of Peter the Great — and then flees from it):

*And he, as though bewitched, as if riveted
To the marble, cannot get down! Around him
Is water and nothing else! And, his back turned
To him, in unshakeable eminence, over
The angry river, the turbulent Neva, stands
The Image, with outstretched arm, on his bronze horse.²⁰*

The element itself (the flood) is not much different from the "Russian rebellion, senseless and merciless" (Pushkin's words), from Pugachev's revolt (this parallel between "The Bronze Horseman" and "The Captain's Daughter" is, of course, obvious and has long been noticed):

*But now, satiated with destruction, wearied
By her insolent violence, the Neva drew back,
Revelling in the chaos she had caused,
And carelessly abandoning her booty.
Thus a marauder, bursting into a village with*

¹⁹ «Люблю тебя, Петра творенье, / Люблю твой строгий, стройный вид, / Невы державное течение, / Береговой ее гранит...»

²⁰ «В неколебимой вышине, / Над возмущенною Невою / Стоит с простертою рукою / Кумир на бронзовом коне».

*His savage band, smashes, slashes, shatters,
And robs; shrieks, gnashing of teeth, violence,
Oaths, panic, howls! And weighed down by their plunder,
Fearing pursuit, exhausted, the robbers leave
For home, dropping their plunder on the way.²¹*

So, we have found in Pugachev a whole set of signs of the double-antipode. No matter how many of them there are (I counted seven, to which we can add an eighth, namely, a particularly expressive gaze, so typical for the double: “I looked up at the plank bed and saw a black beard and two sparkling eyes”), they are all united by the common “mental basis of the rite”: the role of “guide” through death: through Pugachev's rebellion (which is foreshadowed in the novel by the storm).

It should be noted that two other characters in Pushkin's novel have the features of the double-antipode. Both Grinyov's gambling with Zurin (a game of chance between the doubles usually symbolises their dispute about fate) and his duel with Shvabrin (as a symbol of passing through death) reveal additional double-antipodes in these two antagonists of Grinyov.

Shvabrin wounds Grinyov (as if sacrificing him or involuntarily knighting him). In addition, Grinyov, having dived into the world of death (into the world of Russian rebellion), comes out unharmed (like Ivan in Yershov's fairy tale “The Humpbacked Horse”, who dives into boiling milk and comes out a better guy than he was before), while Shvabrin perishes. Shvabrin, by the way, has a swarthy face (“... a young officer came in. He was short and swarthy, his face ugly but very animated”).

Ivan Ivanovich Zurin is Grinyov's first encounter when he left for army service. Zurin “was in Simbirsk to receive recruits”. He beats the sixteen-year-old young man in a Simbirsk tavern at billiards (playing a game of chance with an antipodean double is a frequent element of the plot), introduces him to alcohol (“saying I must

²¹ Но вот, насытись разрушеньем / И наглым буйством утомясь, / Нева обратно повлеклась, / Своим любуюсь возмущеньем / И покидая с небреженьем / Свою добычу. Так злодей, / С свирепой шайкою своей / В село ворвавшись, ломит, режет, / Крушит и грабит; вопли, скрежет, / Насилье, брань, тревога, вой!.. / И грабежом отягощенны, / Боясь погони, утомленны, / Спешат разбойники домой, / Добычу по пути роняя».

get used to army life-and what would life in the army be like without punch?") and, it seems, to sex ("And now let's go to Arinushka's."). The role of the sacrificial knife is played by the pool cue in Zurin's hands, and we see a dressing gown — a rather usual attire for an antipodean double:

"In the billiard room I saw a tall gentleman in a dressing gown; he looked about thirty-five and he had a long black moustache, a cue in one hand, and a pipe between his teeth."

(Remember, by the way, in Gogol's poem "Dead Souls": "... he met with Nozdryov, who was also in his dressing gown, a pipe clenched in his teeth.").

At the end of the story Grinyov, taking Masha (affectionate variant for Marya, Maria) away from Pugachev's place, meets Zurin again, and this meeting proves to be a salvation for him:

"I rushed up onto the porch. The sentries made no attempt to restrain me and I ran straight into a room where six Hussar officers were playing faro. The major was dealing. Imagine my surprise when I recognized him immediately: it was Ivan Ivanovich Zurin, the officer who had fleeced me at billiards at the inn in Simbirsk."

'No!' I cried. 'Ivan Ivanich! I don't believe it!'

'Well, I'll be damned! Pyotr Andreych! Where've you sprung from? Welcome, brother! May I deal you a card?' "

It turns out that Pyotr Grinyov is dealing with a tripled double-antipode, each of which decisively affects his fate. The number "three" in a myth or fairy tale usually denotes fate: the three Moirai or Fates, the Trinity (from the Book of Genesis: three angels appearing to Abraham), three lodgers in Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis", three bank officials in Kafka's novel "The Trial", three roads before the bogatyr (heroic warrior), "three young trees by the roadside, connected with human fate" (in "Tales of the Narts"), three cards in Pushkin's "Queen of Spades", three fateful days ("If I'm not back here in three days" — says Grinyov to Savelich).

The storm (as well as rebellion) in the novel "The Captain's Daughter" is the "source of life and death", corresponding to the mythical beast that consumes and spews out the hero. But then what role does Masha (Marya Mironova) play in Grinyov's life?

Of course, a fate-forming one, just like Pugachev. Grinyov is bound to Pugachev “by a strange confluence of events”, to Marya Ivanovna he is bound by “miraculous circumstances”:

“ ‘Darling Maria Ivanovna,’ I said. ‘I look upon you as my wife. Miraculous circumstances have united us. Nothing in the world can separate us.’ ”

Marya Mironova — doesn't this name remind you of Marya Morevna from a Russian fairy tale? In this sense, the proverb used as an epigraph to the chapter “The Tribunal” is remarkable: “Mirskáya molvá — morskáya volná” (‘public rumour’ — sea wave’), based on the echoing syllables ‘mir’ (world; community), and ‘mor’ (‘morskaya’ means ‘maritime’, but ‘mor’ means ‘mass pestilence’). It is true that Marya Mironova finds herself, as it were, a prisoner of Pugachev, while Marya Morevna herself holds Koschey the Deathless captive (but for the purpose of not being taken captive by him):

“But he [Prince Ivan] could not restrain himself; as soon as Marya Morevna had gone, he rushed to the closet, opened the door, looked in. Inside the closet Koshchey the Deathless was hanging chained with twelve chains.”

The main thing in the myth is not who is in captivity, but the fact of captivity itself. Look at these fairytale characters in Viktor Vasnetsov's painting “Marya Morevna and Koshchey” (1926):



Looking at the picture, one might think that the “goddess of life and death” and Koshchey have already agreed on something (although this is not the case).

Masha finds herself in an army hostile to Grinyov — and he is forced to sneak into it, that is, Masha unwittingly draws him into mortal danger — into Pugachev's lair (but without this trial he will not achieve happiness). So this sweet girl also acts as the “source of life and death”.

As for Marya Morevna from the fairy tale, she herself kills an entire army:

“He made ready, walked and walked, and one day beheld a host of troops lying slain on the field. Prince Ivan said: ‘If any man is alive here, let him answer me. Who slew this great army?’ One man answered him: ‘All this great army was slain by Marya Morevna, the beautiful queen.’ ”

‘Morevna’ means ‘daughter of the sea’, but people heard in this name also the word ‘pestilence’. ‘Marya’, on the one hand, echoes ‘Morevna’, on the other hand, corresponds to the virgin Mary (the Mother of God and the Virgin Intercessor). So Marya Morevna is a goddess not only of death, but also of life.

A similar role in Christian folk tradition is played by the so-called “Black Madonnas” — for example, by the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe (also called ‘Moreniña’ — ‘Darkling’), one of the most revered Christian sacred images in Spain:



The figure of the Madonna is carved from dark cedar wood. It is one of the “Black Madonnas” of Europe, to whom there was a particularly strong pilgrimage during the “atra mors” (Latin for ‘black pestilence, black death’), the plague epidemic of the fourteenth century. The Black Madonna was prayed to as the Virgin Mary, but also as the goddess of death: she knows death — and therefore can undo it.

Masha eventually saves Grinyov — not alone, but with the help of the Empress (thus he is rescued by a double goddess — young and old).

Note also that in Pushkin's “The Tale of the Golden Cockerel” (1834) the role of the goddess of death is played by the Queen of Shamakhan (and instead of Koshchey there is “an astrologer and eunuch”). The Queen appears before King Dodon, like Marya Morevna, standing over the defeated army (as ancient goddesses were depicted with skulls at their feet). The two sons of Dodon who have pierced each other with swords are also noteworthy (and it is not by chance that the image of two falcons and two horses appears):

“A week had already passed, and the tsar was leading his men into the mountains. Suddenly, among the highest peaks, they saw a silken tent. In a narrow mountain pass lay the bodies of the defeated army; men stood around the tent in silent amazement. Tsar Dadon rushed forward — what a terrible sight! Before him his two sons lay dead, without their armour, their swords driven through each other. Their horses wandered loose in the crushed and blood stained grass. The tsar began to weep: ‘My sons, my sons! Both my proud falcons caught in one net! I shall die from grief!’ The people began to mourn with their tsar. With a heavy moan the depths of the hills echoed, and the heart of the mountains shook at its foundations. Suddenly, the silken tent swept open, and a girl, a princess of Shamakhan, shimmering with beauty like the dawn, stepped out to meet the king. Like the birds of night before the sun, the tsar was silenced. At the sight of her, he forgot the death of his sons.”



Tsar Dadon meets the Queen of Shamakhan (illustration by Ivan Bilibin, 1907)

* * *

It is known that the Slavs in the first days of spring performed the rite of taking death outside the settlement: they threw into the water a straw effigy — Morana/Marena, the goddess of death, winter and night.

Such a “goddess of death” is, for example, Marina (Marinka) in the Russian epic song “Dobrynya and Marinka”, acting in alliance with the Serpent Gorynych and, like Circe in the “Odyssey”, turning warriors into animals (Circe into pigs, Marinka into aurochs).

The Russian words ‘smert’ (death), ‘mertvyi’ (dead), ‘mor’ (pestilence) are related to the ancient Indian word ‘mrtis’ (death), the Latin words ‘moriōr’ (I am dying), ‘mors, mortis’ (death) and ‘mortuus’ (dead), and the German word ‘Mord’ (murder). Their common basis is the Indo-European root ‘mer’ (to rub, erase; to die). Hence such literary characters as Professor Moriarty in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (thus, in the story “The Illustrious Client” we read: “If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran, then he is

indeed worth meeting.”), like the Morlocks, the subterranean humanoid cannibals from Herbert Wells' novel “The Time Machine”, like Doctor Moreau from Herbert Wells' novel “The Island of Doctor Moreau” (who is a kind of “master of the beasts”), like Moritz from Wedekind's drama “Spring Awakening” (Melchior's antipodean double who shot himself in the head and then appeared to Melchior as a spirit with his head under his arm), like the giant warrior Morold from the story of Tristan and Isolde (killed by Tristan but wounding Tristan with a poisoned spear — after which Tristan ends up with the giant's sister and her daughter, the blond Isolde, who heals him), etc.

From the same root came the Old Irish word ‘morigain’ (queen of spirits), the Serbian word ‘mora’ (witch; brownie; nightmare), the Russian words ‘kikimora’ (night ghost; house spirit who spins at night), ‘morok’ (obscuration; evil vision), ‘mrak’ (darkness), ‘moroz/mraz’ (frost), ‘mara’ (spooky ghost; hallucination).

Ilya Muromets may indeed have been from the city of Murom, but in the myth the name of the real city becomes an epithet of the hero, which speaks of his passing through death. He is Muromets because he has to do with death (the ‘mor’ — pestilence). (Hence the surname of the old man Murin in Dostoevsky's story “The Landlady”.) Variants of Ilya's nickname: Morovlin, Murovets. We have already talked about how and why Ilya Muromets gets into Svyatogor's pocket (just as Odysseus gets into the cave of Polyphemus, as Väinämöinen goes inside the giant Vipunen). The same symbolic role as Murom is played in the story of Ilya Muromets by the city of Chernigov (a real city, but its name has a mythological meaning, as it means ‘Black City’), under which our hero fights with the besieging army (“Near the city of Chernigov / A vast army had been assembled, / A vast army as black as a black raven.”²²). This black city is the city of death. In addition, Ilya has to pass through the “Black Swamp” and the “River Smorodina” (“Along the straight-traveled road I rode past the city of Chernigov, / I rode past that Swamp, past that Black Swamp, / Past that famous stream Smorodina”). “The River Smorodina” is a river of ‘smórod’ (stench), a river of rot and death.

²² «Под Черниговом силушки черным-черно, / Черным-черно, как черна вóрона».

Noteworthy in this sense are the echoing names in the title of Bulgakov's novel "Master and Margarita". In the name 'Margarita' (Greek for 'pearl') we hear 'mar' ('mara'), while the word 'master' is a chess cast of the word 'smert' (death): in the words MaSTeR and SMeRT' all consonant sounds coincide, with the first and second (MS — SM) and third and fourth (TR — RT) changing places. (Ivan Homeless undergoes initiation in Bulgakov's novel; Margarita and the Master are for him the "source of life and death" and the double-antipode, respectively). What does death have to do with the Master? The point is that the devil was often called "the Master" — and in Bulgakov's novel the devil does the will of the Master (the writer). We will talk more about this later.

In Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment", the symbol of death is the departure to another, foreign continent — AMERICA: " 'I am leaving for foreign parts, my friend.' 'Foreign parts?' 'To America.' 'To America?' Svidrigailov took out the revolver and cocked it." (Svidrigailov is Raskolnikov's antipodean double.) Such a trip to America-Death, of course, is an echo of Pechorin's words from Lermontov's novel "The Hero of Our Time": "I shall go to America, to Arabia, to India—perchance I may die somewhere, on the way!"²³ This Russian phrase sounds, by the way, like poetry, even though it is prose: 'v Ameriku' (to America) is consonant with 'umrú' (I shall die), 'v Indiyu' (to India) is consonant with 'gdié-nibúd' (somewhere), 'v Aráviyu' (to Arabia) is consonant with 'na doróge' (on the road) (in both words there is a "r" sound surrounded by repeated vowels — with stress on the second of them).).

* * *

At the beginning of Alexandre Dumas' novel "The Three Musketeers" (1844), d'Artagnan goes out into the world with his father's parting words and, like the hero of a fairy tale, with three gifts ("the same day the young man set forward on his journey, furnished with the three paternal gifts, which consisted, as we have said, of

²³ «... поеду в Америку, в Аравию, в Индию, — авось где-нибудь умру на дороге!»

fifteen crowns, the horse, and the letter for M. de Treville”). At the inn, he meets his double-antipode — de Rochefort (laughing at the unsightly horse of a young Gascon). How many typical signs of an antipodean double does this character have? Let's look at him:

“Nevertheless, d’Artagnan was desirous of examining the appearance of this impertinent personage who ridiculed him. He fixed his haughty eye upon the stranger, and perceived a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black and piercing eyes, pale complexion, a strongly marked nose, and a black and well-shaped mustache. He was dressed in a doublet and hose of a violet color, with aiguillettes of the same color, without any other ornaments than the customary slashes, through which the shirt appeared. This doublet and hose, though new, were creased, like traveling clothes for a long time packed in a portmanteau. D’Artagnan made all these remarks with the rapidity of a most minute observer, and doubtless from an instinctive feeling that this stranger was destined to have a great influence over his future life.”

The main sign is the feeling (which did not deceive the hero), “that this stranger was destined to have a great influence over his future life”. Important additional signs are black colour of eyes and moustache, dark colour of clothes and “piercing eyes”. We talked about familiarity peculiar to doubles — here it is also present (in the form of imperinence). I don't know whether we should pay attention to “a strongly marked nose” and creased clothes (shabby clothes often indicate a double, who sometimes appears in the guise of a beggar). But as it is, we already have five signs. Later they will be joined by one more, namely the scar on the face:

*“ ‘Has he anything remarkable about him by which one may recognize him?’
‘Oh, certainly; he is a noble of very lofty carriage, black hair, swarthy complexion, piercing eye, white teeth, and has a scar on his temple.’ ”*

In this shorter description, the general dark colour is emphasised by the fact that the stranger met by d'Artagnan is “of swarthy complexion”. The scar is a sign of a typical injury to the head of an antipodean double (if it is not cut off completely, it is at least wounded). (Again, I don't know if we should pay attention to the “white teeth”

(although d'Artagnan is aware of them). Remember, Nozdrev “was a dashing fellow with full, ruddy cheeks, teeth white as snow, and whiskers black as pitch”. Teeth are usually emphasised when talking about an ogre or a vampire.)

As a result of the scuffle with the innkeeper and two of de Rochefort's servants that followed that fateful encounter, d'Artagnan is also wounded in the head — with a club. He fails to fight the stranger who insulted him, although he manages to draw his sword (another sign of his encounter with his antipodean double). The most interesting thing is that immediately after this encounter he sees the “goddess of death” — Milady:

“D’Artagnan, half stupefied, without his doublet, and with his head bound up in a linen cloth, arose then, and urged by the host, began to descend the stairs; but on arriving at the kitchen, the first thing he saw was his antagonist talking calmly at the step of a heavy carriage, drawn by two large Norman horses.

His interlocutor, whose head appeared through the carriage window, was a woman of from twenty to two-and-twenty years. We have already observed with what rapidity d’Artagnan seized the expression of a countenance. He perceived then, at a glance, that this woman was young and beautiful; and her style of beauty struck him more forcibly from its being totally different from that of the southern countries in which d’Artagnan had hitherto resided. She was pale and fair, with long curls falling in profusion over her shoulders, had large, blue, languishing eyes, rosy lips, and hands of alabaster. She was talking with great animation with the stranger.”

That Milady is the “goddess of death” is clear from the entire plot of the novel. At one point, she even appears as a beast and as an animated element of nature:

“The storm broke about ten o’clock. Milady felt a consolation in seeing nature partake of the disorder of her heart. The thunder growled in the air like the passion and anger in her thoughts. It appeared to her that the blast as it swept along disheveled her brow, as it bowed the branches of the trees and bore away their leaves. She howled as the hurricane howled; and her voice was lost in the great voice of nature, which also seemed to groan with despair.”

* * *

Prince Myshkin in Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot" first sees a photographic portrait of Nastasia Filippovna and only then meets her for real:

"But when he was the length of two rooms from the drawing-room, he stopped short, as though recollecting something. He looked round, went to the window nearer to the light, and began looking at the portrait of Nastasya Filippovna.

He seemed trying to decipher something that had struck him before, hidden in that face. The impression it had made had scarcely left him, and now he was in a hurry to verify it again. He was now even more struck by the face, which was extraordinary from its beauty and from something else in it. There was a look of unbounded pride and contempt, almost hatred, in that face, and at the same time something confiding, something wonderfully simple-hearted. The contrast of these two elements roused a feeling almost of compassion. Her dazzling beauty was positively unbearable — the beauty of a pale face, almost sunken cheeks and glowing eyes — a strange beauty! Myshkin gazed at it for a minute, then started suddenly, looked round him, hurriedly raised the portrait to his lips and kissed it."

The Prince kisses the portrait, for him it is alive. If it were any fantastic work, the portrait of Nastasia Filippovna would simply come to life in front of the protagonist. This is how an icon or an idol comes to life for a believer. In a "realistic" work, for example, the protagonist may first see an image of a woman who symbolises for him "the goddess of life and death" (note the contrasts in Nastasia Filippovna's face, her strange and unbearable beauty, her pallor, sunken cheeks and burning eyes — typical, by the way, of the goddess of death, who lacks only accentuated teeth), and then meet her.

A similar thing happens to Levin in Tolstoy's novel "Anna Karenina":

"Passing through a small dining room with dark panelled walls, Stepan Arkadyich and Levin crossed a soft carpet to enter the semi-dark study, lit by one lamp under a big, dark shade. Another lamp, a reflector, burned on the wall, throwing its light on to a large, full-length portrait of a woman, to which Levin involuntarily turned

his attention. This was the portrait of Anna painted in Italy by Mikhailov. While Stepan Arkadyich went behind a trellis-work screen and the male voice that had been speaking fell silent, Levin gazed at the portrait, stepping out of its frame in the brilliant light, and could not tear himself away from it. He even forgot where he was and, not listening to what was said around him, gazed without taking his eyes from the astonishing portrait. It was not a painting but a lovely living woman with dark, curly hair, bare shoulders and arms, and a pensive half smile on her lips, covered with tender down, looking at him triumphantly and tenderly with troubling eyes. Only, because she was not alive, she was more beautiful than a living woman can be.

‘I’m very glad,’ he suddenly heard a voice beside him, evidently addressing him, the voice of the same woman he was admiring in the portrait. Anna came to meet him from behind the trellis, and in the half light of the study Levin saw the woman of the portrait in a dark dress of various shades of blue...”

Notice the phrase: “Only, because she was not alive, she was more beautiful than a living woman can be.” It seems to be about a goddess who — like Koschey the Deathless — is eternally alive and at the same time inanimate, dead. It is quite logical that such a woman dies in the novel. (Anna, in general, is deeply connected to her portraits. From one of them she looks at Karenin: “The impenetrable eyes looked at him insolently and mockingly.” As for Vronsky, he doesn't finish Anna's portrait — and she perishes.)

Living statues, portraits, and dolls abound in Romantic literature. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's novel “The Devil's Elixir”, the monk Medard sees his, conventionally speaking, Beautiful Lady first as Aurelia (but he does not see her face), then as Saint Rosalie from a painting (and he identifies her with Aurelia), and then as Aurelia with her face already uncovered — and he does recognise her as Saint Rosalie from the painting:

“The beams of the morning sun broke in roseate deep lustre through the painted windows of the church. Alone, and lost in deep thought, I sat in the confessional. Only the steps of the officiating lay brother, whose duty it was to sweep the church,

sounded through the vaulted roof. I did not expect any visitors at such an hour; but suddenly I heard near me a rustling sound; and, behold! there came a tall, slender, but exquisitely proportioned, figure of a young woman, in a foreign dress, with a long veil over her face, who must have entered at one of the private doors, and was approaching me as if for confession. In her movements was indescribable grace—she drew nearer—she entered the confessional, and kneeled down. Deep sighs, as if involuntarily, were heaved from her bosom. It seemed as if, even before she spoke, some irresistible spell of enchantment pervaded the atmosphere, and overpowered me with emotions, such as, till now, I had never experienced. <...>

I had not seen the countenance of the unknown; and yet, by the force of my own imagination, her image lived within my heart. She looked on me with her mild blue eyes, in which tears were glistening, and from which glances fell into my soul like consuming fire, which no prayer and no penitential exercises any more could extinguish. <...>

There was an altar in our church dedicated to St Rosalia; and her picture, admirably painted, was hung over it, representing the Saint at the moment when she suffered martyrdom. In this picture, which had never particularly struck me before, I now at once recognised the likeness of my beloved! Even her dress exactly resembled the foreign habit of the unknown!

Here, therefore, like a victim of the most horrible insanity, I used to lie, for hours together, prostrate upon the steps of the altar, uttering hideous groans, and even howling in despair, so that the monks were terrified, and fled from me in dismay. In more tranquil moments, I used to walk hurriedly up and down the convent garden. I beheld her well-known from wandering through the misty fragrant regions of the distant landscape. I saw her emerging from the thickets of the dense wood, rising like a naiad from the fountains—hovering, like some goddess of the olden time, over the flowery meadows. Everywhere I beheld her, and lived but for her alone.”

“At that moment the door opened, and the Baron entered with Aurelia.

As soon as I had set eyes on this girl, it seemed as if a gleam of light from heaven flashed around me, and penetrated to my very heart, kindling up mysterious and long-lost emotions—the most ardent longings—the raptures of the most fervent love. All indeed that I had formerly felt seemed only like obscure and shadowy indications of that which now stepped forth at once into reality and life. Nay, life itself dawned for the first time, glittering, variegated, and splendid before me, and all that I had known before lay cold and dead, as if under the desolate shadows of night.

It was she herself—the same mysterious unknown whom I had beheld in the vision of the confessional. The melancholy, pious, childlike expression of the dark blue eyes—the delicately formed lips—the neck gently bent down, as if in devout prayer—the tall, slender, yet voluptuous form; all these—they belonged not to Aurelia—it was herself, the blessed St Rosalia! Even the minutest particulars of dress—for example, the sky-blue shawl, which the young Baroness had now thrown over her shoulders, was precisely the same worn by the saint in the picture, and by the unknown of my vision.

*What was now the luxuriant beauty of Euphemia compared with the divine charms of this celestial visitant? Only **her, her** alone could I behold, while all around was faded into coldness and obscurity.*

It was impossible that my inward emotion could escape the notice of the bystanders.”

Hoffmann created his novel “The Devil’s Elixir” in the wake of and influenced by Matthew Lewis’s gothic novel “The Monk” (1796):

“ ‘Matilda!’ He said in a troubled voice; ‘Oh! my Matilda!’

She started at the sound, and turned towards him hastily. The suddenness of her movement made her cowl fall back from her head; Her features became visible to the Monk’s enquiring eye. What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his admired Madona? The same exquisite proportion of features, the same profusion of golden hair, the same rosy lips, heavenly eyes, and majesty of countenance adorned Matilda! Uttering an exclamation of surprize, Ambrosio

sank back upon his pillow, and doubted whether the Object before him was mortal or divine.”

At the end of the novel “The Devil's Elixir”, the Beautiful Lady is murdered. She is stabbed by the double of the protagonist (as in the novel of Dostoyevsky “The Idiot” Nastasya Filippovna is stabbed by the double-antipode of prince Myshkin, that is, by Rogozhin. Incidentally, Dostoyevsky noted in one of his letters that “the whole novel was <...> conceived for the denouement of the novel”):

“Till now, I had not ventured to lift up mine eyes, and on doing so, I trembled convulsively, so that my breviary fell to the ground. I bent down to take it up, but a sudden giddiness seized me, and I should have fallen after my book, had not my watchful brother seized and held me back. ‘What is the matter with you, Medardus?’ said he—‘Resist the demon that besets you, and he will flee!’ I made a violent effort to be tranquil, looked up again, and saw Aurelia kneeling at the high altar. Oh, heavens! her beauty of countenance, and symmetry of form, were more than ever dazzling and seductive! She was dressed, too, as a bride, precisely as she had been on that fatal day of our intended marriage, with wreaths of myrtle and roses twisted in her luxuriant and skilfully-plaited hair. The devotion—the solemnity and agitation of the moment, had heightened the bloom on her cheeks; and in her eyes, uplifted to heaven, lay an expression of desire, which, in another place, or on another occasion, might have been very differently interpreted. <...>

I said that my feelings then were indescribable, but my passions now raged and burned within me with a violence which I had never before known. <...>

Meanwhile, I prayed internally with great fervour—‘Oh, merciful Heaven—Oh, ye blessed saints, intercede for me!—Let me not become mad!—only not mad!—Save me—save me from this hellish torment!—Save me from utter frenzy, otherwise I must commit the most horrible of crimes, and give up my soul to everlasting destruction!’ Such were my inward aspirations, for I felt how every moment the evil spirit was acquiring more and more an ascendancy over me. It seemed to me as if Aurelia, too,

*had a share in the crime which I alone was committing, as if the vow that she was about to take was **not** to be the bride of Heaven, but to become **mine!** <...>*

The vow was now pronounced, and during that part of the service consisting of question and response, sung by the nuns of St Clare, the veil was to be laid on Aurelia. Already they had taken the myrtles and roses from her head, and were in the act of cutting off her long and luxuriant locks, when an extraordinary tumult arose in the church. I remarked how the people who stood in the aisles were thrust and driven about. Many of them, too, were violently knocked down, and the disturbance made its way always nearer and nearer, till it arrived at the centre of the church, before which time I could not distinguish the cause.

*With the most furious looks and gestures, striking with his clenched fists at all who stood in his way, and still pressing forward, there now appeared a half-naked man, with the rags of a Capuchin dress hung about his body! At the first glance, I recognized my diabolical **double**; but already at the moment when, anticipating some horrible event, I was in the act of leaving the gallery to throw myself in his way, the horrible wretch had leaped over the railing of the altar. The terrified nuns shrieked and dispersed, but the Abbess undauntedly held Aurelia firmly clasped in her arms. ‘Ha, ha, ha!’ screamed the madman in a thrilling tone, ‘would'st thou rob me of my Princess?—Ha, ha, ha!—The Princess is my bride, my bride!’*

With these words he tore the fainting Aurelia from the Abbess, and with incredible quickness pulled out a stiletto, elevated it high over her head, and then plunged it into her heart, so that the blood sprung in torrents from the wound.—‘Hurrah!—hurrah!’ cried the maniac; ‘now have I won my bride—have won the Princess!’ With these words he rushed through the private grating behind the altar, and disappeared.”

The protagonist kills the Beautiful Lady, as if against his own will, using his diabolical double. The piercing “ha, ha, ha!” is also significant here — this is the kind of devilish laughter often used by the antipodean double or the “goddess of life and death”.

In Dostoevsky's penultimate novel, "A Raw Youth" (1875), Katerina Nikolaevna (the Beautiful Lady) is nearly killed by the mad Versilov (" 'Versilov will murder her! <...> It's the second self,' I cried"). In the climactic scene of the novel (written entirely in the spirit of "The Devil's Elixir"), Versilov points a gun at Katerina Nikolaevna and then shoots himself. Earlier, however, he had so confessed his mental disorder:

" 'Yes, I am really split in two mentally, and I'm horribly afraid of it. It's just as though one's second self were standing beside one; one is sensible and rational oneself, but the other self is impelled to do something perfectly senseless...' "

By killing the "Beautiful Lady", the antipodean double fulfils the hero's secret will. Look at a still from Robert Wiene's "The Cabinet of Dr Caligari" (1920):



Cesare, a somnambulist who is constantly unconscious, commits murders (stabbing his victims with a long knife) at the will of Dr Caligari. In essence, Cesare is a dead man (the doctor only periodically revives him by letting him out of the coffin box to commit the crime) and a doll (while Cesare is "at work", Caligari puts his likeness — a doll — in the box to make everyone think that Cesare is asleep). The very name of the doctor points to the double, to the "shadow" of the hero (Cali — Gary).

(Throughout most of the film, Cesare is the doctor's double. However, at the end of the film, we realise that all the events were the delusions of the mad Franz, a patient

in a clinic for the mentally ill. Franz mistakes the director of the clinic for the legendary Dr Caligari, and the patient, who believes herself to be a queen, for the girl who was almost killed by Cesare at Caligari's will. The result is a chain of doubles: Franz → Caligari → Cesare).

Despite her death, the Beautiful Lady can return — in the form of the Dreadful (Terrible) Lady. We meet such a Dreadful Lady, for example, in Edgar Poe's story “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839):

*“ ‘I **now** tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I **dared not speak!** And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha! <...> Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!’—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—‘**Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!**’*

*As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there **did** stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.”*

There are times when the protagonist kills the Beautiful (or Terrible) Lady — and she laughs, because that's just what she needed. She seduces the protagonist to kill herself, for she is the goddess of death, “the devil's grandmother” (a folklore character). In Dostoevsky's novel “Crime and Punishment” (1866), this is the case with the old pawn-broker — the old woman whom Raskolnikov intends to kill (at least, she appears to him as such):

“The old woman glanced for a moment at the pledge, but at once stared in the eyes of her uninvited visitor. She looked intently, maliciously and mistrustfully. A minute passed; he even fancied something like a sneer in her eyes, as though she had already guessed everything. He felt that he was losing his head, that he was almost frightened, so frightened that if she were to look like that and not say a word for another half minute, he thought he would have run away from her.”

It is as if someone is playing a giveaway game with Raskolnikov — everything goes right for the hero of the novel (“Because of the timing ... the way it all falls together so nicely ... just like a stage play.”). “Just like a stage play” means that everything happens in an artistic way. It is as if he is being led by an evil Muse (“the devil's grandmother”) — or by the devil himself (“I know that the devil dragged me”). Raskolnikov is seized by some dark inspiration that allows him to feel “influences” and see “coincidences”:

“But Raskolnikov had become superstitious of late. The traces of superstition remained in him long after, and were almost ineradicable. And in all this he was always afterwards disposed to see something strange and mysterious, as it were, the presence of some peculiar influences and coincidences.”

After the murder, Raskolnikov dreams of the old woman — and in the dream she is certainly the devil's grandmother, a revived corpse:

“He lost consciousness; it seemed strange to him that he didn't remember how he got into the street. It was late evening. The twilight had fallen and the full moon was shining more and more brightly; but there was a peculiar breathlessness in the air. There were crowds of people in the street; workmen and business people were making their way home; other people had come out for a walk; there was a smell of mortar, dust and stagnant water. Raskolnikov walked along, mournful and anxious; he was distinctly aware of having come out with a purpose, of having to do something in a hurry, but what it was he had forgotten. Suddenly he stood still and saw a man standing on the other side of the street, beckoning to him. He crossed over to him, but at once the man turned and walked away with his head hanging, as though he had made no sign to him. ‘Stay, did he really beckon?’

Raskolnikov wondered, but he tried to overtake him. When he was within ten paces he recognised him and was frightened; it was the same man with stooping shoulders in the long coat. Raskolnikov followed him at a distance; his heart was beating; they went down a turning; the man still did not look round. 'Does he know I am following him?' thought Raskolnikov. The man went into the gateway of a big house. Raskolnikov hastened to the gate and looked in to see whether he would look round and sign to him. In the court-yard the man did turn round and again seemed to beckon him. Raskolnikov at once followed him into the yard, but the man was gone. He must have gone up the first staircase. Raskolnikov rushed after him. He heard slow measured steps two flights above. The staircase seemed strangely familiar. He reached the window on the first floor; the moon shone through the panes with a melancholy and mysterious light; then he reached the second floor. Bah! this is the flat where the painters were at work ... but how was it he did not recognise it at once? The steps of the man above had died away. 'So he must have stopped or hidden somewhere.' He reached the third storey, should he go on? There was a stillness that was dreadful ... But he went on. The sound of his own footsteps scared and frightened him. How dark it was! The man must be hiding in some corner here. Ah! the flat was standing wide open, he hesitated and went in. It was very dark and empty in the passage, as though everything had been removed; he crept on tiptoe into the parlour which was flooded with moonlight. Everything there was as before, the chairs, the looking-glass, the yellow sofa and the pictures in the frames. A huge, round, copper-red moon looked in at the windows. 'It's the moon that makes it so still, weaving some mystery,' thought Raskolnikov. He stood and waited, waited a long while, and the more silent the moonlight, the more violently his heart beat, till it was painful. And still the same hush. Suddenly he heard a momentary sharp crack like the snapping of a splinter and all was still again. A fly flew up suddenly and struck the window pane with a plaintive buzz. At that moment he noticed in the corner between the window and the little cupboard something like a cloak hanging on the wall. 'Why is that cloak here?' he thought, 'it wasn't there before ...' He went up to it quietly and felt that there was someone

hiding behind it. He cautiously moved the cloak and saw, sitting on a chair in the corner, the old woman bent double so that he couldn't see her face; but it was she. He stood over her. 'She is afraid,' he thought. He stealthily took the axe from the noose and struck her one blow, then another on the skull. But strange to say she did not stir, as though she were made of wood. He was frightened, bent down nearer and tried to look at her; but she, too, bent her head lower. He bent right down to the ground and peeped up into her face from below, he peeped and turned cold with horror: the old woman was sitting and laughing, shaking with noiseless laughter, doing her utmost that he should not hear it. Suddenly he fancied that the door from the bedroom was opened a little and that there was laughter and whispering within. He was overcome with frenzy and he began hitting the old woman on the head with all his force, but at every blow of the axe the laughter and whispering from the bedroom grew louder and the old woman was simply shaking with mirth. He was rushing away, but the passage was full of people, the doors of the flats stood open and on the landing, on the stairs and everywhere below there were people, rows of heads, all looking, but huddled together in silence and expectation. Something gripped his heart, his legs were rooted to the spot, they would not move.... He tried to scream and woke up."

The moonlight (heralding a meeting with the moon goddess) and the witch's laughter are interesting here (remember the laughter of old man Murin in front of Ordynov, who is about to slaughter him, in the story "The Landlady": "Suddenly he fancied that the old man's whole face began laughing and that a diabolical, soul-freezing chuckle resounded at last through the room."). The man with stooping shoulders in the long coat ((in the original text: "in a dressing gown") who lures the protagonist into the witch's lair is also noteworthy.

The literary predecessor of Dostoevsky's old interest-earning woman, the old countess from Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades", behaved similarly (also being already dead):

" 'My ace wins,' said Hermann, turning over his card.

'Your Queen's lost,' Chekalinsky said courteously.

Hermann shuddered. Before him, instead of an ace, stood the Queen of Spades. He couldn't believe his eyes, unable to understand how he could have played the wrong card.

At that moment the Queen of Spades seemed to him to wink and smirk. Hermann was struck by an extraordinary likeness.

'The old woman!' he cried out in horror."

The Queen of Spades is an image that comes to life.

In connection with the old witch, let us look at Raskolnikov's two doubles — Marmeladov and Svidrigailov (both of whom, incidentally, perish).

Marmeladov (note also the sound composition of the name) seems to have nothing to do with the female pawn-broker (the witch). However, Raskolnikov meets him immediately after he leaves Alyona Ivanovna.

Raskolnikov loses his way (like Pyotr Grinyov before his meeting with Pugachev, like Chichikov before his meeting with Mrs Korobochka) and descends into a random (but presumably prescribed by fate) tavern, where everything is dirty and sticky, where (literally in the original Russian text) "everything is impregnated with the smell of wine". In a word, the tavern looks like some underground world (or even the belly of a mythical beast):

"The feeling of intense repulsion, which had begun to oppress and torture his heart while he was on his way to the old woman, had by now reached such a pitch and had taken such a definite form that he did not know what to do with himself to escape from his wretchedness. He walked along the pavement like a drunken man, regardless of the passers-by, and jostling against them, and only came to his senses when he was in the next street. Looking round, he noticed that he was standing close to a tavern which was entered by steps leading from the pavement to the basement. At that instant two drunken men came out at the door, and abusing and supporting one another, they mounted the steps. Without stopping to think, Raskolnikov went down the steps at once. Till that moment he had never been into a tavern, but now he felt giddy and was tormented by a burning thirst. He longed for a drink of cold beer, and attributed his sudden weakness to the want of

food. He sat down at a sticky little table in a dark and dirty corner; ordered some beer, and eagerly drank off the first glassful. <...> It was insufferably close, and so heavy with the fumes of spirits that five minutes in such an atmosphere might well make a man drunk.

There are chance meetings with strangers that interest us from the first moment, before a word is spoken. Such was the impression made on Raskolnikov by the person sitting a little distance from him, who looked like a retired clerk. The young man often recalled this impression afterwards, and even ascribed it to presentiment. He looked repeatedly at the clerk, partly no doubt because the latter was staring persistently at him, obviously anxious to enter into conversation. At the other persons in the room, including the tavern-keeper, the clerk looked as though he were used to their company, and weary of it, showing a shade of condescending contempt for them as persons of station and culture inferior to his own, with whom it would be useless for him to converse. He was a man over fifty, bald and grizzled, of medium height, and stoutly built. His face, bloated from continual drinking, was of a yellow, even greenish, tinge, with swollen eyelids out of which keen reddish eyes gleamed like little chinks. But there was something very strange in him; there was a light in his eyes as though of intense feeling — perhaps there were even thought and intelligence, but at the same time there was a gleam of something like madness. He was wearing an old and hopelessly ragged black dress coat, with all its buttons missing except one, and that one he had buttoned, evidently clinging to this last trace of respectability. A crumpled shirt front, covered with spots and stains, protruded from his canvas waistcoat. Like a clerk, he wore no beard, nor moustache, but had been so long unshaven that his chin looked like a stiff greyish brush. And there was something respectable and like an official about his manner too. But he was restless; he ruffled up his hair and from time to time let his head drop into his hands dejectedly resting his ragged elbows on the stained and sticky table. At last he looked straight at Raskolnikov, and said loudly and resolutely: ‘May I venture, honoured sir, to engage you in polite conversation? ...’ ”

A drunken ragamuffin — in this two features of the double-antipode are revealed at once: his characteristic state of altered consciousness (sometimes it is madness — complete or partial, sometimes it is memory loss) and the tornness, dismemberment, and beatenness of the initiate going through death (it is not by chance that Marmeladov will be crushed). First Raskolnikov almost gets hit by the horses (“‘Pretending to be drunk, for sure, and getting under the wheels on purpose’”), and then Marmeladov does get hit (“He was going home, no doubt drunk.”). In addition, as Viktor Shklovsky writes in his book “Pro and Contra. Notes on Dostoevsky” (1957), “the story of Marmeladov, who accepts Sonia's sacrifice, becomes a parallel to Raskolnikov's story, because Raskolnikov is invited to take the use of Dunya's sacrifice: his sister is going to get married in order to help her brother.”

Note also the two drunks met by Raskolnikov at the entrance to the tavern, here foreshadowing a meeting with an antipodean double, emphasising the very idea of a double. Let us call such doubles (as if perpendicular to the line of the main action) “empty twos” or “empty doubles”. Such “perpendicular, empty doubles” are also the two clerks who met Svidrigailov shortly before his suicide:

“He was particularly drawn to these clerks by the fact that they both had crooked noses, one bent to the left and the other to the right. They took him finally to a pleasure garden, where he paid for their entrance.”

And also two of Golyadkin's colleagues (in Dostoevsky's story “The Double”), whom he meets at the very beginning of the unpleasant experience that befalls him:

“At the corner of the Nevsky Prospect and Liteiny Street, he started at a most unpleasant sensation, like a poor wretch with a corn somebody has just accidentally trodden on, and hastily, even fearfully, flattened himself into the darkest corner of the carriage. The fact was that they had met two of his colleagues, two young clerks in the same Government department in which he worked himself.”

Speaking of “empty doubles”, we can also recall the two surveyor's assistants in Kafka's novel “The Castle” — by the way, quite zoomorphic and even chthonic (“two snakes”):

“From the direction of the Castle came two young men of medium height, both very slim, in tight-fitting clothes, and like each other in their features. Although their skin was a dusky brown the blackness of their little pointed beards was actually striking by contrast. Considering the state of the road, they were walking at a great pace, their slim legs keeping time.”

“They sat down then all three together over their beer at a small table, saying little, K. in the middle with an assistant on each side. <...> ‘You’re a difficult problem,’ said K., comparing them, as he had already done several times. ‘How am I to know one of you from the other? The only difference between you is your names, otherwise you’re as like as ...’ He stopped, and then went on involuntarily, ‘You’re as like as two snakes.’ They smiled.”

Marthe's two brothers in Nabokov's novel “Invitation to a Beheading” are also quite charming:

“Marthe’s brothers, identical twins except that one had a golden mustache and the other a pitch-black one”. “The blond brother sat the dark one on his shoulders and in that position they took leave of Cincinnatus and departed, like a live mountain.”

Even the very name of the protagonist — Cincinnatus — is an “empty double” (foreshadowing the appearance of the double-antipode — M’sieur Pierre), which becomes clear from the phrase: “Well, how are you, my poor little Cin-Cin?” By the way, this Cin-Cin (according to M’sieur Pierre — whose full Russian name, by the way, is Petr Petrovich) is going to do “chop-chop” (in Russian: ‘to do chick-chick’).

In the novel “Moby Dick, or the White Whale”, Captain Ahab speaks to his perpendicular doubles (his straight antipodean doubles are discussed ahead):

“Ye two are the opposite poles of one thing; Starbuck is Stubb reversed, and Stubb is Starbuck; and ye two are all mankind...”

Let us return to Svidrigailov, Raskolnikov's main double (and antipode). Svidrigailov says to Raskolnikov: “Didn't I say that there was something in common between us, eh?” And the “common point” (so literally in the Russian text) is the ability to have “daydreams”, to see ghosts. These characters are also united by the

fact that, according to the author's original plan, it was Raskolnikov who was to shoot himself. It turns out that Svidrigailov shot himself instead of him, for him.

If Raskolnikov is obsessed with the fantasy of the right to murder, Svidrigailov is obsessed with another fantasy — the fantasy of lust. Perhaps the title of the novel, *Crime and Punishment*, also refers to Svidrigailov. It is he who is rumoured to have abused a teenage girl, that is, to have committed some basic, archetypal crime — a crime that the author believed to be the worst of all. (A contemporary's testimony: “Dostoevsky spoke quickly, worried and confused.... The worst, most terrible sin is to rape a child. To take a life is terrible, Dostoevsky said, but to take away faith in the beauty of love is an even more terrible crime. <...> the most terrible sin for which there is and can be no forgiveness, and with this most terrible crime I executed Stavrogin in the “*Demons*” ”). Svidrigailov did not actually commit this crime (although according to the original plan of the novel he was supposed to commit it), but dreams about the abused girl visit him. Stavrogin, who, apart from this theme and partly similar appearance, is united with Svidrigailov by his final suicide, will later be guilty of a similar crime.

Compassion for the offended or even abused girl is a key element in virtually all of Dostoevsky's works. This girl is either abused or threatened with abuse, or she is simply beaten, stripped (or her clothes are torn or scanty), wet, cold, etc. Such is Dostoevsky's Muse.

We find something similar in Franz Kafka's diary entry (dated 2 January 1912): as a child, before going to sleep, he often imagined that he would ride in a carriage pulled by four horses into a Jewish village, free a beautiful girl who had been beaten without fault (“ein mit Unrecht geprügeltes schönes Mädchen”), and take her away with him. At the same time, the writer rightly notes that this fantasy was apparently fuelled by premature unhealthy sexuality.

Dostoevsky's Muse is most clearly manifested in the character of the teenage girl Nellie from “*The Insulted and Humiliated*” (1861) — “tortured and quivering”, suffering from epilepsy, doomed to die because of “an organic defect of the heart”. The prototype of Nelly is known to be the teenage girl Mignon from Goethe's

“Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship” (1796), who dies of heartbreak. (Perhaps the first variant of the title of Dostoevsky's novel was “Mignon”. It is significant that the future Nastasya Filippovna in the original plans of “The Idiot” also bears the name of Mignon). Mignon, by the way, gets beaten up:

“He sprang forward to see what it was; and, pressing through the people, he was struck with horror to observe the master of the rope-dancing company dragging poor Mignon by the hair out of the house, and unmercifully beating her little body with the handle of a whip.

Wilhelm darted on the man like lightning, and seized him by the collar. “Quit the child!” he cried, in a furious tone, “or one of us shall never leave this spot!” and, so speaking, he grasped the fellow by the throat with a force which only rage could have lent him. The showman, on the point of choking, let go the child, and endeavored to defend himself against his new assailant. But some people, who had felt compassion for Mignon, yet had not dared to begin a quarrel for her, now laid hold of the rope-dancer, wrenched his whip away, and threatened him with great fierceness and abuse. Being now reduced to the weapons of his mouth, he began bullying, and cursing horribly. The lazy, worthless urchin, he said, would not do her duty; refused to perform the egg-dance, which he had promised to the public; he would beat her to death, and no one should hinder him.”

“The dance between the eggs”, which Mignon later dances blindfolded — only in front of Wilhelm and only at her will — is a symbol of art in general (which reveals to us the Muse in this girl). We shall return to Mignon again.

Let us now look at the girl from Svidrigailov's dream:

“He walked for some time through a long narrow corridor without finding anyone and was just going to call out, when suddenly in a dark corner between an old cupboard and the door he caught sight of a strange object which seemed to be alive. He bent down with the candle and saw a little girl, not more than five years old, shivering and crying, with her clothes as wet as a soaking house-flannel. She did not seem afraid of Svidrigailov, but looked at him with blank amazement out of her big black eyes. Now and then she sobbed as children do when they have been

crying a long time, but are beginning to be comforted. The child's face was pale and tired, she was numb with cold. 'How can she have come here? She must have hidden here and not slept all night.' He began questioning her. The child suddenly becoming animated, chattered away in her baby language, something about 'mammy' and that 'mammy would beat her,' and about some cup that she had 'b'woken.' The child chattered on without stopping. He could only guess from what she said that she was a neglected child, whose mother, probably a drunken cook, in the service of the hotel, whipped and frightened her; that the child had broken a cup of her mother's and was so frightened that she had run away the evening before, had hidden for a long while somewhere outside in the rain, at last had made her way in here, hidden behind the cupboard and spent the night there, crying and trembling from the damp, the darkness and the fear that she would be badly beaten for it. He took her in his arms, went back to his room, sat her on the bed, and began undressing her. The torn shoes which she had on her stockingless feet were as wet as if they had been standing in a puddle all night. When he had undressed her, he put her on the bed, covered her up and wrapped her in the blanket from her head downwards. She fell asleep at once. Then he sank into dreary musing again.

'What folly to trouble myself,' he decided suddenly with an oppressive feeling of annoyance. 'What idiocy!' In vexation he took up the candle to go and look for the ragged attendant again and make haste to go away. 'Damn the child!' he thought as he opened the door, but he turned again to see whether the child was asleep. He raised the blanket carefully. The child was sleeping soundly, she had got warm under the blanket, and her pale cheeks were flushed. But strange to say that flush seemed brighter and coarser than the rosy cheeks of childhood. 'It's a flush of fever,' thought Svidrigailov. It was like the flush from drinking, as though she had been given a full glass to drink. Her crimson lips were hot and glowing; but what was this? He suddenly fancied that her long black eyelashes were quivering, as though the lids were opening and a sly crafty eye peeped out with an unchildlike wink, as though the little girl were not asleep, but pretending. Yes, it was so. Her lips parted in a

smile. The corners of her mouth quivered, as though she were trying to control them. But now she quite gave up all effort, now it was a grin, a broad grin; there was something shameless, provocative in that quite unchildish face; it was depravity, it was the face of a harlot, the shameless face of a French harlot. Now both eyes opened wide; they turned a glowing, shameless glance upon him; they laughed, invited him.... There was something infinitely hideous and shocking in that laugh, in those eyes, in such nastiness in the face of a child. 'What, at five years old?' Svidrigailov muttered in genuine horror. 'What does it mean?' And now she turned to him, her little face all aglow, holding out her arms.... 'Accursed child!' Svidrigailov cried, raising his hand to strike her, but at that moment he woke up."

Doesn't this waking girl from Svidrigailov's dream remind you of the vampire Lucy from Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula" (1897), also ready to wake up? (Her "flush of fever" alone is worth it!: "But strange to say that flush seemed brighter and coarser than the rosy cheeks of childhood. <...> Her crimson lips were hot and glowing."):

"There lay Lucy, seemingly just as we had seen her the night before her funeral. She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever, and I could not believe that she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before, and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom.

'Is this a juggle?' I said to him.

'Are you convinced now?' said the Professor, in response, and as he spoke he put over his hand, and in a way that made me shudder, pulled back the dead lips and showed the white teeth. 'See,' he went on, 'they are even sharper than before...' "

It should be noted that Goethe's Mignon also appears as a "living dead" — she is embalmed before being given an unusually solemn burial:

" 'A balsamic substance has been forced through all the veins, and now tinges, in place of blood, these cheeks too early faded. Come near, my friends, and view this wonder of art and care!'

He raised the veil: the child was lying in her angel's-dress, as if asleep, in the most soft and graceful posture. They approached, and admired this show of life."

And does not the girl in Svidrigailov's dream resemble the revived, laughing old pawn-broker (witch) from Raskolnikov's dream? By the way, Svidrigailov dreams that he finds the girl "in a dark corner between an old cupboard and the door". This is similar to how Raskolnikov (in his dream) discovers the old woman "in the corner between the window and the little cupboard". The girl in Svidrigailov's dream corresponds to the old female pawn-broker in Raskolnikov's dream.

Are not the old woman and the girl hypostases of the same witch, as in Gogol's novella "Viy", where the murdered old witch turns into a beautiful young lady? She rises from the tomb to punish her murderer (Thomas Brutus):

"Slowly he turned his head to look at the dead girl, and ...

A shudder ran through his veins: before him lay a beauty such as there had never been on earth. <...> She lay as if alive. <...> The rubies of her mouth seemed to make the blood scald his heart. Suddenly something terribly familiar showed in her face.

'The witch!' he cried out in a voice not his own, looked away, turned pale, and began reading his prayers.

It was the very witch he had killed."

"He approached the bier, looked nervously at the face of the dead girl, could not help shuddering slightly, and involuntarily closed his eyes. What terrible and extraordinary beauty!

He turned away and tried to go to one side, but the strange curiosity and peculiar fascination which men feel in moments of fear, compelled him to look again and again, though with a similar shudder. And in truth there was something terrible about the beauty of the dead girl. Perhaps she would not have inspired so much fear had she been less beautiful; but there was nothing ghastly or deathlike in the face, which wore rather an expression of life, and it seemed to the philosopher as though she were watching him from under her closed eyelids. He even thought he saw a tear roll from under the eyelash of her right eye, but when it was half-way down her cheek, he saw that it was a drop of blood. <...>

'Suppose she rose up after all?'

He raised his head. Then he looked round him wildly and rubbed his eyes. Yes, she was no longer lying in the coffin, but sitting upright. He turned away his eyes, but at once looked again, terrified, at the coffin. She stood up; then she walked with closed eyes through the church, stretching out her arms as though she wanted to seize someone.”

The “mistress of the beasts”, being the “source of life and death”, enters into a love affair with the hero and kills him (or dies herself at his hand — in myth it is important that a murder takes place when they meet, and who kills whom does not matter). Dostoevsky, in “Crime and Punishment”, separated these two lines, giving the murder to Raskolnikov and the eroticism to Svidrigailov. In French literature contemporary to Dostoevsky, however, these two lines (Thanatos and Eros, so to speak) are usually combined in such a popular protagonist as the homicidal sexual maniac.

Let us look at two examples.

First example. Svidrigailov's dream of a little girl is echoed in a fantasy from *Chants de Maldoror* (1869) by Comte de Lautréamont (Isidor Ducasse), where the author viciously parodies contemporary “compassionate” fiction — revealing the sadistic basis of this, in Nabokov's words, “protective-coloured compassion”:

“On my daily walk I used to pass through a narrow street every day. Every day a slim ten-year-old girl would follow me along the street, keeping a respectful distance, looking at me with sympathetic, curious eyes. She was big for her age, and had a well-shaped body. <...> One day she was following me as usual; the sturdy arms of a woman of the people caught her by the hair, like a whirlwind catches a leaf, and slapped her twice, brutally, on her proud, silent face. Then she brought that straying consciousness back home. I tried in vain to appear unconcerned; she never failed to pursue me, though her presence had by now become irksome. When I took a different route, she would stop, struggling violently to control herself, at the end of the street, standing still as the statue of silence, and she would not cease looking before her until I was out of sight. One day this girl went on ahead of me in the street, and fell into step with me. If I walked faster to pass by her, she almost ran

to keep the same distance between us. But if I slowed down so that there would be a large space between us, she slowed down too, and did so with all the grace of childhood. When we reached the end of the street, she slowly turned round barring my way. There was no time now for me to slip away; now I stood before her. Her eyes were swollen and red. It was easy to see that she wanted to speak to me, but did not know how to go about it. Her face suddenly turning pale as a corpse, she asked me: 'Would you be so kind as to tell me what time it is?' I told her I did not have a watch and walked rapidly away. <...> Who knows? Perhaps this young girl was not what she appeared to be. Perhaps boundless cunning, eighteen years' experience and the charm of vice were hidden beneath her innocent appearance. <...> Oh, if this supposition be true, cursed be the windings of that dark street! Horrible! horrible! the things that happen there. I think her mother struck her because she was not plying her trade skilfully enough. It is possible that she was only a child and, in that case, the mother is even more guilty. For my part, I refuse to believe this supposition, which is only a hypothesis and I prefer to see and to love, in this romantic character, a soul revealing itself too soon... Ah, young girl, I charge you not to reappear before me, if ever I return to that narrow street. It could cost you dear! Already, boiling waves of blood and hatred are rising to my head! No! No! I, generous enough to love my fellows! I have resolved against it since the day of my birth! They do not love me! Worlds will be destroyed, granite will glide like a cormorant on the surface of the waves before I touch the infamous hands of another human being. Back... back with that hand! Young girl, you are no angel, you will become like other women after all. No, no, I implore you, do not reappear before my frowning squinting eyes. In a moment of distraction I might take your arms and wring them like linen which is squeezed after washing, or break them with a crack like two dry branches and then forcibly make you eat them. Taking your head between my hands with a gentle, caressing air, I might dig my greedy fingers into the lobes of your innocent brain – to extract, with a smile on my lips, a substance which is good ointment to bathe my eyes, sore from the eternal insomnia of life. I might, by stitching your eyelids together, deprive you of the spectacle of the universe,

and make it impossible for you to see your way; and then I should certainly not act as your guide. I might, raising your virgin body in my iron arms, seize you by the legs and swing you around me like a frond, concentrating all my strength as I described the final circle, and hurling you against the wall. Each drop of your blood would spurt on to a human breast, to frighten men and to set before them an example of my wickedness. They will tear shreds and shreds of flesh from their bodies; but the drop of blood remains, ineffaceable, in the same place, and will shine like a diamond. Do not be alarmed. I will instruct half a dozen servants to keep the venerated remains of your body and to protect them from the ravenous hunger of the dogs. No doubt the body has remained stuck to the wall like a ripe pear and has not fallen to the earth; but a dog can jump extremely high, if one is not careful...”

It sounds like Dostoevsky's “Notes from Underground” taken to the extreme (especially the second part, “Apropos of the Wet Snow”). “Taking your head between my hands with a gentle, caressing air, I might dig my greedy fingers into the lobes of your innocent brain...”

Second example. In Émile Zola's late novel “The Beast Within” (*La Bête humaine*, 1890), Jacques is the ultimate maniac, obsessed with the desire to kill a woman:

“The terrible affliction, which he had thought was cured, had returned. He had wanted to kill her. He had wanted to kill this girl. Kill a woman! Kill a woman! The words had sounded in his ears since his early adolescence with the maddening, feverish insistence of unsated desire. Whereas other boys coming to puberty dreamed of possessing a woman, the only thing that had excited him was the thought of killing one. It was pointless trying to deceive himself.”

Jacques is an interesting parallel to Raskolnikov (the French translation of “Crime and Punishment” was published in 1884), for when he plots the murder of his mistress Séverine's husband (Roubaud), he also makes arguments such as “I have the right!”, but behind these arguments is quite obviously the bloodlust, the voluptuousness of the murder itself:

“He broke out into a sweat; he saw himself with the knife in his hand, plunging it into Roubaud's throat <...> and feeling the satisfaction and relief as the blood ran

over his hands. He would kill him; he had decided. He would be cured, he would have the wife he adored and his future would be assured. If he had to kill, and someone had to be killed, he would kill Roubaud. He would at least know why he was doing it; it made sense logically and it was in his own best interests.

Having taken his decision and as it had just struck three, Jacques tried to sleep. He was about to drop off when a violent shock made him come to and sit up in his bed gasping for breath. Good God! What right had he to kill Roubaud? If a fly annoyed him he would squash it with his hand. Once he had nearly tripped over a cat and had kicked it from under his feet and broken its back; he hadn't meant to, it's true. But Roubaud was a man like himself. Jacques had to rethink all his arguments in order to persuade himself of his right to murder — the right of the strong to destroy the weak who get in their way."

It is no coincidence that a grinning dead old woman appears in the novel "The Beast Within", as in Crime and Punishment:

"There was a sudden rush of wind, the walls of the house shook, and the glow from the firebox of a passing train moved across the dead woman's white face, making her staring eyes and the sneering grin on her lips turn blood-red. It was the last stopping train from Paris, making its slow, laborious progress towards Le Havre."

Another remarkable thing: if in "Crime and Punishment" the symbol of the murdered old female pawn-broker and her sister Lizaveta is the tortured and killed horse from Raskolnikov's dream (compare also with the parallel fall and death of Anna Karenina and Frou-Frou's horse in Tolstoy's novel), in "The Beast Within" a similar symbol is Jacques's crashed steam engine. (By the way, Jacques named his locomotive "La Lison".) Zola directly compares the wrecked locomotive with a dying horse:

"La Lison had fallen over on to her back, with her underside to the air. Steam came gushing from open valves and broken pipes with a fierce hiss, like the dying gasps of an angry giant. Dense clouds of white vapour swirled across the ground. Burning coal spilled from the firebox, like blood pouring from her belly, filling the air with a pall of black smoke. The force of the impact had buried her chimney in the ground; the chassis was broken where it had taken the shock, and both side frames were bent.

She lay with her wheels in the air, like a monstrous steed that has been gored by some savage beast, displaying her twisted coupling-rods, her broken cylinders, and her shattered piston rods and valve gear to the sky, like a hideous gaping wound through which her life ebbed away with groans of anger and despair. Beside her lay the horse that had not been killed; its two front legs had been ripped off and, like her, its innards were spilling out through an open gash in its belly. It was straining its head forward, straight and rigid, in a hideous contortion of pain; they could see it gasping and screaming pitifully, but above the terrible noise that came from the dying locomotive, no sound reached their ears.”

This tragic horse jogged into literature from Victor Hugo's novel “The Miserables” (1862) — from the chapter “The Death of the Horse” (in this novel, the death of the horse symbolises the death of Fantine — Cosette's mother). But actually there is a sacrifice in all these novels: the death of the “mistress of the beasts” and the death of a mythical beast are synonymous.

* * *

In Pushkin's novella “The Queen of Spades”, Hermann thinks the dead countess is winking at him:

“... Hermann summoned his resolve to go up to the coffin. He bent down to the ground and prostrated himself for several minutes on the cold floor, which was strewn with sprigs of fir. Finally, pale as the deceased, he got to his feet, climbed the steps to the catafalque and bent down towards her. At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman screwed up one eye and gave him a mocking wink. Hermann stepped quickly backwards, lost his footing and crashed to the ground, flat on his back.”

Nothing surprising, of course: a dead person, a statue or a painting has to give a sign to the hero somehow: it can nod, it can wink.... Look, for example, at the winking false Maria from Fritz Lang's film Metropolis:



False Maria's human form is deceptive: she is a female robot created by the inventor Rotwang, who gave her the appearance of the real Mary he kidnapped (remember Coppola and the puppet Olympia from Hoffmann's "The Sandman"). In the film, the false Maria is repeatedly referred to as a witch.

Recall also the winking of the girl in Svidrigailov's dream ("He suddenly fancied that her long black eyelashes were quivering, as though the lids were opening and a sly crafty eye peeped out with an unchildlike wink, as though the little girl were not asleep, but pretending.").

Margarita in Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "Master and Margarita" does not wink, but squints at one eye:

"What, then, did this woman need?! What did this woman need, in whose eyes there always burned some enigmatic little fire? What did she need, this witch with a slight cast in one eye, who had adorned herself with mimosa that time in the spring? I do not know. I have no idea."

This difference in Margarita's eyes is echoed in Bulgakov's novel by the different eyes of Woland (Satan) ("Mouth somehow twisted. Clean-shaven. Dark-haired. Right eye black, left — for some reason — green. Dark eyebrows, but one higher than the other. In short, a foreigner."), in Koroviev's asymmetrical glasses ("Now the ex-choirmaster had perched on his nose an obviously unnecessary pince-nez, in which one lens was missing altogether and the other was cracked."), in the albugo

on Azazello's eye ("short, but with athletic shoulders, hair red as fire, albugo in one eye, a fang in his mouth").

Woland can also squint ("here the foreigner squinted at Berlioz"), as can the Queen of Spades ("At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman screwed up one eye and gave him a mocking wink" (in the Russian text literally: "squinted and grinned"). As can Pugachev ("Pugachev looked at me intently, occasionally squinting his left eye with an astonishing expression of cunning and mockery"). Notice, by the way, how close the images of Pugachev and the Queen of Spades are here. Smerdyakov also squints his left eye when looking at Ivan Karamazov:

"His left eye winked and he grinned as if to say [literally: "his left slightly squinted eye blinked and sneered"], 'Where are you going? You won't pass by; you see that we two clever people have something to say to each other.' "

In short, both the witch (the goddess of life and death) and the antipodean double have a bad habit of winking or squinting. Look also at the shot from Akira Kurosawa's film "The Idiot", where Akamo (Parfyon Rogozhin) winks at Kameda (Prince Myshkin):



At the same time, a squinted or closed eye is synonymous with blindness. Here is a still from Samuel Beckett's film "The Film" (1964):



The protagonist is horrified when he notices his double (exactly himself) standing against the wall and staring at him.

Blindness is a sign of a being from the world of the dead (unseeing and invisible in the world of the living). A blind or squinted eye is a magical eye (designed to see in the world of death, or to convey a message from another world). For example, you can see such an eye — a snake-eye (a snake is a symbol of the underworld) — on ancient Peruvian ceramic:



Look also at the spirit mask from Alaska squinting its left eye:



Carlos Castaneda (who knew Indian mythology quite well) writes about such a magical eye in “Tales of Power” (1974), a book about an encounter with a *nágual*, a zoomorphic spirit-double:

“ ‘The secret is in the left eye,’ he said. ‘As a warrior progresses on the path of knowledge his left eye can clasp anything. Usually the left eye of a warrior has a strange appearance. Sometimes it becomes permanently crossed, or it becomes smaller than the other, or larger, or different in some way.’ ”

In Henrik Ibsen's play “Peer Gynt” (1867), the Dovre King wants to turn Peer into a troll:

*... In your left eye
I'll make a little scratch, so that you'll see askew
ever after; all will appear to be splendidly new.*

In short, the squinted eye means: there is another world — and here is a sign from it.

But that is not all. As we have already said, in Raphael's painting "La Belle Jardinière" (Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist), the little Jesus and John the Baptist correspond compositionally to the eyes of the Madonna. It is as if this painting itself has two eyes, and the left eye (John the Baptist) is an antipodean double of the right one (Jesus). It is as if the painting winks at us with the double-antipode (the artwork seems to see us and gives us a sign from the other world). Something similar happens in the following still from Ingmar Bergman's film "Persona" (1966):



This face is joined from two halves: on the left is the nurse Alma, and on the right is Mrs Elisabet Vogler, Alma's patient and antipodean double. Alma is speaking here: *"No! I'm not like you. I don't feel the same way you do. I'm Sister Alma. I'm only here to help you. I'm not Elisabet Vogler. You're Elisabet Vogler."*

Alma turned into her antipodean double — and got scared. Earlier she was saying: *"When I got home and looked in the mirror, I thought, 'We look alike.' Don't get me wrong. You're much more beautiful. But we're alike somehow. I think I could turn into you if I really tried. I mean inside."*

Alma, thanks to her patient, undergoes an initiation. Bergman (in "Images") formulated it as follows: "Through Mrs Vogler, nurse Alma is off in search of herself."

The Latin word "persona" means "mask". Without realising it himself (but guided by his artistic instinct), Bergman in this image reproduced an Indian sacral mask, in

which one half of the face is that of a human being and the other half is that of a spirit.

* * *

We have already noticed that a squinted or blind eye in myth is not only a sign of a creature of the other world, but also becomes a creature of the other world itself — a double-antipode of an ordinary eye. A similar story happens with legs. Limpness or one-leggedness of someone in the myth means that he is a snake (or descended from a snake). However, a lame leg (or an artificial leg) can also act as a double-antipode of a healthy one. We see a similar picture, for instance, in Melville's novel "Moby Dick, or the White Whale", when we look at the one-legged Captain Ahab preparing for the whale hunt (his leg, by the way, was bitten off by the White Whale):

"And had you watched Ahab's face that night, you would have thought that in him also two different things were warring. While his one live leg made lively echoes along the deck, every stroke of his dead limb sounded like a coffin-tap. On life and death this old man walked."

Captain Kopeykin (one of Chichikov's doubles) in Gogol's prose poem "Dead Souls" is one-legged and one-armed.

Ahab is just one-legged (it is noteworthy that "his snow-white new ivory leg" is made of whale bone, that is, he is related to the mythical beast). But — to complete the picture — he meets another captain (an American meets an Englishman) who is one-legged (and also thanks to the White Whale):

" 'See you this?' and withdrawing it from the folds that had hidden it, he held up a white arm of sperm whale bone, terminating in a wooden head like a mallet. <....> With his ivory arm frankly thrust forth in welcome, the other captain advanced, and Ahab, putting out his ivory leg, and crossing the ivory arm (like two sword-fish blades) cried out in his walrus way, 'Aye, aye, hearty! let us shake bones

together!—an arm and a leg!—an arm that never can shrink, d'ye see; and a leg that never can run. Where did'st thou see the White Whale?—how long ago?'

'The White Whale,' said the Englishman, pointing his ivory arm towards the East, and taking a rueful sight along it, as if it had been a telescope; 'there I saw him, on the Line, last season.'

'And he took that arm off, did he?' asked Ahab, now sliding down from the capstan, and resting on the Englishman's shoulder, as he did so.

'Aye, he was the cause of it, at least; and that leg, too?' "

The English captain is Ahab's antipodean double (in addition to the Ishmael ↔ Queequeg line in the novel, there is the Ahab ↔ Ahab's doubles line). He is not going to continue pursuing the White Whale ("No more White Whales for me; I've lowered for him once, and that has satisfied me.") — in contrast to Ahab ("But he will still be hunted, for all that. What is best let alone, that accursed thing is not always what least allures. He's all a magnet!"). The English captain tells Ahab in which direction to look for the White Whale.

Ahab's other antipodean double is the deranged little negro Pip, who — especially relevant to our creepy investigation — wants to replace the captain's missing leg:

" 'Do thou abide below here, where they shall serve thee, as if thou wert the captain. <...>

'No, no, no! ye have not a whole body, sir; do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye.' "

Ahab's double is also the mysterious Parsee Fedallah:

"... as Ahab's eyes so awed the crew's, the inscrutable Parsee's glance awed his; or somehow, at least, in some wild way, at times affected it. Such an added, gliding strangeness began to invest the thin Fedallah now; such ceaseless shudderings shook him; that the men looked dubious at him; half uncertain, as it seemed, whether indeed he were a mortal substance, or else a tremulous shadow cast upon the deck by some unseen being's body. And that shadow was always hovering there. For not by night, even, had Fedallah ever certainly been known to slumber,

or go below. He would stand still for hours: but never sat or leaned; his wan but wondrous eyes did plainly say—We two watchmen never rest. <...>

At times, for longest hours, without a single hail, they stood far parted in the starlight; Ahab in his scuttle, the Parsee by the mainmast; but still fixedly gazing upon each other; as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow, in Ahab the Parsee his abandoned substance.”

We shall speak later about similarities of this Parsee in Gogol — about the Persian from the story “Nevsky Prospekt”, about the terrible look of the scrawny oriental old man (probably also a Persian) from the story “Portrait”.

At the end of Melville's novel, the dead Fedalla stares intently at Captain Ahab, as if calling the captain to follow him:

“Lashed round and round to the fish's back; pinioned in the turns upon turns in which, during the past night, the whale had reeled the involutions of the lines around him, the half torn body of the Parsee was seen; his sable raiment frayed to shreds; his distended eyes turned full upon old Ahab.

The harpoon dropped from his hand.

‘Befooled, befooled!’—drawing in a long lean breath—‘Aye, Parsee! I see thee again.—Aye, and thou goest before; and this, THIS then is the hearse that thou didst promise...’ ”

* * *

Let us give an example on the mythical dead hand. In José Saramago's novel “The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis” (1984), Ricardo Reis — a heteronym for the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (that is, a fictional person in whose name Pessoa wrote some of his poems) — returns from Brazil to Portugal and meets Pessoa, who had died shortly before. Fernando Pessoa plays the role of Ricardo Reis's antipodean double — he is Reis's guide to the realm of death. In the hotel Ricardo Reis meets a girl named Marcenda (note also the name itself — its very sound), whose right hand is alive and whose left hand is dead (weaned). (“... how have you

been, is your hand improving. No better, I have it here in my pocket like a dead bird.”) Marcenda (the goddess of death, about whom it is said that “her left hand is anticipated death”) makes a date with Ricardo. Ricardo, arriving at the appointed place, sees first “two silent old men seated on the same bench. They have probably known each other so long that they have no longer anything to say, perhaps they are waiting to see who will die first.” In short, we see here “empty doubles” (who also emphasise the fact that Pessoa dies first, to be followed shortly after by Reis). Reis is then joined by Pessoa, who is visible to one of the old men, and invisible to the other, and they argue it (“... what I don't understand is why that fellow in black has been hanging around all this time, What fellow, That one leaning against the railing, I can't see anyone, You need glasses, And you're drunk. It was always the same with these two old men, they would start chatting, then argue, then move to separate benches, then forget their quarrel and sit together once more.”). Then comes Marcenda, to whom it seems that Ricardo is talking to himself — while he was talking to his double and recalling Pessoa's poems (“Were you talking to yourself, she asked. Yes, after a fashion, I was reciting some poetry written by a friend of mine who died a few months ago ...”).

Ricardo Reis corresponds to the right (living) hand of Marcenda, while Fernando Pessoa (Reis's double-antipode) corresponds to the left (dead) hand of Marcenda, who plays the role of the goddess of life and death.

* * *

Leonid Gaidai's comedy film “The Caucasian Captive” (1966) begins with a coded mythological picture: Isis, the Beautiful Lady — between doubles. The action of the film takes place in the Caucasus. Shurik (a diminutive for Alexander), riding a donkey, gets stuck on the road, and on his right a Caucasian guy on a lorry with a red cross (chauffeur Edik) gets stuck on the same road. No matter how hard they struggle, they are unable to move their reluctant means of transport. Suddenly unearthly music is heard, a girl Nina — obviously a goddess (about her it will be

said: “A student, a Komsomol girl²⁴, an athlete, finally, she is just a beauty!”) heads towards them and passes between them on the road ahead. The donkey and the car move off on their own, leaving the young people behind them on the road, and follow her — the “mistress of the beasts”. Then the donkey and the car are followed by the young people, and they mount their friends —the four-legged one and the four-wheeled one. (By the way, towards the end of the film, the Caucasian driver says about his truck: “This car is a beast!” — that is, very powerful.) In short, we see two centaurs on the sides of the “mistress of the beasts”:



The antipodean double often appears as a stranger (for example, a foreigner). And very often as a person with dark hair and swarthy skin (because the double-antipode is the “shadow” of the hero). Edik is exactly like that. The double-antipode has an important role: he must unravel (or, on the contrary, tangle) the hero's fate. That's what happens in the film. Shurik escapes from the psychiatric institution, jumping (with the help of a swing) over the fence — and immediately meets Edik, who has arrived with his lorry. The latter catches up with the fleeing Shurik, puts him in the lorry, and then takes over all the tasks.

²⁴ The Young Communist League, usually known as Komsomol, was a political youth organization in the Soviet Union.

By the way, there is also an “empty trio” in the film (emphasising the trinity of the code picture). These hapless goddesses of fate (Greek Moirai, Roman Parkas, Scandinavian Norns) are the Coward, the Experienced and the Moron:



In Vladimir Motyl's film "White Sun of the Desert" (1969), Sukhov (the film's protagonist) meets his Oriental assistant — at first in the form of a separate head.



This is the buried Saïd, who will then unobtrusively help the man who dug him up, Sukhov (quite a fairy-tale element of the plot: either a head deprived of its torso or a dead man not buried properly helps the hero).

The Caucasus or the desert in these films are synonyms for the other world into which the hero enters. The desert is also a synonym for the element of sand that consumes the hero.

* * *

Evgraf, the faithful assistant and half brother of Yurii Zhivago, a doctor and poet ('Eugraf' in Greek means 'one who writes well'), appears to the protagonist out of a snowstorm, which, quite obviously, has penetrated into the novel from Pushkin's "The Captain's Daughter". (Golyadkin's double in Dostoevsky's story "The Double" also appears from "the snowstorm"). And before getting into the snowstorm itself, Zhivago goes off the road (like Pyotr Grinyov) and goes deeper into the labyrinth (like Chichikov in "Dead Souls", like Ishmael in "Moby Dick"): *"He had turned down so many side streets that he had almost lost count of them when the snow thickened and the wind turned into a blizzard, the kind of blizzard that whistles in a field covering it with a blanket of snow, but which in town tosses about as if it had lost its way."*

There was something in common between the disturbances in the moral and in the physical world, near and far on the ground and in the air. Here and there resounded the last salvoes of islands of resistance. Bubbles of dying fires rose and broke on the horizon. And the snow swirled and eddied and smoked at Yurii's feet, on the wet streets and pavements.

A newsboy running with a thick batch of freshly printed papers under his arm and shouting 'Latest news!' overtook him at an intersection.

'Keep the change,' said the doctor. The boy peeled a damp sheet off the batch, thrust it into his hand, and a minute later was engulfed in the snowstorm.

The doctor stopped under a street light to read the headlines. The paper was a late extra printed on one side only; it gave the official announcement from Petersburg that a Soviet of People's Commissars had been formed and that Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat were established in Russia. There followed the

first decrees of the new government and various brief news dispatches received by telegraph and telephone.

The blizzard lashed at the doctor's eyes and covered the printed page with gray, rustling pellets of snow. But it was not the snowstorm that prevented him from reading. The historic greatness of the moment moved him so deeply that it took him some time to collect himself.

To read the rest of the news he looked around for a better lit, sheltered place. He found that he was standing once again at that charmed spot, the intersection of Serebriany and Molchanovka, in front of a tall, five-story building with a glass door and a spacious, well-lit lobby.

He went in and stood under the electric light, next to the staircase, reading the news.

Footsteps sounded above him. Someone was coming down the stairs, stopping frequently, as though hesitating. <...>

Yurii Andreyevich was absorbed in his paper and had not meant to look up, but the stranger stopped so suddenly at the foot of the stairs that he raised his head.

Before him stood a boy of about eighteen in a reindeer cap and a reindeer coat worn, as in Siberia, fur side out. He had a swarthy face with narrow Kirghiz eyes. His face had an aristocratic quality, the fugitive spark and reticent delicacy that give an impression of remoteness and are sometimes found in people of a complex, mixed parentage.

The boy obviously mistook Yurii Andreyevich for someone else. He looked at him, puzzled and shy, as if he knew him but could not make up his mind to speak. To put an end to the misunderstanding Yurii Andreyevich measured him with a cold, discouraging glance.

The boy turned away confused and walked to the entrance. There he looked back once again before going out and banging the heavy glass door shut behind him."

Evgraf as an antipodean double has the following features: the name itself, his appearance from the labyrinth and from the snowstorm, "a reindeer cap and a reindeer coat worn, as in Siberia, fur side out" (that is, the skin of the zoomorphic

double), a gaze fixed on Zhivago and “a swarthy face with narrow Kyrghiz eyes”. The latter signifies an Oriental stranger (the hero's antipode), but not only. “Swarthy face” is here because Evgraf is Yurii's “shadow.” And the “Kyrgyz eyes” represent the squinted, that is, special, otherworldly, magical look of the double.

Compare this to what happens to the protagonist of Gustav Meyrink's novel “The Golem” (1915), who feels himself being transformed into a Golem and acquiring a mongoloid face with slanted eyes:

“I was trying to imitate the gait and expression of the unknown man when I could not even remember them. How could I expect to imitate him if I had no clue at all as to what he looked like!

But what happened was different, completely different from what I imagined. My skin, my muscles, my body suddenly remembered, without revealing the secret to my brain. They made movements that I had not willed, had not intended.

As if my limbs no longer belonged to me!

All at once, when I took a few steps into the room, I found myself walking with a strange, faltering gait. That is the way someone walks who is constantly in fear of falling forward on to his face, I said to myself.

*Yes, yes, yes! That was the way **he** walked!*

I knew quite clearly: that is the way he is.

I was wearing an alien face, clean-shaven, with prominent cheek-bones; I was looking at my room out of slanting eyes. I could sense it, even though I could not see myself.”

(At another point in the novel, Golem is described as a “a completely unknown person, smooth-faced, with a yellow complexion and mongoloid features”.)

“Strange, mysterious” Evgraf not only helps Yurii Zhivago during his illness, but also guides his destiny. It is noteworthy that the second time Yurii sees him through the delirium of his illness, that is, as though the double appears to the protagonist in a dream:

“He began to get better. At first he took everything for granted, like a halfwit. He remembered nothing, he could see no connection between one thing and another

and was not surprised at anything. His wife fed him on white bread and butter and sugared tea; she gave him coffee. He had forgotten that such things did not exist, and he enjoyed their taste like poetry or like fairy tales, as something right and proper for a convalescent. Soon, however, he began to think and wonder.

'How did you get all this?' he asked his wife.

'Your Grania got it for us.'

'What Grania?'

'Grania Zhivago.'

'Grania Zhivago?'

'Well, yes, your brother Evgraf, from Omsk [a city in Siberia, that is, over the Ural Mountains]. Your half brother. He came every day while you were ill.'

'Does he wear a reindeer coat?'

'That's right. So you did see him. You were unconscious nearly all the time. He said he had run into you on the stairs in some house or other. He knew you—he meant to speak to you, but apparently you frightened him to death! He worships you, he reads every word you write. The things he got for us! Rice, raisins, sugar! He's gone back now. He wants us to go there too. He's a strange boy, a bit mysterious. I think he must have some sort of connection with the government out there. He says we ought to get away for a year or two, get away from the big towns, 'go back to the land' for a bit, he says. I thought of the Krueger place and he said it was a very good idea. We could grow vegetables and there's the forest all around. There isn't any point in dying without a struggle, like sheep.'

In April that year Zhivago set out with his whole family for the former Varykino estate, near the town of Yuriatin, far away in the Urals.'

(It is also well worth noting the appropriateness and "rightness" of the "poetry and fairy tale" so important to the understanding of Pasternak's novel. It is also significant that Grania appears from behind the Ural Mountains — as if from another world. Grania, by the way, is an affectionate variant of the name 'Evgraf', 'Grania' sounds similar to the Russian word 'gran' — 'edge, border'.)

In the further course of the novel, this double continues to personify Providence:

“ ‘It is truly extraordinary. He is my half brother. We bear the same name. And yet I know virtually nothing about him. For the second time he has burst into my life as my good genius, my rescuer, resolving all my difficulties. Perhaps in every life there has to be, in addition to the other protagonists, a secret, unknown force, an almost symbolic figure who comes unsummoned to the rescue, and perhaps in mine Evgraf, my brother, plays the part of this hidden benefactor?’ ”

In Thomas Mann's novel “The Magic Mountain” (1924) Hans Castorp, having got to the “magic mountain” (a Swiss mountain tuberculosis sanatorium), meets his “goddess of life and death”, his Beautiful Lady — a Russian patient (with a French surname) Clavdia Chauchat (who, entering the dining room, every time slams the door, which at first unpleasantly surprises Hans. But, of course, this slamming is a sign that violates decorum and everyday life, a sign of a goddess (don't laugh!)). She reminds him of someone. At one point Hans Castorp goes into the mountains, sinks into a dream there — and sees his school childhood. He realises that Clavdia Chauchat reminds him of a boy, Pribislav (spelled Pshibislav) Hippe, with whom Hans went to school, to whom he was irresistibly, insistently drawn, but with whom he spoke only once. The boy was, like Clavdia, of exotic origin and appearance:

“He came from Mecklenburg and was in his person obviously the product of an ancient mixture of races, a grafting of Germanic stock with Slavic, or the reverse. True, his close-shorn round pate was blond; but the eyes were a grey-blue, or a blue-grey—an indefinite, ambiguous colour, like the hue of far-distant mountain ranges—and of an odd, narrow shape; were even, to be precise, a little slanting, with strongly marked, prominent cheek-bones directly under them. It was a type of face which in this instance, far from seeming an abnormality, was distinctly pleasing, though odd enough to have won for him the nickname of ‘the Kirghiz’ among his schoolmates.”

(Apparently, this is where Evgraf's “Kirghiz eyes” came from.) Later on, events take place that further unite these two images (Clavdia as “mistress of the beasts” and Pribislav as an antipodean double) for the protagonist.

The idea of a school mate “shining through” the Beautiful Lady also appealed to Hermann Hesse. In Hesse's novel “Steppenwolf” (1927), the protagonist (Harry

Haller) talks to a girl without a name (she refused to give her name at their first meeting):

“ ‘But now I really must know your name.’

She looked at me for a moment without speaking.

‘Perhaps you can guess it. I should be so glad if you did. Pull yourself together and take a good look at me. Hasn’t it ever occurred to you that sometimes my face is just like a boy’s? Now, for example.’

Yes, now that I looked at her face carefully, I had to admit she was right. It was a boy’s face. And after a moment I saw something in her face that reminded me of my own boyhood and of my friend of those days. His name was Herman. For a moment it seemed that she had turned into this Herman.

‘If you were a boy,’ said I in amazement, ‘I should say your name was Herman.’

‘Who knows, perhaps I am one and am simply in woman’s clothing,’ she said, joking.

‘Is your name Hermine?’

She nodded, beaming, delighted at my guess. <...>

Meanwhile I asked her: ‘How did you manage to look like a boy and make me guess your name?’

‘Oh, you did all that yourself. Doesn’t your learning reveal to you that the reason why I please you and mean so much to you is because I am a kind of looking glass for you, because there’s something in me that answers you and understands you?’
<...>

‘There’s nothing you don’t know, Hermine,’ I cried in amazement. ‘It’s exactly as you say. And yet you’re so entirely different from me. Why, you’re my opposite. You have all that I lack.’

‘So you think,’ she said shortly, ‘and it’s well you should.’ ”

Note that Hermann is also the author's name. He put his “I” on the chessboard of the work (compare: ‘Harry Haller’ — ‘Hermann Hesse’), then gave to the protagonist Hermine-Hermann, added a double-antipode — swarthy saxophonist Pablo.... In Goethe's novel “Elective Affinities” (1809), the protagonist says: “But man is a true

Narcissus; he delights to see his own image everywhere; and he spreads himself underneath the universe, like the amalgam behind the glass” (“...aber der Mensch ist ein wahrer Narziss; er bespiegelt sich überall gern selbst, er legt sich als Folie der ganzen Welt unter.”). Quite similar to what Stavrogin says: “I’ll go to a doctor. It’s all rubbish, terrible rubbish. It’s I myself in various aspects and nothing more.”

It can be creepy, but it can also be fun. For example, in Jim Jarmusch’s film “Paterson”, the main character is a person-city: a bus driver and poet named Paterson lives in the city of Paterson. And now and then he meets different doubles: both literal double pairs (so to speak, empty doubles) and his own double-antipodes.

Let me give another example of homogeneous characters in a plot: in August Strindberg’s dramatic trilogy “The Road to Damascus” (1898—1904), the protagonist (the Stranger), a double of the author himself, meets a Lady and then a “strange beggar” who looks like him (“Are you, you; or are you me?”). All other characters in the play are doubles and doubles of doubles. For example, the Beggar appears later as the Dominican and also as the Confessor. In fact, there is only one character in the trilogy, namely the author himself, carrying on a conversation with himself by means of his various reflections.

Let us return to “The Magic Mountain”. The resemblance of Frau Chauchat to ancient images of goddesses is emphasised by Hans’s enchanted admiration of her arms (remember Lara’s arms, which Yurii Zhivago imagines in the winter rowan tree):

“But it [a new gown] left free to the shoulder Clavdia’s arms, so tender and yet so full, so cool, so amazingly white, set off against the dark silk of her frock, with such ravishing effect that it made Hans Castorp close his eyes, and murmur within himself: ‘O my God!’ ”

“Of her arms we shall say no more in this place. They were bare to the shoulder. ‘Look at her well,’ Hans Castorp heard Herr Settembrini say, as though from a distance, following her with his glance as she presently left the room. ‘The fair one, see! ’Tis Lilith!’

‘Who?’ asked Hans Castorp.

Herr Settembrini's literary soul was pleased. He answered: 'Adam's first wife is she.' "

Hans perceives his meeting with Clavdia as fateful:

"Then there were the eyes themselves: the narrow "Kirghiz" eyes, whose shape was yet to Hans Castorp a simple enchantment and whose colour was the grey-blue or blue-grey of distant mountains; they had the trick of sidewise, unseeing glance, which could sometimes melt them into the very hue of mystery and darkness— these eyes of Clavdia, which had gazed so forbiddingly into his very face, and which so awfully resembled Pribislav Hippe's in shape, expression, and colour that they fairly frightened him. Resembled was not the word: they were the same eyes. The breadth, too, of the upper part of the face, the flattened nose, everything, even to the flush in the white skin, the healthy colour of the cheek—which in Frau Chauchat's case, as in so many others, merely counterfeited health and was a superficial effect of the openair cure—everything was precisely Pribislav, and no differently would he have looked at Hans Castorp were they to meet again as of old in the school court-yard. It had been staggering in the extreme. Hans Castorp thrilled at the encounter, yet experienced a mounting uneasiness like that he felt when he realized how narrow was the proximity that enclosed him and the fair Russian. That the long-forgotten Pribislav Hippe should appear to him in the guise of Frau Chauchat and look at him with those "Kirghiz" eyes—this was to be immured, not with opportunity, but with the inevitable, the unescapable, to such an extent as to fill him with conflicting emotions. It was a situation rich in hope, yet heavy with dread ..."

The words "this was to be immured, not with opportunity, but with the inevitable, the unescapable <...> It was a situation rich in hope, yet heavy with dread" mean, incidentally, that the hero has entered the "hut on chicken legs" of Russian fairy tales, which cannot be bypassed if you want to enter another world and gain power over fate. He has entered a limited, but artistic space. (Limited in the same way that a painting is limited by its frame.)

Clavdia Chochat, who appears to the hero on the snowy "magic mountain", is the Snow Queen, that is, a version of the goddess of death. It is not by chance that she

is “corroded by the worm of disease”. And it is not by chance that Hans Castorp is enchanted by “the utter, accentuated, blinding nudity of these arms, these splendid members of an infected organism”. Note also the “the flush in the white skin, the healthy colour of the cheek—which in Frau Chauchat’s case merely counterfeited health” and recall, for instance, the delicate blush of the vampire Lucy in “Dracula” (“and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom”) or the “flush of fever” of the girl in Svidrigailov’s dream.

Hermine in “Steppenwolf” also turns out to be the goddess of death, the Snow Queen. She asks Harry Haller to kill her — and he obliges:

“Beneath Hermine’s left breast was a fresh round mark, darkly bruised—a love bite of Pablo’s beautiful, gleaming teeth. There, where the mark was, I plunged in my knife to the hilt. The blood welled out over her white and delicate skin. <...> Her wish was fulfilled. Before she had ever been mine, I had killed my love. I had done the unthinkable, and now I kneeled and stared and did not know at all what this deed meant, whether it was good and right or the opposite. <...> The painted mouth glowed more red on the growing pallor of the face. [You remember Lucy from Dracula: “The lips were red, nay redder than before, and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom.”] So had my whole life been. My little happiness and love were like this staring mouth, a little red upon a mask of death.

And from the dead face, from the dead white shoulders and the dead white arms, there exhaled and slowly crept a shudder, a desert wintriness and desolation, a slowly, slowly increasing chill in which my hands and lips grew numb. Had I quenched the sun? Had I stopped the heart of all life? Was it the coldness of death and space breaking in?

With a shudder I stared at the stony brow and the stark hair and the cool pale shimmer of the ear. The cold that streamed from them was deathly and yet it was beautiful, it rang, it vibrated. It was music!

Hadn’t I once felt this shudder before and found it at the same time a joy? Hadn’t I once caught this music before? Yes, with Mozart and the immortals.”

Along with Clavdia, the “source of life and death” in the novel “The Magic Mountain” is snow — as an element of nature. Thus, the chapter “Snow” first relates how unusually much snow has fallen this winter, then describes a blizzard:

“At ten o’clock the sun, a wan wisp of light, came up behind its mountain, and gave the indistinguishable scene some shadowy hint of life, some sallow glimmer of reality; yet even so, it retained its delicate ghostliness, its lack of any definite line for the eye to follow. The contours of the peaks dissolved, disappeared, were dissipated in the mist, while the vision, led on from one pallidly gleaming slope of snow to another, lost itself in the void. <...>

Then there were storms so violent as to prevent one’s sitting on the balcony for the driven snow which blew in, in such quantity as to cover floor and chair with a thick mantle. Yes, even in this sheltered valley it knew how to storm. The thin air would be in a hurly-burly, so whirling full of snow one could not see a hand’s breadth before one’s face. Gusts strong enough to take one’s breath away flung the snow about, drew it up cyclone-fashion from the valley floor to the upper air, whisked it about in the maddest dance; no longer a snow-storm, it was a blinding chaos, a white dark, a monstrous dereliction on the part of this inordinate and violent region; no living creature save the snow-bunting—which suddenly appeared in troops—could flourish in it.”

The story goes on to describe how Hans goes skiing in the mountains and gets caught in a blizzard. In his memory and imagination, the blizzard is merged with the raging sea — and thus with the beast that beats its paw and opens its mouth:

“On the island of Sylt he had stood by the edge of the thundering surf. In his white flannels, elegant, self-assured, but most respectful, he had stood there as one stands before a lion’s cage and looks deep into the yawning jaws of the beast, lined with murderous fangs. He had bathed in the surf, and heeded the blast of the coast-guard’s horn, warning all and sundry not to venture rashly beyond the first line of billows, not to approach too nearly the oncoming tempest—the very last impulse of whose cataract, indeed, struck upon him like a blow from a lion’s paw. From that experience our young man had learned the fearful pleasure of toying with forces so

great that to approach them nearly is destruction. What he had not then felt was the temptation to come closer, to carry the thrilling contact with these deadly natural forces up to a point where the full embrace was imminent. Weak human being that he was—though tolerably well equipped with the weapons of civilization—what he at this moment knew was the fascination of venturing just so far into the monstrous unknown, or at least abstaining just so long from flight before it, that the adventure grazed the perilous, that it was just barely possible to put limits to it, before it became no longer a matter of toying with the foam and playfully dodging the ruthless paw—but the ultimate adventure, the billow, the lion's jaws, and the sea.”

Let us recall on this occasion the raging blizzard at the beginning of the novel “Doctor Zhivago”, which also seems animate — as if it were a mythical beast or the Snow Queen:

“During the night the boy, Yura, was wakened by a knocking at the window. The dark cell was mysteriously lit up by a flickering whiteness. With nothing on but his shirt, he ran to the window and pressed his face against the cold glass.

Outside there was no trace of the road, the graveyard, or the kitchen garden, nothing but the blizzard, the air smoking with snow. It was almost as if the snowstorm had caught sight of Yura and, conscious of its power to terrify, roared and howled, doing everything possible to impress him. Turning over and over in the sky, length after length of whiteness unwound over the earth and shrouded it. The blizzard was alone in the world; it had no rival.”

In the snow, Hans Castorp notices eyes — the eyes of Clavdia and Pribislav:

“Walking, he thrust the end of his stick in the snow and watched the blue light follow it out of the hole it made. That he liked; and stood for long at a time to test the little optical phenomenon. It was a strange, a subtle colour, this greenish-blue; colour of the heights and deeps, ice-clear, yet holding shadow in its depths, mysteriously exquisite. It reminded him of the colour of certain eyes, whose shape and glance had spelled his destiny; <...> eyes seen long ago and then found again, the eyes of Pribislav Hippe and Clavdia Chauchat.”

So, the hero, who finds himself in a strange world (connected with the snow element), encounters there the “mistress of the beasts” (the goddess of life and death) and perceives through her an antipodean double. This experience changes his life. But it is a risky business. In Prosper Mérimée's short story “The Venus of Ille” (1837), the double-antipode of the protagonist is a swarthy Aragonese who plays ball with him (“swarthy” means that he is a “shadow”; “Aragonese” means that he is a stranger, a different, that is, antipode; playing ball is a characteristic way of contact with the double). The colour of the Aragonese's skin also shows his connection to the bronze Venus, who is a statue that comes to life (and kills the protagonist with her embrace, because he had the imprudence to put a wedding ring on her finger):

“Contrary to general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball; to be sure, it skimmed along the ground, driven with astounding force by an Aragonese who seemed to be the leader of the Spaniards.

He was a man of some forty years, thin and wiry, about six feet tall; and his olive skin was almost as dark as the bronze of the Venus.”

* * *

In Jim Jarmusch's film “Dead Man” (1995), the Indian Nobody (the fact that he is an Indian here means: an outsider, an antipode) tries on William Blake's (the protagonist's) glasses, after William's words: “I can't see clearly”. (And he tries on the protagonist's hat the first time he meets him.)



Glasses symbolise a special look, a special vision. They are one of the signs of an antipodean double. If glasses are worn by the protagonist, it can be an omen of the appearance of a double. Particularly interesting is the exchange of glasses. If Nobody looks into them and then returns (or gives) the glasses to the protagonist, the latter will be able to see “another world”.

In Bertolucci's film “The Twentieth Century”, Olmo, who is thought to have died in the war, returns home. His daughter finds him standing in the cemetery (a dead man brought back to life, so to speak). We then see a scuffle between Olmo and Alfredo. Alfredo has his glasses askew (asymmetrically), and Olmo, addressing the fallen Alfredo (asking him jokingly if he is dead or just sleeping), puts on his glasses, mimicking his friend.

Look at Dr Caligari with his somnambulist Cesare (whose role is to carry out the doctor's evil will):



The Doctor is wearing glasses and Cesare's eyes are closed (and he's in an upright box — in a coffin). Everything is ready for the magic to happen.

In the still from David Fincher's film “Fight Club” (1999), you see a man in dark glasses:



Here, of course, is a kind of quotation from “The Brothers Karamazov” (where it is said about the devil: “Someone appeared to be sitting there ...”). The hero finds an antipodean double sitting in the corner (who doesn't really exist and who tells him: “You were looking for a way to change your life. You could not do this on your own. All the ways you wish you could be ... That’s me. I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you’re not.”). Note the fur, typical of an “animal double”, in this case in the form of a fur jacket (and compare to the phrase from the beginning of the

film: “You step inside your cave and you walk ... deeper into your cave. As you walk you feel a healing energy all around you. Now find your power animal.”). In another scene of the film, when the protagonist meets his antipodean double for the first time, the double has a briefcase filled with bars of soap made of human fat (a typical devil's bag or suitcase with human souls or heads). There is also a “Beautiful Lady” in the film, named Marla — a kind of goddess of death, in this sense both Marla's phrase “My tit's gonna rot off” and her very name (“If I did have a tumour, I'd name it Marla”) are noteworthy.

In Vladimir Nabokov's novel “Lolita” (1955), dark glasses lying on the beach are transformed into “two bearded brothers” emerging from the water:

“That photograph was taken on the last day of our fatal summer and just a few minutes before we made our second and final attempt to thwart fate. Under the flimsiest of pretexts (this was our very last chance, and nothing really mattered) we escaped from the cafe to the beach, and found a desolate stretch of sand, and there, in the violet shadow of some red rocks forming a kind of cave, had a brief session of avid caresses, with somebody's lost pair of sunglasses for only witness. I was on my knees, and on the point of possessing my darling, when two bearded bathers, the old man of the sea and his brother, came out of the sea with exclamations of ribald encouragement, and four months later she died of typhus in Corfu.”

The glasses lying on the beach are a symbol of the gaze of the “Invisible one”, that is, the gaze of someone looking in from another world. It is the gaze of eyes devoid of body. Eyes separated from the body are another sign of both the antipodean double and the “Beautiful Lady”. Such, for example, are the eyes in Alexander Blok's poem “The Stranger” (1906): “And two eyes, limpid, blue, and fathomless / Are blooming on a distant shore”²⁵, or the eyes of the Olympia doll in Hoffman's story “The Sandman”: “At this point Nathanael saw that a pair of blood-flecked eyes were lying on the floor and staring up at him...”. And here is the intense gaze of Rogozhin tracking Prince Myshkin:

²⁵ «И очи синие бездонные / Цветут на дальнем берегу».

“... Prince Myshkin arrived in St. Petersburg by the morning train from Moscow. No one met him; but, as he stepped out of the carriage, he suddenly became aware of two strangely glowing eyes fixed upon him from among the crowd that met the train. On endeavouring to re-discover the eyes, and see to whom they belonged, he could find nothing to guide him. It must have been a hallucination. But the disagreeable impression remained ...”

Take a look at a still from Akira Kurosawa's film “The Idiot”:



Here Kameda-Myshkin is shown against the backdrop of Akamo-Rogozhin's gaze — Kameda leaves Akamo's house, Akamo follows him with his gaze (we see the transition from one frame to the next — and their overlapping).

The dark glasses on the beach in the novel “Lolita” are the gaze of “McFate” (Nabokov's term), who follows Humbert Humbert and intrudes into his life. “McFate” then incarnated into a specific person — into “McCoo”, into Clare Quilty, into C.Q., into the “brother”. Here, by the way, is the last fight between H.H. and C.Q. — they are fighting in an embrace (and spinning, twirling), which is so typical of doubles (as typical is the death of the second of them):

“We fell to wrestling again. We rolled all over the floor, in each other's arms, like two huge helpless children. He was naked and goatish under his robe, and I felt

suffocated as he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us.”

Glasses sometimes function as a magical pair object. Look, for example, at the ornamentation of a Tunguska carpet (from Anna Smolyak's book “Shaman: Personality, Functions, Worldview”):



Glasses, as well as eyes, can not only symbolise the look of an antipodean double, but also represent an image of two doubles, emphasise the doubleness underlying the plot. The tautological names of the protagonist or his double-antipode can play a similar role: Humbert Humbert and Clare Quilty. Nabokov himself associates the protagonist's name with the eyes:

“Its author’s bizarre cognomen is his own invention; and, of course, this mask—through which two hypnotic eyes seem to glow—had to remain unlifted in accordance with its wearer’s wish.”

Nabokov usually doesn't need to be deciphered, he tells you everything himself. Unlike Gogol — look, for example, at the name Chi-chi-kov (who at one point is mistaken for Rinaldo Rinaldini or Captain Kopeykin).

In Edgar Poe's short story “William Wilson”, William Wilson is the name of both the protagonist and his double. Queequeg, by the way, is also quite a double name:

Quee-queg. The ideal name for a double is perhaps Otto, in which it is as if a mirror has been inserted: OT-TO. Nabokov interprets this name poetically in the story “A Guide to Berlin”:

“Today someone wrote ‘Otto’ with his finger on the strip of virgin snow and I thought how beautifully that name, with its two soft o’s flanking the pair of gentle consonants, suited the silent layer of snow upon that pipe with its two orifices and its tacit tunnel.”

In Goethe's novel “Elective Affinities”, the Beautiful Lady is Ottilia, and the two men around her are called Otto:

“ ‘... and then, has it occurred to neither of you that today is your nameday? Are you not both called Otto?’ The two friends took hands across the little table.”

Another example: Otto is the name of the brother of the protagonist Robert in Arthur Schnitzler's short story “Flight into Darkness” (1917). Robert, gradually going mad over the course of the story, notices in the mirror the asymmetry of his face (his left eye does not open properly), later Robert thinks that in the mirror he sees not himself, but his brother Otto, at the end of the novel he kills his brother (“one of us must go into darkness”), after which he runs away and falls off a cliff, smashing his head on the rocks. The head of the antipodean double has already been discussed, the fall from a height — associated with the double — is discussed ahead.

In Russian literature, the double is often characterised by the tautology of first name and patronymic. Thus, Alexander Vvedensky's “The Mirror and the Musician” (1929) begins with the words: “The room is dark. In front of the mirror is the musician Prokofiev. In the mirror is Ivan Ivanovich”.

Let us return to the glasses. Ivan Karamazov comes to Smerdyakov (to his double-antipode, who has fulfilled — with the help of the devil — Ivan's secret will) and sees the objects — two of each, in pairs, and then Smerdyakov's glasses:

“Ivan knocked, and, on the door being opened, went straight into the passage. By Marya Kondratyevna’s directions he went straight to the better room on the left, occupied by Smerdyakov. There was a tiled stove in the room and it was extremely hot. The walls were gay with blue paper, which was a good deal used however,

and in the cracks under it cockroaches swarmed in amazing numbers, so that there was a continual rustling from them. The furniture was very scanty: two benches against each wall and two chairs by the table. The table of plain wood was covered with a cloth with pink patterns on it. There was a pot of geranium on each of the two little windows. In the corner there was a case of ikons. On the table stood a little copper samovar with many dents in it, and a tray with two cups. But Smerdyakov had finished tea and the samovar was out. He was sitting at the table on a bench. He was looking at an exercise-book and slowly writing with a pen. There was a bottle of ink by him and a flat iron candlestick, but with a composite candle. Ivan saw at once from Smerdyakov's face that he had completely recovered from his illness. His face was fresher, fuller, his hair stood up jauntily in front, and was plastered down at the sides. He was sitting in a parti-coloured, wadded dressing-gown, rather dirty and frayed, however. He had spectacles on his nose, which Ivan had never seen him wearing before. This trifling circumstance suddenly redoubled Ivan's anger: 'A creature like that and wearing spectacles!' Smerdyakov slowly raised his head and looked intently at his visitor through his spectacles ..."

I counted five "twos" (not counting the glasses themselves). The glasses here act as the culmination of the enumeration of paired objects. (Recall that the devil who appeared to Ivan Karamazov had "a tortoise-shell lorgnette on a black ribbon.")

The tattered blue paper, with cockroaches in the cracks, is a symbol of the realm of death in which its master Smerdyakov resides (this surname contains not only the word 'smerdet' (to stink) but also the word 'smert' (death).

You've no doubt noticed Smerdyakov's "rather dirty and frayed" dressing-gown. It is also a sign of an antipodean double who has come from the realm of death.

Similar "demonic" twos accompany Humbert Humbert. Visiting (and shooting) Clare Quilty, he sees everything double:

"I could not bring myself to touch him in order to make sure he was really dead. He looked it: a quarter of his face gone, and two flies beside themselves with a dawning sense of unbelievable luck."

Then Humbert Humbert goes down to the drawing room:

“... two dark-haired pale young beauties, sisters no doubt, big one and small one (almost a child), demurely sat side by side on a davenport.”

Humbert Humbert Humbert then exits the building and heads to his car:

“This, I said to myself, was the end of the ingenious play staged for me by Quilty. With a heavy heart I left the house and walked through the spotted blaze of the sun to my car. Two other cars were parked on both sides of it, and I had some trouble squeezing out.”

The very name that Humbert Humbert gave his car — “Melmoth” (the name of the main character from Maturin's novel about a fateful double) — foreshadowed the appearance of his double in his own life.

“Professor, take off your bicycle glasses!” says Mayakovsky in one of his poems. The bicycle indeed sometimes plays the same role as glasses, that is, it also symbolises the look (or presence) of an antipodean double. Thus, in Andrey Tarkovsky's film “Nostalgia” (1983), Andrey (the protagonist) meets Domenico (in whose dwelling he sees on the wall the formula of doubleness: $1 + 1 = 1$).

The meeting takes place in front of the entrance to Domenico's dwelling (the lair, the cave, the “gate of death”):



Domenico is sitting on a bicycle and pedalling. The bicycle is not moving, as it has a raised rear wheel (which, accordingly, is spinning). Behind Domenico sits his dog (emphasising the “animal-ness” of the double). This picture of a bicycle symbolises

the antipodes: one wheel spins and the other does not. The bicycle winks. Andrey corresponds to the stationary wheel, while Domenico corresponds to the moving wheel.

At the beginning of Tarkovsky's film "The Sacrifice" (1986), the main character (Alexander) is approached on a bicycle by the postman Otto (an excellent job for an antipodean double: letters in a bag are like souls in the devil's bag). Otto circles around Alexander on his bicycle. The name OT-TO, of course, is a good representation of not only the eyes or glasses, but also of the bicycle. At one point, Otto talks to Alexander through the glass (that is, acts as his reflection). Otto is the "master of fate" ("I'm sort of a collector ... I collect incidents."). He sends Alexander to the maid Maria, who lives not far away and who in the film represents the "source of life":

" 'In any case, you must go to Maria!' 'But why?' 'Don't you want all of this to be over and done with?' <...> 'Otto!' 'Yes. You must go to Maria and lie with her.' <...> 'And if you only wish for one thing at that moment: That all this will be over, then it will be! There'll be no more of it!' <...> 'But that's madness, Otto! Good God, Otto.' 'You don't understand a thing. It's true! It's a holy truth. She has very special qualities, you know. I've gathered evidence. She is a witch!' 'In what sense?' 'In the best sense.'"

Otto lends Alexander his bicycle, on which Alexander rides to Maria (falling between two puddles on the way — this fall rhymes in the film with Otto's two falls). Maria, incidentally, also has a bicycle, and rides it at the end of the film. As a result of the interaction between Alexander, Maria and Otto (that is, as a result of the realisation of the coded image), the world is saved (at least that is how it appears to Alexander).

* * *

At the end of Donna Tartt's novel "The Secret Story" (1992), the hero-narrator (Richard Papen) sees his dead antipodean double (Henry Winter) in a dream — wearing glasses, with his head shot through:

" 'I thought I'd find you here,' said a voice at my elbow.

It was Henry. His gaze was steady and impassive in the dim light. Above his ear, beneath the wire stem of his spectacles, I could just make out the powder burn and the dark hole in his right temple."

Henry had once saved Richard by pulling him in winter from a frozen dwelling quite reminiscent of the realm of death:

"I found myself in a cavernous, dusty room with a plank floor and high, exposed rafters."

"My quarters were uncomfortable, certainly, they were foully dirty and bitterly cold; but it never occurred to me that they were actually unsafe."

"Late one afternoon, as it was getting dark, I looked down into the empty courtyard and was startled to see that a dark, motionless figure had materialized under the lamp, standing with its hands in the pockets of its dark overcoat and looking up at my window. It was shadowy and heavy snow was falling: 'Henry?' I said, and squeezed my eyes shut until I saw stars. When I opened them again, I saw nothing but snow whirling in the bright cone of emptiness beneath the light.

At night I lay shivering on the floor, watching the illuminated snowflakes sift in a column through the hole in the ceiling. On the margin of stupefaction, as I was sliding off the steep roof of unconsciousness, something would tell me at the last instant that if I went to sleep I might never wake: with a struggle I would force my eyes open and all of a sudden the column of snow, standing bright and tall in its dark corner, would appear to me in its true whispering, smiling menace, an airy angel of death."

"The emergency room doctor told me that Henry had saved my life."

Henry himself is related to the realm of death, it is no accident that his surname is Winter). Henry saves from death and kills (whom and why, we will not tell here, we will only say that the novel is based quite openly on an ancient rite), he fulfils

his role as a guide to death and through death (“ ‘Death is the mother of beauty,’ said Henry.”). Henry, even before his suicide, is portrayed as not fully alive, as if he died as a child:

“ ‘Henry had a bad accident when he was a little boy,’ he said. ‘Got hit by a car or something and nearly died...’ ”

“... was dark-haired, with a square jaw and coarse, pale skin. He might have been handsome had his features been less set, or his eyes, behind the glasses, less expressionless and blank. He wore dark English suits and carried an umbrella (a bizarre sight in Hampden) and he walked stiffly through the throngs of hippies and beatniks and preppies and punks with the self-conscious formality of an old ballerina, surprising in one so large as he.”

On top of all this, Henry is a polyglot — as the devil must be a polyglot, or an angel, or, so to speak, a master of fate (we will return to this feature of the double-antipode shortly):

“He was a linguistic genius. He spoke a number of languages, ancient and modern, and had published a translation of Anacreon, with commentary, when he was only eighteen.”

* * *

Look at a still from the film “The Student of Prague” (1913) by Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener:



The student Balduin sees his double. This double was a simple reflection in a mirror, but the mysterious Italian Scapinelli (a reincarnation of Hoffmann's Coppola from Hoffmann's story "The Sandman") — wearing a black cloak, a cylinder, a wand and, of course, glasses — draws him out of the mirror. The double subsequently kills Balduin's rival (but against the will — or rather, against the conscious will — of the student himself) in a duel (by chopping him down with a sabre). Also notable (in the sense of doubleness) is the scene where we see Balduin and his double playing cards. As well as the scene where the "Beautiful Lady" (Margit) and her mirror come between the student and his double.

Let's talk about the murder that the protagonist commits with the help of his double. At the beginning of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "Master and Margarita" (1928—1940) there is a "repulsive, alarming" event — a tram cuts off the head of Berlioz, a man of letters ("Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz, editor of a fat literary journal and chairman of the board of one of the major Moscow literary associations, called Massolit²⁶ for short..."). Was it an accident, or perhaps there was a murder here? The reader may well get the feeling that Berlioz's death was not just an accident, that someone had a score to settle with the venerable literary man.

²⁶ *Massolit*: An invented but plausible contraction parodying the many contractions introduced in post-revolutionary Russia.

Well, if it was murder, how exactly could Berlioz have been killed? 1) Was he pushed under a tram? 2) He was hypnotised, that is, “programmed” in such a way that he himself fell under the tram? 3) Berlioz was “jinxed”?

Let's imagine: a man is walking along the road. A certain villain stands at a distance and wants to kill the person walking along. He can do it in three main ways.

Firstly, by direct violence. For example, run up to the walking man and stab him with a knife. In Bulgakov's novel, such direct violence is expressed in the version that Berlioz was pushed under the tram. This version is immediately exposed as untenable:

“Riukhin had no wish to say anything, but was forced to explain:

‘The secretary of Massolit, Berlioz, was run over by a tram-car tonight at the Patriarch’s Ponds.’

‘Don’t blab about what you don’t know!’ Ivan got angry with Riukhin. ‘I was there, not you! He got him under the tram-car on purpose!’

‘Pushed him?’

“Pushed him”, nothing!’ Ivan exclaimed, angered by the general obtuseness. ‘His kind don’t need to push! He can perform such stunts — hold on to your hat! He knew beforehand that Berlioz would get under the tram-car!’ ”

Secondly, murder can be committed by some kind of spiritual influence, non-contact violence. For example, the villain at a distance, by an effort of will, makes the walker fall down and smash his head. In the novel, this second method corresponds to the version of hypnosis:

“The investigator left Ivanushka, having obtained some quite important material. Following the thread of events from the end to the beginning, they finally succeeded in reaching the source from which all the events had come. The investigator had no doubt that these events began with the murder at the Patriarch’s Ponds. Of course, neither Ivanushka nor this checkered one had pushed the unfortunate chairman of Massolit under the tram-car; physically, so to speak, no one had contributed to his falling under the wheels. But the investigator

was convinced that Berlioz had thrown himself under the tram-car (or tumbled under it) while hypnotized.”

Such is the police's version, but it is rejected by the Master (and, of course, the reader realises from the outset that hypnosis was not involved):

“From this same cognac the master’s head became giddy, and he began to think: ‘No, Margarita’s right ... Of course, this is the devil’s messenger sitting before me. No more than two nights ago, I myself tried to prove to Ivan that it was precisely Satan whom he had met at the Patriarch’s Ponds, and now for some reason I got scared of the thought and started babbling something about hypnotists and hallucinations ... Devil there’s any hypnotists in it! ...’ ”

So, in addition to the above two, there is a third way (how a villain standing on the roadside can kill a person walking on the road). To use it, you need to be a wizard, a sorcerer. The sorcerer follows the man with his gaze, makes a wish for his death — and suddenly sees, for instance, a car fly out from around a bend and hit the walking person.

Is the third way of influence possible at all? In life — I do not dare to judge. But in literature (and in cinema) we often observe it — and the influence (the so-called “evil eye”) is carried out with the help of a double.

Look, for example, at the still from Ingmar Bergman's film “Fanny and Alexander” (1982):



This is a conversation between Alexander (sitting with his back to us) and Ishmael (who, incidentally, recalls the biblical Ishmael, “a wild ass of a man”, Isaac's older

brother). In parallel to this conversation (at exactly the same time), Alexander's stepfather (hated by his stepson) dies:

“ ‘My name is Ismael, but you already know that. "And he will be a wild man. His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." I'm considered dangerous. That's why I'm locked up. ’ ‘Dangerous in what way?’ ‘Write your name here. The pencil's pretty dull, but it should still serve. ’ ‘There, Alexander Ekdahl. ’ ‘Now read what you've written. ’ ‘It says "Ismael Retzinsky." ’ ‘Perhaps we're the same person, with no boundaries. Perhaps we flow through each other, stream through each other boundlessly and magnificently. You bear such terrible thoughts... it's almost painful to be near you. Yet it's also enticing. Do you know why?’ ‘I don't think I want to know. ’ ‘You've heard of making an image of someone you dislike and sticking pins in it? It's a rather clumsy method when you think of the swift paths an evil thought can travel. You're a strange little person. You won't speak of that which is constantly in your thoughts. You're thinking of a man's death. Wait a moment. I know who you're thinking of... ’ ”

Ishmael then hugs Alexander and looks past him to describe Alexander's stepfather (whom he has never met) and the stepfather's actions at the moment. Alexander says to this: “Don't talk like that.” Ishmael replies: “It is not I talking. It is yourself. You are not to hesitate.” (He covers Alexander's eyes with the palm of his hand.) During these words, Ishmael's face is replaced by that of his stepfather's mad and sick aunt, knocking over a lamp (the cause of the house fire and stepfather's death). Ishmael further says: “Give me your hands. It isn't really necessary, but it's safer. The doors will be thrown open. A scream will echo through the house.” (We see a picture of the house on fire.) Alexander: “I don't want to.” Ishmael: “It's too late. You have only one way to go, and I am with you. I obliterate myself. I merge into you, my child. Don't be afraid. I am with you. I'm your guardian angel.”

Before his conversation with Ishmael, Alexander got lost in the night labyrinth of a stranger's house (“It won't be easy to find the toilet in the dark. I hope there aren't any ghosts. Damn, I think I've lost my way. Now I'm lost for sure.”) and saw a mummy. The mummy (doll) turned towards him — and its face was in the same

instant replaced by the face of his stepfather's aunt lying in bed, turning towards the lamp to knock it over. In short, the encounter with the antipodean double (Ishmael) occurs here after the encounter with the goddess of death (the mummy).

Let us look now (and in this connection) at the double-antipodes in the novel “Master and Margarita”.

Master ↔ Mikhail Berlioz. You could also say: Mikhail Bulgakov ↔ Mikhail Berlioz (since the Master is not only the protagonist, but also a direct appointee of the author). The initials (MB) match, the first names match. Moreover, Berlioz has an artistic surname (the surname of the French composer Hector Berlioz, author of “Symphonie fantastique”). That is, the surname of a genuine artist — all the more so of an artist treating the fantastic, which Bulgakov himself is. That's why they're doubles. But they are also antipodes, because the surname of the true artist emphasises Mikhail Berlioz's mediocrity and warns that he occupies the wrong place — that he should be “removed”.

We already know that the double-antipode in a work of fiction often dies and frequently loses (literally) his head. (In this sense, the eerie scene in which Woland talks to Berlioz's reanimated head lying on a plate is also noteworthy. The image of the head on the plate refers us to John the Baptist — who has only in common with Michael Berlioz that they are both doubles-antipodes in relation to the protagonist of the text). Most importantly, Michael Berlioz, being, so to speak, the master of literature (the disposer of the fates of books and their authors), played a fate-shaping role in the life of the protagonist, that is, in the life of the Master (and the composite prototype of Michael Berlioz, apparently, played a similar role in Bulgakov's life). Note such a detail as Berlioz's glasses (“His neatly shaven face was adorned with black horn-rimmed glasses of a supernatural size”). Compare this to the sorcery murder in Vladimir Nabokov's short story “Fairy Tale”:

“And if you don't believe in my power yet..... See, there's a gentleman in tortoise-shell glasses crossing the street over there. Let the tram hit him.”

Master ↔ Woland. (Incidentally, in Valery Bryusov's novel “The Fiery Angel” (1907), which in some respects influenced Bulgakov's text, the Devil is called the

Master.) As one can easily see, the letter W in the name Woland is an inverted letter M, embroidered by Margarita on the Master's cap: "the poet managed to make out the word 'Professor' printed in foreign type on the card, and the initial letter of the last name — a double 'V' — 'W'". (Note that Bulgakov's and Berlioz's names also begin with the letter M.) Both of them (the Master and Woland) are called "historians" — and indeed, each of them invents his own history: the Master ("a historian by education") created (wrote) the story about Yeshua and Pontius Pilate, Woland creates different stories (incidents) in Moscow (he is, so to speak, a history-maker). (" 'I am a historian,' the scholar confirmed, and added with no rhyme or reason: This evening there will be an interesting story at the Ponds!' "). Woland is the "shadow" of the Master. (This is how he alludes to it: "Here is the shadow of my sword. Trees and living beings also have shadows.")

There is a similar transition of the Master into his "shadow" in Bulgakov's "Theatrical Novel". The writer Maksudov dreams that he is in the fifteenth century and that he looks suspiciously like the opera's Mephistopheles:

"I remember a dream I had on the night of the twentieth to the twenty-first of January.

A huge hall in the palace, and it was as if I were walking through the hall. Candles are burning smokily in candlesticks, they are heavy, greasy, golden. I am dressed strangely, my legs are covered with tights, in a word, I am not in our century, but in the fifteenth. I am walking through the hall, and I have a dagger on my belt. The beauty of the dream lay not in the fact that I was the apparent ruler, but in this dagger, which the courtiers at the door were clearly afraid of. Wine cannot intoxicate like this dagger, and, smiling, nay, laughing in my sleep, I walked noiselessly to the door.

The dream was delightful to such an extent that when I awoke I was still laughing for some time."

Here it is worth noting the dagger (a sacrificial knife is a common accessory of the double, let us remember that in Goethe's tragedy Mephistopheles appears to Faust with a long, sharp sword: "mit einem langen, spitzen Degen", let us also remember

Woland's sword: "in the ever-deceptive light of the moon it seemed to Ivan Nikolaevich that he stood holding a sword, not a walking stick, under his arm"). Note also laughter — a typical feature of the devil — as, for instance, in the "Master and Margarita":

" 'And sometimes it's worse still: the man has just decided to go to Kislovodsk' — here the foreigner squinted at Berlioz — 'a trifling matter, it seems, but even this he cannot accomplish, because suddenly, no one knows why, he slips and falls under a tram-car! Are you going to say it was he who governed himself that way? Would it not be more correct to think that he was governed by someone else entirely?' And here the unknown man burst into a strange little laugh. "

Woland seems to have been summoned to life by the Master (even if he doesn't realise it) who is terribly fed up with (and terribly offended by) Soviet reality. And so Mikhail Berlioz gets what he deserves: "He got him under the tram-car on purpose!" (I quite agree with Ivan that Woland put Berlioz under the tram, not just foresaw his death).

When reading about Berlioz's head being cut off, the reader may well experience a sense of satisfaction. Compare this with the feeling the master has when listening to Ivan Homeless in the madhouse:

"The listener accompanied the description of Berlioz's terrible death with an enigmatic remark, while his eyes flashed with spite:

'I only regret that it wasn't the critic Latunsky or the writer Mstislav Lavrovich instead of this Berlioz!' "

And isn't it with the same gloating, malevolent feeling that we read the scene in which Margarita, who has turned into a witch, smashes up Latunsky's flat — though she is stopped by the crying of a child (at which point the revenge stops)?

The Master (the writer) in Bulgakov's novel — so seemingly harmless — is in fact Faust, whose will is fulfilled by Woland-Mephistopheles. As soon as the writer thought of the literary bureaucrat: "To hell with him!", his wish came true.

In short, what apparently happens is the following: the Master (the appointee, representative of Mikhail Bulgakov himself) kills his double-antipode — the literary

man Mikhail Berlioz (double-victim) with the help of his double-antipode Woland (double-killer).

Too complicated, too confusing? Let's go back to our example of the man walking down the road. He is hit by a car coming round the corner. Let's say the driver of the car gets a call in the morning that his grandmother is very ill. He rushes to see her. Suppose a sorcerer sees a man walking along the road just now and wishes him dead. He does not yet know how the death will be carried out. But he feels that — as if from the other side of life, from the other side of the world — Woland's eyes are fixed on him, ready to take his order. And he stares intently through the walking man directly into the eyes of his double-antipode. The walking man, caught on the line between the doubles looking into each other's eyes, dies. (And for this procedure it is not necessary at all to see the victim or to be close to it, it is enough to imagine it and to immerse oneself in it). The order is carried out — and, most surprisingly and unbelievably, thanks to the circumstances that preceded the order being placed! (Incidentally, this is what happens in the film “Fanny and Alexander”: on the one hand, the sick aunt asks Alexander's stepfather to move the lamp closer, the stepfather receives a lion's dose of sleeping pills from Alexander's mother, the aunt accidentally knocks over the lamp, the stepfather and the aunt get burnt — that is, the events in the stepfather's house develop on their own, while on the other hand, in another house and just before the fire, Alexander, talking to Ishmael, casts a spell on the stepfather. The lamp was moved earlier, the sleeping pills were given before the sorcery began).

Apparently, in order to exert a decisive latent influence on the world, on fate, it is necessary to have an assistant acting from the other side (there is nothing new, of course, in this statement: in this case we are talking about a prayer with a “minus” sign, an evil prayer or a curse — a request to the devil). Master-Bulgakov uses such an assistant to “cope” with Berlioz. At the same time, Woland seems to adjust various events that have already happened to the impending cutting off of Berlioz's head by a tram — it is not without reason that he is compared to a tailor sewing

Berlioz's suit (the double-antipode is often a tailor or a cook, as he “sews” or “cooks” the hprotagonist's fate):

“However, before he managed to utter these words, the foreigner spoke:

‘Yes, man is mortal, but that would be only half the trouble. The worst of it is that he’s sometimes unexpectedly mortal — there’s the trick! And generally he’s unable to say what he’s going to do this same evening.’

‘What an absurd way of putting the question ...’ Berlioz thought and objected:

‘Well, there’s some exaggeration here. About this same evening I do know more or less certainly. It goes without saying, if a brick should fall on my head on Bronnaya ...’

‘No brick,’ the stranger interrupted imposingly, ‘will ever fall on anyone’s head just out of the blue. In this particular case, I assure you, you are not in danger of that at all. You will die a different death.’

‘Maybe you know what kind precisely?’ Berlioz inquired with perfectly natural irony, getting drawn into an utterly absurd conversation. ‘And will tell me?’

‘Willingly,’ the unknown man responded. He looked Berlioz up and down as if he were going to make him a suit, muttered through his teeth something like: ‘One, two ... Mercury in the second house ... moon gone ... six — disaster ... evening — seven ...’ then announced loudly and joyfully: ‘Your head will be cut off!’

Homeless goggled his eyes wildly and spitefully at the insouciant stranger, and Berlioz asked, grinning crookedly:

‘By whom precisely? Enemies? Interventionists?’

‘No,’ replied his interlocutor, ‘by a Russian woman, a Komsomol girl.’

‘Hm ...’ Berlioz mumbled, vexed at the stranger’s little joke, ‘well, excuse me, but that’s not very likely.’

‘And I beg you to excuse me,’ the foreigner replied, ‘but it’s so. Ah, yes, I wanted to ask you, what are you going to do tonight, if it’s not a secret?’

‘It’s not a secret. Right now I’ll stop by my place on Sadovaya, and then at ten this evening there will be a meeting at Massolit, and I will chair it.’

‘No, that simply cannot be,’ the foreigner objected firmly.

'Why not?'

'Because,' the foreigner replied and, narrowing his eyes, looked into the sky, where, anticipating the cool of the evening, black birds were tracing noiselessly, 'Annushka has already bought the sunflower oil, and has not only bought it, but has already spilled it. So the meeting will not take place.'

Here, quite understandably, silence fell under the lindens."

Not only is the Master related to Woland, but of course Margarita is as well. She is the goddess of the moon:

"Then the moonbeam boils up, a river of moonlight begins to gush from it and pours out in all directions. The moon rules and plays, the moon dances and frolics. Then a woman of boundless beauty forms herself in the stream, and by the hand she leads out to Ivan a man overgrown with beard who glances around fearfully. Ivan Nikolaevich recognizes him at once. It is number one-eighteen, his nocturnal guest. In his dream Ivan Nikolaevich reaches his arms out to him and asks greedily:

'So it ended with that?'

'It ended with that, my disciple,' answers number one-eighteen, and then the woman comes up to Ivan and says:

'Of course, with that. Everything has ended, and everything ends ... And I will kiss you on the forehead, and everything with you will be as it should be ...'

She bends over Ivan and kisses him on the forehead, and Ivan reaches out to her and peers into her eyes, but she retreats, retreats, and together with her companion goes towards the moon ..."

If we look at the master's number in the clinic (118) as a picture, we see doubles and the infinity sign, itself also double — consisting of two loops. The master is an antipodean double for Ivan, guiding his initiation, as a result of which Ivan Homeless becomes the historian Ivan Nikolaevich. In this scene, the Beautiful Lady, the goddess of the moon, appears to Ivan and brings the Master to him.

This novel in general is permeated with moonlight. It seems that even the colour of the flowers with which Margarita is first seen by the Master is lunar. They stand out against the background of her coat like the moon in the night sky:

“She was carrying repulsive, alarming yellow flowers in her hand. Devil knows what they’re called, but for some reason they’re the first to appear in Moscow. And these flowers stood out clearly against her black spring coat.”

The Moon reflects the light of the Sun. The Moon (in myth, in art) is the double-antipode of the Sun.

We have already talked about Margarita's differing eyes (corresponding to Woland's differing eyes).

The fulfilment of the hero's wishes by a devil is a common fairy tale plot, which has passed into many literary works. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, this theme was discovered by symbolism (which made myth a fact of human mental life), namely by Henrik Ibsen in his play “The Master Builder” (1892). Halvard Solness feels the presence of the troll within himself, and that the troll “summons those outside powers” — spirits (“invisible demons”):

*“HILDE [very serious]: There **was** this thing inside me that urged me on and drove me here. Beckoned and drew me here too.*

*SOLNESS [excitedly]: There we have it! There we have it, Hilde! There’s a troll dwelling inside you as well. As there is in me. Because the troll inside us — **that’s** what summons those outside powers, you see. And we have to surrender to them — whether we want to or not.*

HILDE: I think you might be right, master builder.

SOLNESS [walking around the room]: Oh, there are so impossibly many devils in the world that we can’t see, Hilde!

HILDE: Devils too?

SOLNESS [standing still]: Good devils and bad devils. Fair-haired devils and black-haired ones. If only we could always tell whether it was the fair ones or the dark ones that had hold of us! [Wanders around.] Ho-ho! Then there would be no problem! <...>

HILDE: Out with it then, Mr Master Builder.

*SOLNESS [confidentially]: Hilde, don't you too believe that there are certain special, chosen people who have been granted the blessing and the power and the ability to **wish** for something, **desire** something, **want** something so deeply and so — so inexorably — that they **rebound** to get it in the end. Don't you believe that? <...>*

SOLNESS: You don't accomplish such great things alone. Oh no — the helpers and servants — they have to play their part too, if anything is to be achieved. But they — they never come of their own accord. You have to call out to them loud and long. In your mind, I mean."

The point is that, with the troll's help, Solness has committed (or thinks he has committed) an “involuntary” murder — for the sake of his career as a builder. And he foresees the coming retribution (“The turn is coming. A little sooner or a little later. Because the retribution, there's no escaping that.”). Under the impression of this play by Ibsen, as we know, Alexander Blok named his poem “Retribution” (1910—1921). In another poem Blok has lines that echo Solness's reasoning:

*There's a bad eye and a good eye,
But I wish no eye was there following me:
There's too much in each of us
Of unknown, playing forces...*

Compare with the conversation in Ibsen's play “Little Ejolf” (1894):

*“— I wouldn't mind betting that evil eyes have been playing tricks on you here.
— Evil eyes?
— Evil eyes, yes.
— Do you believe in evil eyes, Mrs Allmers?
— Yes, I've begun to believe in evil eyes.”*

So this theme was quite popular in the era of symbolism. For example, Vladislav Khodasevich in his essay “Muni” (from the book “Necropolis”, 1939) tells about a friend of his youth (who committed suicide): how they, “little students of bad

magicians”, lived in a world where “everything seemed ambiguous and double-meaning”, where every phenomenon, every event had to be deciphered — and where (no wonder, since everything is double) one could see doubles:

“Once, Muni and I were sitting in the Prague Restaurant, the main hall of which was divided by a broad archway. Curtains hung along either side of the arch. At one end, a waiter in a white shirt and white trousers was standing with his back to us, gripping the lintel with his right hand and tucking his left hand behind his waist. A little while later, another waiter of similar height appeared from behind the arch and stood facing both us and the first waiter. He had accidentally duplicated the first waiter’s pose exactly, only in reverse: this waiter was gripping the lintel with his left hand while holding his right hand tucked behind his waist, and so forth. It was as if it were one person standing in front of a mirror. Muni said with an ironic smile, ‘And here’s his reflection now.’

We began to observe them. The waiter standing with his back to us dropped his right hand. At the very same moment, the other waiter dropped his left. The first one made some other movement—and again, the second one mirrored him exactly. This went on and on. It became uncanny. Muni watched in silence, tapping his foot. Suddenly, the second waiter made a quick about-face and disappeared behind the projecting portion of the arch. Someone must have called for him. Muni jumped to his feet, white as chalk. Then he recovered himself and said, ‘If our waiter had left and the reflection had remained, I wouldn’t have been able to bear it. Just feel what my heart is doing.’ ”

And then we read about how reality can be manipulated by “order”:

“Another time, we were walking along Tverskaya Street. Muni was saying that there were moments in which he was able to predict the future with complete accuracy. But this talent only applied to trivial events.

‘Right, so, over there! See that carriage? Its back axle is about to break.’

We were overtaken by an old carriage drawn by a pair of sorry-looking nags. A little old gray-haired man was sitting in it, accompanied by a little old lady to match.

'Well?' I said. 'It doesn't seem to be breaking.'

The carriage rolled on for ten or so more sazhen²⁷: it was already starting to be obscured by other vehicles. Suddenly, all at once, it stopped in the middle of the pavement across the street from Yeliseyev's store. We ran up to it. The back axle had split down the middle. The old folks clambered out. They had escaped with only a fright. Muni wanted to go up to them and beg their forgiveness. It was only with great difficulty that I was able to dissuade him.

On the very same day, late in the evening, we were walking along Neglinny Drive. We were with V. F. Akhramovich, who went on to become a zealous Communist. At the time, he was a zealous Catholic. I was telling him about the incident that had occurred earlier that day. Akhramovich asked Muni jokingly, 'Couldn't put in an order for something like that, could I?'

'Give it a try.'

'Well then, could we run into Antik?' (V. M. Antik published the yellow booklets for Universal Library. All three of us had worked on them.)

'Sure, why not?' Muni said.

We were nearing the intersection where the Petrovsky Lines converge. A coachman pulled out right in front of us, heading our way. As he drew even with us, a gray-haired man tipped his hat and bowed. It was Antik.

Muni said to Akhramovich reproachfully, 'Oh, you! Couldn't have wished for the Messiah, could you?'

This style of life was exhausting. Muni used to say that it was all degenerating into filth and neurasthenia, like a spiritual runny nose. And from time to time he would announce, 'The omens are emptying out.'

He donned his blue glasses 'so as not to see more than was necessary' and carried around a spoon and a big bottle of bromine with ever-changing contents..."

As for the novel "Master and Margarita", there is one direct influence, namely the influence of Alexander Kuprin's story "The Star of Solomon" (1917), which the author first intended to call "The Fulfilment of Desire". In Bulgakov's book, Stepan

²⁷ A sazhen is an obsolete unit of measurement equal to seven feet.

Likhodeev, the director of the Variety Theatre, awakens and sees the obliging Woland. In Kuprin's story, Ivan Stepanovich Tsvet, the protagonist, who awoke (also in the morning, after a drink), sees Mephodius Isayevich Tophel (that is, Mephistophel) with his “sticky prevenience” (“ ‘What a sticky prevenience this mysterious man has,’ he reflected. ‘The lines of our lives have converged and will not diverge...’ ”).

And now all the wishes — good and unkind, free and (what is especially terrible) involuntary — of Ivan Stepanovich begin to be fulfilled. Let's look at two examples — one for the fulfilment of a good wish and one for the fulfilment of an evil wish.

The fulfilment of the good wish (though not quite good, not for everyone) takes place after Tsvet is given a lift from the estate to the train by a “redheaded postman” — and he really likes this postman):

“It was time to part. The redheaded postman had to go get his bag. The two young men shook hands again, looked at each other and for some reason hugged. ‘You are a great fellow,’ Tsvet said, very touched, ‘I sincerely wish you to become a postmaster as soon as possible, and then marry a beautiful, wealthy and pleasant young lady.’ The postman waved and made a humorously desperate face.

‘Eh, the tea and crumpets aren't for us fools. If your first wish ever comes true, then it will only be in five years or so. And even then, someone senior in the district must die or get fired, and I don't wish anyone any ill. And the second — alas, my dear sir! — is just as impossible for me as to become a Chinese emperor. I know I can tell you this, Mister Tsvet, in full confidence. There is a girl around here... In Starodub... Clavdushka. I was love-struck almost from the moment I saw her. I danced with her at Christmas and even managed to propose. But, alas! Her father is a timber merchant, a wealthy man. He is giving three thousand rubles as Clavdushka's dowry, and that's not including all the dishes and furniture. How can I ever be good enough for her? She herself viewed my proposal favorably. She said, “Be patient, maybe I'll be able to influence papa. Wait, I shall let you know.” Well, it's almost end of April... She must have forgotten me. A woman's memory is

short. So, I weave my grief like a rope. But, I bid you a good trip. And all the best.'

<...>

Tsvet's car started moving too. At that very moment the door of his compartment thundered open and his friend the postman, Vasily Vasilyevich burst in. His cap had slid all the way back, his red curls looked like fire, his face was red and flushed with joy. He started shaking Ivan Stepanovich's hands in great excitement.

'My dear man... If only you knew... What? The train is moving? Ah, to hell with it. And to hell with all my correspondents — they've had enough of my sweat... They can wait one day... I'll see you off to the next stop. A day like that only happens once. If only you knew! Truly, you are a magician, a wizard, a warlock and an oracle. Like in an old fairy tale, like some sort of a good spirit...'

'My dear Vasily Vasilyevich, please explain to me what's going on. I don't understand.'

'Indeed! Listen! When we parted you said: I wish you to become a postmaster. Yes? Remember?'

'Yes, I do.'

'And then you said: I wish you all the best with a beautiful young lady, and so on... Right?'

'Yes.'

'Well, imagine this — as if you waived a magic wand! I was picking up a sack with mail. The sack was old and suddenly tore open. An entire mountain of letters fell out. I started picking them up. And suddenly I saw two envelopes — and both for me. Here, here, take a look.' He thrust two envelopes into Tsvet's hand. One was a large gray official envelope, the other — small, purple, with two kissing doves.

Tsvet noted politely, 'Perhaps there is something in these letters I shouldn't know?'

'For you? For you? You may know anything! You are my benefactor. See for yourself! Read them!' Tsvet did. The first letter was from the postal district. In it the regional postman, Vasily Vasilyevich Modestov, was being appointed as postmaster for the town of Saburovo, to replace the former postmaster who'd fallen gravely ill. The purple envelope contained a sheet of green paper with a sticker of

two kissing doves on the first page, covered with five rolling lines without a greeting, clearly inspired by sincere hope and naïve encouragement, and accompanied by thirty grammatical errors. 'Wonderful,' Tsvet said returning the letters, 'I am very happy for you.' "

In order for Tsvet's wish to be realised, the events preceding the wish itself must have taken place! After all, the postmaster had fallen ill before, the letter with the kissing doves was written before Tsvet met the postman Modestov and wished him postmastery and good luck in love.

And here is the fulfilment of Tsvet's evil wish (fortunately stopped in time):

"Later that day, the train was passing right next to a construction site of a new church. A man was moving around the bell-tower dome, doing some kind of work right next to the cross. From below, he looked like a tiny black worm. 'What if he falls?' the thought flickered through Tsvet's mind and he sensed a cloying chill in his gut. At the same time he saw the man lose his footing and start sliding down the convex shiny side of the dome, vainly grasping for purchase on the smooth metal. A moment longer — and he would plunge to his death. 'No, no!' Tsvet cried out loud and covered his face in terror. He moved his hands and sighed in relief. The worker managed to grab onto something and it was now obvious that he was clutching a rope running down the side of the dome from the bottom of the cross. The train kept on going, and the church vanished around the bend. 'Did I really want to see him die?' Tsvet asked himself. He could not answer the terrible question. No, of course he didn't wish death or injury upon that poor man he never met. But somewhere at the very bottom of his soul, in the horrible black depth, under the layers of simultaneous thoughts, feelings and desires that were clear, semi-clear and nearly unconscious, there was a shadow akin to foul curiosity. Right then Tsvet realized for the first time, what bloody madness would have consumed the world, had all human wishes come true instantaneously."

Getting hit by the tram of fate, so to speak, is also included in "The Star of Solomon" (and this fate is assigned by the instantaneous thought of a sorcerer):

“A tram was traveling down Alexandrovskaya Street, purple and green sparks flying from under its wheels. Having come around the bend, it was approaching to the Bulvarnaya corner. An elderly lady, holding a little girl of about six by the hand, was crossing Alexandrovskaya Street, and Tsvet thought, ‘She will turn and see the tram, dawdle for a second, then run across the tracks. Why do women have this wild habit of waiting for the last moment and then dashing in front of a horse or a car? It’s as if they purposely tempt their fate or gamble with death. Most likely, they are just afraid.’

It all happened exactly as he thought. The woman saw the oncoming tram and scurried back and forth in a panic. At the last fraction of a second, the child with her animal instinct turned out to be wiser than the adult. The little girl pulled her hand free and jumped back. The elderly woman raised her arms and ran toward the child. At that moment the train pulled up and knocked her off her feet. Tsvet had fully experienced and felt everything that’s happened to the woman in those seconds: rush, dismay, helplessness, terror. Internally, from the distance he too scurried, became lost, torn between wanting to go forward and back and finally fell between the tracks knocked out by the blow.”

(We again see the already familiar mythical female couple: the “elderly woman” and the “girl”. The “goddess of life and death” is here divided into these two figures. And we also see the commissioner of the crime merging with his victim).

After the tragic incident with the elderly woman, Tsvet rejects his sorcery gift. This is what he says about it, finally parting with Toffel:

“ ‘However, back to business, my good Ivan Stepanovich. Well? Have you experienced the mighty power?’

‘To hell with it.’

‘Had enough?’

‘More than enough. Disgusting!’ ”

The story of Ivan Karamazov is not so fairytale-like: the devil is only imagined by him. Ivan’s father is killed by the lackey Smerdyakov (a real person, but, as we have

already said, playing the role of the devil in the novel). Ivan, however, wishes his father dead. He tells his brother Alyosha:

“Be sure, I should always defend him [the father]. But in my wishes I reserve myself full latitude in this case.”

However, as August Strindberg remarked about himself in his autobiographical book “Inferno” (1897):

“I had frivolously played with hidden forces, and now my evil purpose, guided by an unseen Hand, had reached its goal, and struck my heart.”

(Probably, behind Ivan Karamazov's words about complete freedom of desire is Dostoevsky's personal experience that tormented him: the writer's father was murdered by peasants, while the relationship between father and son was not good. And note that Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, that is, the victim, is given the author's own name, just as Mikhail Bulgakov gives his name to Berlioz. Smerdyakov, the murderer, is given the name “Pavel Fedorovich” — a mirror image of the victim's name).

Ivan kills his father with the help of his double — the real (Smerdyakov) and the otherworldly (devil) (“ ‘Well ... well, it was the devil helped you!’ Ivan cried again.”). In doing so, he places the victim on the line between himself and the antipodean double. It is not difficult for Ivan to do this, as he is already a potential double of Fyodor Pavlovich, as Smerdyakov tells him (in the conversation in Smerdyakov's hut):

“ ‘... You are like Fyodor Pavlovitch, you are more like him than any of his children; you’ve the same soul as he had.’

‘You are not a fool,’ said Ivan, seeming struck.”

A similar “disgusting thing” happens in Nabokov's “Lolita” — I mean the death of Humbert Humbert's wife (curiously, in this novel we again meet, conventionally speaking, a “witch” and her daughter). When Charlotte is hit by a car, Humbert Humbert, approaching the scene, sees, among other things, “two policemen and a sturdy man with tortoise shell glasses”. The “sturdy man with tortoise shell glasses”

is the driver of the car that hit Charlotte. H.H. immediately realises that it was not an accident, that Charlotte was “liquidated” on his order:

“I long for some terrific disaster. Earthquake. Spectacular explosion. Her mother is messily but instantly and permanently eliminated, along with everybody else for miles around. Lolita whimpers in my arms. A free man, I enjoy her among the ruins.”

The order was taken by “McFate”, who appeared to the protagonist in the guise of a beast-like motorist wearing horn-rimmed glasses (note the twice-recurring deuce in the account of this visit):

“Speaking of busybodies, I had another visitor — friend Beale, the fellow who eliminated my wife. Stodgy and solemn, looking like a kind of assistant executioner, with his bulldog jowls, small black eyes, thickly rimmed glasses and conspicuous nostrils... <...> Suavely saying he had twins in my stepdaughter’s class, my grotesque visitor unrolled a large diagram he had made of the accident. It was, as my stepdaughter would have put it, “a beauty,” with all kinds of impressive arrows and dotted lines in varicolored inks. Mrs H.H.’s trajectory was illustrated at several points by a series of those little outline figures—doll-like wee career girl or WAC—used in statistics as visual aids. Very clearly and conclusively, this route came into contact with a boldly traced sinuous line representing two consecutive swerves—one which the Beale car made to avoid the Junk dog (dog not shown), and the second, a kind of exaggerated continuation of the first, meant to avert the tragedy. A very black cross indicated the spot where the trim little outline figure had at last come to rest on the sidewalk. <...>

*With his hummingbird pencil deftly and delicately flying from one point to another, Frederick demonstrated his absolute innocence and the recklessness of my wife: while he was in the act of avoiding the dog, **she** slipped on the freshly watered asphalt and plunged forward whereas she should have flung herself not forward but backward (Fred showed how by a jerk of his padded shoulder). I said it was certainly not his fault, and the inquest upheld my view. <...>*

In result of that weird interview, the numbness of my soul was for a moment resolved. And no wonder! I had actually seen the agent of fate. I had palpated the very flesh

of fate and its padded shoulder. A brilliant and monstrous mutation had suddenly taken place, and here was the instrument. Within the intricacies of the pattern (hurrying housewife, slippery pavement, a pest of a dog, steep grade, big car, baboon at its wheel), I could dimly distinguish my own vile contribution. Had I not been such a fool or such an intuitive genius—to preserve that journal, fluids produced by vindictive anger and hot shame would not have blinded Charlotte in her dash to the mailbox. But even had they blinded her, still nothing might have happened, had not precise fate, that synchronizing phantom, mixed within its alembic the car and the dog and the sun and the shade and the wet and the weak and the strong and the stone. Adieu, Marlene! Fat fate's formal handshake (as reproduced by Beale before leaving the room) brought me out of my torpor; and I wept. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury—I wept.”

The double here is not a tailor who sews fate (as in the novel “Master and Margarita”), but an alchemist who mixes the ingredients of fate in an alembic. Which, of course, in a mythological sense is the same thing.

Let's look at the famous still from Alfred Hitchcock's film “Strangers on a train” (1951):



The strangulation of the woman is reflected in the left glass of the glasses that fell into the grass. These glasses will appear again in the film: they are presented to the protagonist by his antipodean double, the murderer of that woman (the protagonist's wife). There is an involuntary “order” of murder in the film: the protagonist would

benefit from the death of his wife, he may even latently wish it, and his double-antipode takes it upon himself to fulfil this unvoiced order.

* * *

In Gogol's story "The Portrait" (1833—1842), the painter Chartkov accidentally finds and buys a portrait of an old man who seems to have chained him to himself with his eerily alive gaze. It is obvious that in this portrait the protagonist has met his evil angel, his antipodean double, who looks at him as if some magic mirror reflected the black side of his soul (compare with the plot of Oscar Wilde's novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" (1890), in which a young man keeps a portrait of an old man — a gradually aging image of himself):

" 'Well, my friend, have you chosen something?' But the artist had already been standing motionless for some time before a portrait in a big, once magnificent frame, on which traces of gilding now barely gleamed.

It was an old man with a face the color of bronze, gaunt, high-cheekboned; the features seemed to have been caught at a moment of convulsive movement and bespoke an un-northern force. Fiery-noon was stamped on them. He was draped in a loose Asiatic costume. Damaged and dusty though the portrait was, when he managed to clean the dust off the face, he could see the marks of a lofty artist's work. The portrait, it seemed, was unfinished; but the force of the brush was striking. Most extraordinary of all were the eyes: in them the artist seemed to have employed all the force of his brush and all his painstaking effort. They simply stared, stared even out of the portrait itself, as if destroying its harmony by their strange aliveness. When he brought the portrait to the door, the eyes stared still more strongly. They produced almost the same impression among the people. A woman who stopped behind him exclaimed, 'It's staring, it's staring!' and backed away. He felt some unpleasant feeling, unaccountable to himself, and put the portrait down."

Here we can note three signs of the double-antipode. Firstly, the double-antipode is in the portrait, in the painting that the protagonist is looking at. The painting here is an equivalent of an evil mirror: the hero looks into it and sees himself distorted. (We have already mentioned one more meaning of the appearance of the double-antipode in a painting or in the form of a statue: the deity takes possession of its own image, the image comes to life and addresses the hero. This has the effect of a dead man coming back to life, which testifies to the deity's belonging to another world). Noteworthy here is the cramp (“convulsive movement”), so peculiar to the devil's doubles or to the heroes meeting them. (For example, Ivan Karamazov is given a cramp by Smerdyakov: “Ivan, in a sudden paroxysm [in Russian: like seized by cramp], bit his lip, clenched his fists, and, in another minute, would have flung himself on Smerdyakov”; “... and he could not have explained himself what he was feeling at that instant. He moved and walked as though in a nervous frenzy” [in Russian: like seized by cramp]. As for Svidrigailov, he seems to contain a convulsion in the very sound of his surname). Secondly, the stare itself (the double's gaze is either a look from the outside, or a reflection of the hero's own gaze, staring tensely into the mirror). Thirdly, “a loose Asiatic costume” of the old man depicted in the portrait. The antipodean double is supposed to appear as an unusual, exotic, otherworldly person. Therefore, he often appears as a stranger, as a foreigner, often as an Asian. It is not by chance that in Gogol's story “Nevsky Prospekt”, the painter Piskarev comes to a Persian for help — and the Persian gives the painter opium (demanding, incidentally, to paint him a beautiful woman in return — that is, to give him an image of a goddess):

“He had heard that there were means of inducing sleep—one need only take opium. But where could he get opium? He thought of a Persian who sold shawls and, whenever he saw Piskarev, asked him to paint a beautiful woman for him. He decided to go to him, assuming that he would be sure to have the drug he wanted. The Persian received him, sitting on a sofa with his legs crossed under him. ‘What do you want opium for?’ he asked.

Piskarev told him about his sleeplessness.

'Very well, you must paint me a beautiful woman, and I will give you opium...' "

Quite often the shadowy aspect of the antipodean double is emphasised by his tall stature or swarthiness (and also by the cloak that covers him, concealing him — in the story "Portrait" it is "a loose Asiatic costume"). (Compare with Pechorin's double-antipode in Lermontov's novel "A Hero of Our Time" (1839—1840), Vulich, who is marked by "a tall stature, a swarthy complexion, black hair, black piercing eyes". In addition, Pechorin's rival Grushnitski is "swarthy and black-haired"). Such is also the painter Chartkov's shadowy double. This is how the character who served as the subject of this portrait is described at the end of the story:

"He went about in loose Asian attire; the dark color of his face pointed to his southern origin, but precisely what his nationality was—Indian, Greek, Persian—no one could say for certain. Tall, almost extraordinary stature, a swarthy, lean, burnt face, its color somehow inconceivably terrible, large eyes of an extraordinary fire, and thick, beetling brows, distinguished him greatly and sharply from all the ashen inhabitants of the capital."

The painter Chartkov met his personal devil, his devilish double (this meeting was unobtrusively foreshadowed by the artist's very surname: 'devil' in Russian is 'chyort'). The painter brings the purchased portrait home — and is horrified by the eyes of his "shadow":

"Having said that, the artist suddenly shuddered and went pale: gazing at him, peering from behind the canvas on the easel, was someone's convulsively distorted face. Two terrible eyes were fixed directly on him, as if preparing to devour him; on the mouth was written the threatening command to keep silent. Frightened, he wanted to cry out and call Nikita, who had already managed to set up a mighty snoring in the front room; but suddenly he stopped and laughed. The feeling of fear instantly subsided. It was the portrait he had bought, which he had quite forgotten about. Moonlight illuminated the room and, falling on it, endowed it with a strange aliveness. He began studying it and cleaning it. Wetting a sponge, he went over it several times, washed off almost all the dust and dirt that had accumulated and stuck to it, hung it on the wall before him, and marveled still

more at the extraordinary work: the whole face almost came to life, and the eyes stared at him so that he finally gave a start and stepped back, saying in an amazed voice, 'It stares, it stares at you with human eyes!' <...>

This was no longer art: it even destroyed the harmony of the portrait itself. They were alive, they were human eyes! It seemed as if they had been cut out of a living man and set there. Here there was not that lofty pleasure which comes over the soul at the sight of an artist's work, however terrible its chosen subject; here there was some morbid, anguished feeling."

Then Chartkov falls asleep and has a dream in which an old man emerges from a portrait and seduces him with gold:

"The eyes were fixed still more terribly, still more meaningly, on him, and seemed not to want to look at anything but him. Filled with an oppressive feeling, he decided to get up, grabbed a bedsheet, and, going over to the portrait, covered it completely.

Having done so, he went back to bed more calmly, began thinking about the poverty and pitifulness of the artist's lot, about the thorny path that lay before him in this world; and meanwhile his eyes involuntarily looked through the chink in the screen at the sheet-covered portrait. The moonlight intensified the whiteness of the sheet, and it seemed to him that the terrible eyes even began to glow through the cloth. In fear, he fixed his eyes on it more intently, as if wishing to assure himself that it was nonsense. But finally, indeed now ... he saw, saw clearly: the sheet was no longer there ... the portrait was all uncovered and staring, past whatever was around it, straight into him, simply staring into his insides ... His heart went cold. And he saw: the old man stirred and suddenly leaned on the frame with both hands. Finally he propped himself on his hands and, thrusting out both legs, leaped free of the frame ... Now all that could be seen through the chink in the screen was the empty frame. The noise of footsteps sounded in the room, finally coming closer and closer to the screen. The poor artist's heart began to pound harder. Breathless with fear, he expected the old man to look behind the screen at any moment. And then he did look behind the screen, with the same bronze face,

moving his big eyes. Chartkov tried to cry out and found that he had no voice, tried to stir, to make some movement, but his limbs would not move. Open-mouthed and with bated breath, he looked at this terrible phantom, tall, in a loose Asian robe, waiting for what he would do. The old man sat down almost at his feet and then took something from under the folds of his loose garment. It was a sack. The old man untied it and, taking it by the corners, shook it upside down: with a dull sound, heavy packets shaped like long posts fell to the floor, and each was wrapped in blue paper and had "1,000 Gold Roubles" written on it. Thrusting his long, bony hands from the wide sleeves, the old man began to unwrap the packets. Gold gleamed. However great the oppressive feeling and frantic fear of the artist, still all of him gazed at the gold, staring fixedly as it was unwrapped by the bony hands, gleaming, clinking thinly and dully, and then wrapped up again."

Note the look in the double's eyes, penetrating right into the hero's soul: "the portrait was all uncovered and staring, past whatever was around it, straight into him, simply staring into his insides..."

What happened next, you know. The money was indeed given out by the ghost (it was accidentally found in the frame of the painting), Chartkov ceases to serve true art, becomes a fashionable painter, ruins his talent, is tormented by this, and finally loses his mind:

"Attacks of rage and madness began to come more often, and finally it all turned into a most terrible illness. A cruel fever combined with galloping consumption came over him with such fierceness that in three days nothing but a shadow of him remained. This was combined with all the signs of hopeless insanity. Sometimes several men could not hold him back. He would begin to imagine the long forgotten, living eyes of the extraordinary portrait, and then his rage was terrible. All the people around his bed seemed to him like terrible portraits. It doubled, quadrupled in his eyes; all the walls seemed hung with portraits, their motionless, living eyes fixed on him. Frightful portraits stared from the ceiling, from the floor; the room expanded and went on endlessly to make space for more of these motionless eyes."

The plot of the devil's antipodean double coming out of the portrait was transferred to Gogol's story from Charles Robert Maturin's then very popular novel "Melmoth the Wanderer". At the beginning of the novel, John Melmoth comes to visit his sick (being near death) uncle to care for him. John is to receive a large inheritance upon his uncle's death. The uncle is a phenomenal miser, and his avarice is colourfully described. So his uncle gives John a key and sends him to his closet to fetch maderia. There John sees a portrait of his ancestor, also John Melmoth (and here doubleness, perhaps not so obvious in Gogol's "Portrait", reveals itself definitively) — with surprisingly lively eyes in which the devil's fire glows. And when he returns, he learns a strange thing from his uncle: this man is still alive:

" 'Take this key,' said old Melmoth, after a violent spasm; 'take this key, there is wine in that closet,—Madeira. I always told them [to the servants] there was nothing there, but they did not believe me, or I should not have been robbed as I have been. At one time I said it was whiskey, and then I fared worse than ever, for they drank twice as much of it. '

John took the key from his uncle's hand; the dying man pressed it as he did so, and John, interpreting this as a mark of kindness, returned the pressure. He was undeceived by the whisper that followed,—'John, my lad, don't drink any of that wine while you are there.' [Compare, in Gogol's "Dead Souls", about Plyushkin: "He himself had forgotten by then how much he had of what, and only remembered where in the cupboard he kept a little decanter with the remainder of some liqueur, on which he himself had made a mark, so that no one could steal a drink from it."] *'Good God!' said John, indignantly throwing the key on the bed; then, recollecting that the miserable being before him was no object of resentment, he gave the promise required, and entered the closet, which no foot but that of old Melmoth had entered for nearly sixty years. He had some difficulty in finding out the wine, and indeed staid long enough to justify his uncle's suspicions,—but his mind was agitated, and his hand unsteady. He could not but remark his uncle's extraordinary look, that had the ghastliness of fear superadded to that of death, as he gave him permission to enter his closet. He could not but see the looks of horror which the women exchanged*

as he approached it. And, finally, when he was in it, his memory was malicious enough to suggest some faint traces of a story, too horrible for imagination, connected with it. He remembered in one moment most distinctly, that no one but his uncle had ever been known to enter it for many years.

Before he quitted it, he held up the dim light, and looked around him with a mixture of terror and curiosity. There was a great deal of decayed and useless lumber, such as might be supposed to be heaped up to rot in a miser's closet; but John's eyes were in a moment, and as if by magic, rivetted on a portrait that hung on the wall, and appeared, even to his untaught eye, far superior to the tribe of family pictures that are left to moulder on the walls of a family mansion. It represented a man of middle age. There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but the eyes, John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. Had he been acquainted with the poetry of Southey, he might have often exclaimed in his after-life,

*'Only the eyes had life,
They gleamed with demon light.'*

From an impulse equally resistless and painful, he approached the portrait, held the candle towards it, and could distinguish the words on the border of the painting,—Jno. Melmoth, anno 1646. John was neither timid by nature, or nervous by constitution, or superstitious from habit, yet he continued to gaze in stupid horror on this singular picture, till, aroused by his uncle's cough, he hurried into his room. The old man swallowed the wine. He appeared a little revived; it was long since he had tasted such a cordial,—his heart appeared to expand to a momentary confidence. 'John, what did you see in that room?' 'Nothing, Sir.' 'That's a lie; every one wants to cheat or to rob me.' 'Sir, I don't want to do either.' 'Well, what did you see that you—you took notice of?' 'Only a picture, Sir.' 'A picture, Sir!—the original is still alive.' John, though under the impression of his recent feelings, could not but look incredulous. 'John,' whispered his uncle;—

'John, they say I am dying of this and that; and one says it is for want of nourishment, and one says it is for want of medicine,—but, John,' and his face looked hideously ghastly, 'I am dying of a fright. That man,' and he extended his meagre arm toward the closet, as if he was pointing to a living being; 'that man, I have good reason to know, is alive still.' 'How is that possible, Sir?' said John involuntarily, 'the date on the picture is 1646.' 'You have seen it,—you have noticed it,' said his uncle. 'Well,'—he rocked and nodded on his bolster for a moment, then, grasping John's hand with an unutterable look, he exclaimed, 'You will see him again, he is alive.' Then, sinking back on his bolster, he fell into a kind of sleep or stupor, his eyes still open, and fixed on John.'

Soon the portrait really comes to life:

"At this moment John saw the door open, and a figure appear at it, who looked round the room, and then quietly and deliberately retired, but not before John had discovered in his face the living original of the portrait. His first impulse was to utter an exclamation of terror, but his breath felt stopped. He was then rising to pursue the figure, but a moment's reflection checked him. What could be more absurd, than to be alarmed or amazed at a resemblance between a living man and the portrait of a dead one! The likeness was doubtless strong enough to strike him even in that darkened room, but it was doubtless only a likeness; and though it might be imposing enough to terrify an old man of gloomy and retired habits, and with a broken constitution, John resolved it should not produce the same effect on him.

But while he was applauding himself for this resolution, the door opened, and the figure appeared at it, beckoning and nodding to him, with a familiarity somewhat terrifying."

Let us note another sign of the double-antipode: in Maturin's novel we are dealing with a revived dead man, with a living corpse — in short, with Koshchey the Deathless (" '... That man,' and he extended his meagre arm toward the closet, as if he was pointing to a living being; 'that man, I have good reason to know, is alive still.' "). This "meagre arm" is also noteworthy: not only does the protagonist's

double appear as if he has come out of the painting, but the dying uncle himself appears as a reanimated corpse — as the revived Koshchey. Gogol's old man also resembles Koshchey (“Thrusting his long, bony hands from the wide sleeves, the old man began to unwrap the packets. Gold gleamed.”). Storing gold (or treasure), by the way, is a typical role of Koshchey (for example, in Pushkin's poem: “Tsar Koshchey withers there over the gold...”).

Then, in Maturin's novel, we read stories of encounters with the undying Melmoth, told by people from different countries and epochs. One of them, Stanton, a seventeenth-century man, finds Melmoth (to his own misfortune) and he appears to him in the form of a “shadow”:

“When the play was over, he stood for some moments in the deserted streets. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and he saw near him a figure, whose shadow, projected half across the street, <...> appeared to him of gigantic magnitude. He had been so long accustomed to contend with these phantoms of the imagination, that he took a kind of stubborn delight in subduing them. He walked up to the object, and observing the shadow only was magnified, and the figure was the ordinary height of man, he approached it, and discovered the very object of his search...”

After his uncle's death, young John Melmoth burns a gruesome portrait of his ancestor — but it doesn't help:

“After a few moments, he raised himself with an involuntary start, and saw the picture gazing at him from its canvas. He was within ten inches of it as he sat, and the proximity appeared increased by the strong light that was accidentally thrown on it, and its being the only representation of a human figure in the room. Melmoth felt for a moment as if he were about to receive an explanation from its lips. He gazed on it in return,—all was silent in the house,—they were alone together. The illusion subsided at length; and as the mind rapidly passes to opposite extremes, he remembered the injunction of his uncle to destroy the portrait. He seized it;—his hand shook at first, but the mouldering canvas appeared to assist him in the effort. He tore it from the frame with a cry half terrific, half

triumphant;—it fell at his feet, and he shuddered as it fell. He expected to hear some fearful sounds, some unimaginable breathings of prophetic horror, follow this act of sacrilege, for such he felt it, to tear the portrait of his ancestor from his native walls. He paused and listened:—there was no voice, nor any that answered;—but as the wrinkled and torn canvas fell to the floor, its undulations gave the portrait the appearance of smiling. Melmoth felt horror indescribable at this transient and imaginary resuscitation of the figure. He caught it up, rushed into the next room, tore, cut, and hacked it in every direction, and eagerly watched the fragments that burned like tinder in the turf-fire which had been lit in his room. As Melmoth saw the last blaze, he threw himself into bed, in hope of a deep and intense sleep. He had done what was required of him, and felt exhausted both in mind and body; but his slumber was not so sound as he had hoped for. The sullen light of the turf-fire, burning but never blazing, disturbed him every moment. He turned and turned, but still there was the same red light glaring on, but not illuminating, the dusky furniture of the apartment. The wind was high that night, and as the creaking door swung on its hinges, every noise seemed like the sound of a hand struggling with the lock, or of a foot pausing on the threshold. But (for Melmoth never could decide) was it in a dream or not, that he saw the figure of his ancestor appear at the door?—hesitatingly as he saw him at first on the night of his uncle's death,—saw him enter the room, approach his bed, and heard him whisper, ‘You have burned me, then; but those are flames I can survive.—I am alive,—I am beside you.’ [“Now you are with me forever,” are the words that the stepfather in Bergman's film “Fanny and Alexander” says to Alexander, appearing to his stepson after he has been burned in a fire: catching up to the walking Alexander from behind and throwing him to the floor. The stepfather (the Shadow) is dressed in black, while Alexander is wearing a white shirt.] Melmoth started, sprung from his bed,—it was broad day-light. He looked round,—there was no human being in the room but himself. He felt a slight pain in the wrist of his right arm. He looked at it, it was black and blue, as from the recent gripe of a strong hand”.

Here it is interesting to note the play of light (in Maturin's novel it is “the sullen light of the turf-fire”, in Gogol's story it will be moonlight), which vivifies the portrait, as well as other methods of vivification. For instance, it seems to the protagonist that the portrait is smiling, but in fact it is simply wrinkled and torn. Compare in Gogol's “Portrait” (in the first edition): “... at the same time his face was strangely twisted and a kind of fixed laughter expressed itself in all his wrinkles...” An important sign of the devil's double is his squeezing of the hero's hand. Compare with Pushkin's tragedy “The Stone Guest”:

Statue: Give me your hand.

Don Juan: Here ...oh, it's heavy,

The stony grip of his right hand!

Leave me alone, let go—let go of me ...

I am undone—it's finished—Doña Anna!

(They descend.)

The wind rushing into the house (as if someone has already stepped on the threshold) also reminds us of Pushkin's lines: “From early morn the clouds hang low, / The night grows rough and wild with storm; / And lo! the dead man ceaseless knocks / At window first, and then at door.”²⁸

Take a look at a still from Samuel Beckett's film “The Film”:

²⁸ «Уж с утра погода злится, / Ночью буря настает, / И утопленник стучится / Под окном и у ворот».



The protagonist looks at a picture of some Mesopotamian god hanging on the wall. Then he tears the picture down, tears it up and stomps on it, but the god continues to look at him from the scrap with one eye. (The protagonist himself is also one-eyed.) But why do the eyes of Gogol's diabolical double endlessly multiply? (“All the people around his bed seemed to him like terrible portraits. It doubled, quadrupled in his eyes; all the walls seemed hung with portraits, their motionless, living eyes fixed on him. Frightful portraits stared from the ceiling, from the floor; the room expanded and went on endlessly to make space for more of these motionless eyes.”) Before I attempt to answer this, let us turn to another popular work of the time, the “Confession of an English Opium-Eater” by Thomas de Quincey (1821). The autobiographical hero of Thomas de Quincey's story, an opium-user, at one point sees the following:

“To my architecture succeeded dreams of lakes and silvery expanses of water: these haunted me... <...>.

The waters now changed their character—from translucent lakes shining like mirrors they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself slowly like a scroll through many months, promised an abiding torment... <...> Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. <...> ... now it

was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces upturned to the heavens—faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries: my agitation was infinite; my mind tossed and surged with the ocean.”

A vision similar to the vision of faces agitating on the waters in De Quincey's tale also occurs in Maturin's novel, in the description of Melmoth the Wanderer's dream:

“He dreamed that he stood on the summit of a precipice, whose downward height no eye could have measured, but for the fearful waves of a fiery ocean that lashed, and blazed, and roared at its bottom, sending its burning spray far up, so as to drench the dreamer with its sulphurous rain. The whole glowing ocean below was alive—every billow bore an agonizing soul, that rose like a wreck or a putrid corse on the waves of earth's oceans—uttered a shriek as it burst against that adamantine precipice—sunk—and rose again to repeat the tremendous experiment!”

Melmoth then — in his dream — plunges from a height into this ocean.

As for the protagonist of De Quincey's story, before he sees many faces “upon the rocking waters of the ocean”, he meets an Asian (a Malay), who then dwells in his opium dreams — in multiplied form (and who, on leaving, surprisingly consumed at a single sitting a huge dose of opium given to him by De Quincey):

“One day a Malay knocked at my door. What business a Malay could have to transact amongst English mountains I cannot conjecture ... <...>. ... the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations ... <...> This incident I have digressed to mention, because this Malay <...> fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him, worse than himself, that ran “a-muck” at me, and led me into a world of troubles.”

“The Malay has been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes. <...> I was kissed, with cancerous

kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud. <...> The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him, and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, etc. All the feet of the tables, sofas, etc., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions; and I stood loathing and fascinated."

"Slavish gestures", by the way, are one of the signs of an antipodean double. After all, he is the shadow of the hero: where the hero goes, he goes too. And it is also one of the traditional signs of the devil, because the devil is a lackey: Mephistopheles serves Faust in this world so that Faust will serve him in the afterlife. The devil appears as a lackey in Dostoevsky's novel "The Brothers Karamazov" ("No, I was never such a flunkey [*in Russian: lackey*]! How then could my soul beget a flunkey like you?"), and Smerdyakov is a lackey in the same novel ("On a bench in the gateway the valet [*in Russian: lackey*] Smerdyakov was sitting enjoying the coolness of the evening, and at the first glance at him Ivan knew that the valet Smerdyakov was on his mind, and that it was this man that his soul loathed.").

So what does this terrifying, monstrous multiplicity of heads, faces, eyes ("the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions") mean?

I think the point is this: the hero, leaning over the world as if it were a mirror, as if it were a watery expanse ("a vast mirror, the world's sea" — as it is said in Bonaventure's "Night Vigils", an anonymous German romantic work published in 1805), sees himself as a multiplied double, sees his own multifaceted, many-eyed "shadow". He is reflected in every thing (compare with the "great saying" of the Hindus: "tat tvam asi" — 'that thou art', that is you, all of this is you). It is as if a mirror splits, and each shard becomes a mirror reflecting the hero. It is as if the hero undergoes a rite of passage, during which he has to be shattered (that is, united with the world), and then restored, reassembled into himself. That is, he has to die in order

to be born again. If this rite of passage is successful (which, however, may also end in mere death or madness), the hero will be one with the world and will be able to accept his fate.

This multiplication of eyes (as well as heads, mouths and hands) we see, for example, in the “Bhagavad Gita”, where Krishna, at Arjuna's request, shows him his true appearance:

It had many
mouths and eyes;
many wondrous
aspects to behold;
many divine ornaments;
many divine weapons
of war,
raised high.

<...>

There, Arjuna,
the son of Pandu, saw
in the body
of the God of gods
the whole world,
standing as one,
and yet divided up
in many ways.

<...>

Strong-Armed One,

when the worlds
see your great form,
with many eyes and mouths,
many arms, thighs and feet,
with many fearsome tusks
and many bellies,
they tremble as I do.

In “Metropolis”, the protagonist watches the devilish goddess, the false Maria, performing in the theatre (he is sick and at home at this point, but in his delirium he sees her and her delirious male audience); there she is (note the plurality of dragons carrying her — the same sign of the many-faced deity as in Krishna's appearance):



And here are the multiplied eyes of the audience (but in the protagonist's delirium, they are his own multiplied eyes):



In E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman", Nathanael is visited by his man-shadow (Coppola, in whom Nathanael recognises the fearsome alchemist Coppelius — the horror of his childhood) — a barometer and spectacle salesman. Coppola lays out the glasses, offering to buy them — one would think, no big deal. But look how the hero of the story (a very unstable young man) perceives it:

"One day, he was in the act of writing to Clara [later the heroine of Dostoevsky's "The Double" will be called so], when there came a gentle knocking at the door; it opened in response to his reply, and the repellent face of Coppola looked in. Nathanael felt himself tremble in his innermost depths; recalling what Spalanzani had told him about his fellow countryman, however, and the sacred promise he had made to his beloved regarding the sandman Coppelius, he was ashamed of this childish fear, pulled himself together with all his might, and said, as gently and composedly as he could: 'I am not going to buy a barometer, my dear friend, so please be gone.'

*At that, however, Coppola stepped bodily into the room and, his wide mouth distorted into an ugly grin and his little eyes blazing out piercingly from under long grey eyelashes, said in a hoarse voice: 'Not barometer, not barometer! – I also got lov-ely **occe**, lov-ely **occe**!'*

Horried, Nathanael cried: 'Madman! how can you have eyes?'

But Coppola had already put aside his barometers and, reaching into his capacious coat pockets, brought out lorgnettes and pairs of spectacles and laid them on to the table. 'Here, here: glasses, glasses to put on your nose; they're my occe, lov-ely occe!'

And with that he fetched out more and more pairs of spectacles, so that the whole table began to sparkle and glitter in an uncanny fashion. A thousand eyes gazed and blinked and stared up at Nathanael, but he could not look away from the table, and Coppola laid more and more pairs of spectacles on to it, and flaming glances leaped more and more wildly together and directed their blood-red beams into Nathanael's breast. Unmanned by an ungovernable terror, he cried: 'Stop! stop! dreadful man!'
”

And here is the horror that Nathanael experienced as a child when he met Coppelius: *“I seemed to see human faces appearing all around, but without eyes – instead of eyes there were hideous black cavities. 'Eyes, bring eyes!' Coppelius cried in a dull hollow voice. Gripped by wild terror, I screamed aloud and fell out of my hiding-place on to the floor. Coppelius seized me. 'Little beast! Little beast!' he bleated, showing his teeth. Then he pulled me up and threw me on to the hearth, so that the flames began to singe my hair. 'Now we have eyes — eyes — a lovely pair of children's eyes!' Coppelius whispered and took a red-glowing dust out of the flame with his hands and was about to sprinkle it into my eyes.”*

Let us note that Coppola-Coppelius, on the one hand, peddles eyeglasses, which are at the same time eyes, on the other hand, he blinds the boy because he is a representative of the other world, the world of death, the world of the invisible. To see in the other world, one must be blind or have one's eyes closed. (Compare with the blinded Polyphemus. For the myth it is not important who blinds whom: the ogre blinds the hero or the hero blinds the ogre. What matters is that the blinding takes place.) Coppelius is the Sandman:

“ 'Mama, who is this sandman who always drives us away from Papa? What does he look like?'

'There is no sandman, my dear child,' my mother replied. 'When I say the sandman is coming, all that means is that you are sleepy and cannot keep your eyes open, as though someone had sprinkled sand into them.' "

Let us return to the terrifying multiplicity of the double-antipode. In Dostoevsky's story "The Double", Golyadkin is horrified to see "a terrible multitude" of "perfect counterparts of himself" — the connection between doubleness and multiplied faces is obvious here:

"Mr Golyadkin rushed away, following his nose, at the mercy of fate, to wherever chance would lead him; but with every step he took, every time his foot struck the pavement, there sprang up, as if from under the ground, another exactly and completely identical Mr Golyadkin, revolting in his depravity. And all these complete replicas, as soon as they appeared, began running along one behind the other, stretching out in a long file like a string of geese and scurrying after Mr Golyadkin, so that there was no escaping from perfect counterparts of himself, so that horror deprived the much-to-be-pitied Mr Golyadkin of breath, so that finally there had sprung up a terrible multitude of perfect replicas, so that at length the whole capital was clogged with perfect replicas..."

In Charles Nodier's story "Smarra" (1821), the hero in a nightmare is visited by a certain Méroé (an apparent goddess of death, connected to the world of snakes), who unleashes on him a freak monster called Smarra. Smarra is accompanied by "the thousand demons of the night", including "heads newly-severed from their trunks by the soldier's war-axe, but which look at me with living eyes, hopping on reptiles' feet...". (Note, by the way, the sound of the names themselves: 'Méroé', 'Smarra'). However, the vision of a multiplied double can also be good, while remaining formidable, that is, being both beautiful and frightening. This is the case, for instance, in Hermann Hesse's novel "Steppenwolf", where the musician Pablo, the double-antipode of the protagonist (Harry Haller), shows him himself in a multiplied form:

" 'Well laughed, Harry,' cried Pablo. 'You will learn to laugh like the immortals yet. <...> We are in a magic theatre; a world of pictures, not realities. See that you

pick out beautiful and cheerful ones and show that you really are not in love with your highly questionable personality any longer. Should you still, however, have a hankering after it, you need only have another look in the mirror that I will now show you. But you know the old proverb: "A mirror in the hand is worth two on the wall." Ha! ha!' (Again that laugh, beautiful and frightful!) 'And now there only remains one little ceremony and quite a jolly one. You have now to cast aside the spectacles of your personality. So come here and look in a proper looking glass. It will give you some fun.'

Laughingly with a few droll caresses he turned me about so that I faced the gigantic mirror on the wall. There I saw myself.

I saw myself for a brief instant as my usual self, except that I looked unusually good-humored, bright and laughing. But I had scarcely had time to recognize myself before the reflection fell to pieces. A second, a third, a tenth, a twentieth figure sprang from it till the whole gigantic mirror was full of nothing but Harrys or bits of him, each of which I saw only for the instant of recognition."

Pablo is an "exotic beautiful demigod" to whom the protagonist is introduced by Hermina, his Beautiful Lady (one might say his Muse):

"... she introduced me to the saxophone player, a dark and good-looking youth of Spanish or South American origin, who, she told me, could play on all instruments and talk every language in the world."

Pablo, by the way, treats Harry to powder (with a dash of cocaine) from his snuff box, which is in keeping with his role as the master of the initiation rite:

"He offered me a pinch from his little gold snuffbox. It would do me good. I looked inquiringly at Hermine. She nodded and I took a pinch. The almost immediate effect was that I became clearer in the head and more cheerful. No doubt there was cocaine in the powder. Hermine told me that Pablo had many such drugs, and that he procured them through secret channels. He offered them to his friends now and then and was a master in the mixing and prescribing of them. He had drugs for stilling pain, for inducing sleep, for begetting beautiful dreams, lively spirits and the passion of love."

Then Harry notices “those lovely animal eyes” as well.

We already know why the double is swarthy. But what does his ability to “play all the instruments and speak all the languages of the world” mean? (Let us also remember Bulgakov's Woland: “Oh, I'm generally a polyglot and know a great number of languages.”) Apart from knowing the language of spirits and beasts, it probably means the unity of the antipodean double with the world and his role as a helper and teacher (or destroyer) in relation to the hero. The double-antipode is usually a master who either knows how to do many things or combines different things into something whole. Such are, for example, the tailor Petrovich in Gogol's short story “The Overcoat”, the cook Smerdyakov in “The Brothers Karamazov”. Such is the “historian” Woland (“He looked Berlioz up and down as if he were going to make him a suit”). The double-antipode sews or brews fate. Here, for example, is Ivan's guess about Smerdyakov:

“What a rigmarole! And it all seems to happen at once, as though it were planned. You'll have a fit and they'll both be unconscious,” cried Ivan. “But aren't you trying to arrange it so?” broke from him suddenly, and he frowned threateningly.”

It is no accident that the double in Saramago's novel “The Double” (2002) is an actor who plays many minor roles. And all these roles have to do with organising events or observing them (an hotel receptionist, a theater impresario, a police photographer, a dance teacher, a bank clerk, a medical auxiliary, a nightclub doorman, a croupier...). A mysterious criminal-in-hiding named Vautrin in Balzac's novel “Father Goriot” (double-antipode of Eugène de Rastignac) knows everything and does everything:

“...if anything went wrong with one of the locks, he would soon unscrew it, take it to pieces, file it, oil and clean and set it in order, and put it back in its place again; ‘I am an old hand at it,’ he used to say. Not only so, he knew all about ships, the sea, France, foreign countries, men, business, law, great houses and prisons, — there was nothing that he did not know.”

(Vautrin, as the double-antipode should do, plays a “fate-shaping” role in relation to the protagonist. He explicitly declares: “I mean to play Providence for you, and

Providence is to do my will.” Vautrin also possesses the features of an “animal double”: “ ‘Look here!’ — he unbuttoned his waistcoat and exposed his chest, covered, like a bear's back, with a shaggy fell ...”. He is here addressing Eugène de Rastignac.)

Kurtz, in Joseph Conrad's story “Heart of Darkness” (1902), is not far behind Vautrin:

“... another fellow, calling himself Kurtz’s cousin, appeared two days later, and was anxious to hear all the details about his dear relative’s last moments. Incidentally he gave me to understand that Kurtz had been essentially a great musician. ‘There was the making of an immense success,’ said the man, who was an organist, I believe, with lank grey hair flowing over a greasy coat-collar. I had no reason to doubt his statement; and to this day I am unable to say what was Kurtz’s profession, whether he ever had any—which was the greatest of his talents. I had taken him for a painter who wrote for the papers, or else for a journalist who could paint—but even the cousin (who took snuff during the interview) could not tell me what he had been—exactly. He was a universal genius ...”

This, by the way, is how Kurtz is first seen by Willard in Francis Ford Coppola's film “Apocalypse Now” (1979), based on Conrad's story:



(Willard follows Kurtz into the jungle, that is, into the depths of the element, the “source of life and death”, where he is to slay Kurtz with his sword. Kurtz allows himself to be killed, since he sees Willard as his successor. In parallel with the killing

of the double, a sacrifice is made: the head of a bull is cut off). As you can see, Kurtz has a shadow instead of a face, and he is also bald (we will talk about bald doubles later). Kurtz is also an animal double: he is as much a creature of the jungle as the tiger that frightened the protagonist and his companions at the very beginning of their odyssey. Well, and a reanimated dead man, of course, because at the sight of the protagonist he sits up from a lying position (in his dark niche). In the story, Kurtz appears as Koschey the Deathless and an eternally hungry ogre:

“His covering had fallen off, and his body emerged from it pitiful and appalling as from a winding-sheet. I could see the cage of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arm waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide—it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him.”

Take a look at another master at dealing with a multi-part mechanism — a still from Emer Kavrur's film “The Hidden Face” (1991), based on a screenplay by Orhan Pamuk:



The protagonist comes to the clockmaker (the master of time and fate). He is directed to the clockmaker by a mysterious woman in blue (“a woman out of a dream”).

And here is the master from the Russian fairy tale “The Tricky Science”, in whom the master of the initiation rite is clearly visible:

“He was a craftsman in a town beyond the Volga, he taught different languages and different crafts, and he could manage everything. He instructed boys, took them from their fathers-mothers for three years.”

Let us put it this way: both the plurality of the double's eyes and the plurality of his skills are based on the equality of the double to the whole world (in which the hero must be reflected, must dissolve).

Let us look at another quite curious example of the “many-eyedness” associated with doubleness. August Strindberg's novel “On the Seaboard” (1890) (the original title of the novel was “The Master”) ends with the protagonist, the fish inspector Axel Borg, in a half-crazed state going out on a sailboat into the winter sea, clearly not intending to return from this outing. The last lines of the novel are:

“Out to the new Christmas star led the way, out over the sea, the mother of all, from the womb of whom life's first spark was kindled, the inexhaustible spring of fecundity and love, life's origin and life's foe.”

Here we clearly see the hero's entry into the “source of life and death”. Immediately before this, the inspector is confronted with the many-eyedness of the sea. The motivation for the phenomenon is bizarre: a steamer gets shipwrecked, and the waves carry children's dolls to the shore (the steamer was taking them to a Christmas fair). The eyes of the dolls move as the dolls rock on the waves, and the inspector imagines that these eyes are giving him a sign, winking at him:

“Some had blond bangs, others black, their cheeks were rose and white, and their big, open blue eyes glanced up to the black sky, immovable and without winking. But when they came nearer the strand, he observed, that when they swung on the wave, the eyes of some of them moved, as if they signaled to him, that he should rescue them.”

There is, of course, an antipodean double in this novel. When Axel Borg sets out — in a total fog — on his boat to an uninhabited islet, it seems to him that someone is following him, and then on this islet there is a “fate-shaping” meeting

(“it was not by chance that they had met out here”) with a preacher who emerged from the fog. The preacher turns out to be Borg's classmate (“he seemed to perceive a face behind this face, and annoyed by this labor which his memory had unconsciously undertaken, he asked bluntly: ‘Have we not met each other before?’”). Before Borg's suicidal sailing at the end of the novel, the preacher holds the hand of the inspector, who has woken up after losing consciousness (“When he awoke and came to his senses, he felt a strong warm hand grasping his right hand...”).

The preacher also has other features of a double. His face is covered with a long dark beard, his left shoulder is lower than his right. Uneven shoulders are as much an omen of meeting an antipodean double as different eyes. For example, in Yukio Mishima's novel “The Temple of the Golden Pavilion” (1956), the protagonist (who is about to burn the temple) seems to see his double:

“I was walking along the road in front of the Myoshin Temple when I happened to notice a student striding ahead of me at the same pace as mine. He stopped at a little tobacco shop which was housed in a building with ancient eaves, and I noticed his profile as he stood there in his student's cap buying a pack of cigarettes. It was a sharp, white profile with narrow eyebrows. From his cap I could tell that he came from Kyoto University. He glanced at me out of the corner of his eyes. It was as though dark shadows had drifted together. I knew intuitively that he was a pyromaniac. <...>

I slowed down and decided to follow the student As I walked behind him and observed that he carried one of his shoulders a little lower than the other, I felt that his back was, in fact, my own. He was far more beautiful than I, but I had no doubt that he was being impelled to commit the same act as myself because of the same loneliness, the same unhappiness, the same confused thoughts about beauty. As I followed him, I began to feel that I was witnessing my own deed in anticipation.

Such things are liable to happen on a late spring afternoon, because of the brightness and the languid air. I became double and my other self imitated my

actions in advance, thus clearly showing me the self that I should not be able to see when the time came for me to put my plan into execution.”

Uneven shoulders may not only be a sign of a double, but also of someone who is about to meet his double. In Dostoevsky's “The Brothers Karamazov”, Alyosha looks at Ivan, who is leaving him and who is then to meet Smerdyakov:

“He suddenly noticed that Ivan swayed as he walked and that his right shoulder looked lower than his left. He had never noticed it before.”

There is also a “double” witch in Strindberg's novel: Axel Borg not only has a fateful meeting with a beautiful woman and her elderly mother, but the beautiful woman herself appears to him as an old witch at a certain moment (“and when he saw it in profile he could picture the coming witch physiognomy, when the time came that the old woman's teeth loosened, the lips sunk and formed an obtuse angle and the nose dropped down over the prominent chin”).

In Bergman's film “Fanny and Alexander”, just before meeting the antipodean double (Ishmael), Alexander meets the many-eyed god. What happens is as follows. Having stayed overnight in someone else's house, the boy fails to find a pot, goes out into some labyrinth-like rooms, loses his way — and then the puppeteer, wanting to cheer him up, gives him a rather gruesome performance (and it is good that Alexander had already managed to pee before that). The key in the door on Alexander's side begins to turn:

“Who's behind the door?” “It is God behind the door.” “Can't you come out?” “No living being may see God's face.” “What do you want?” “To prove that I exist.” “This is the end of me.” “Shall I show myself? Now you will see me. Here I come, Alexander.”

Then a rack of puppets (mostly heads, faces of puppets) starts to shake — they sort of come to life, some of them fall down. Here is this still from the film:



A man who has seen Krishna must either perish or change his life — be born a second time. In the poem “Archaic Torso of Apollo” (Archaischer Torso Apollos) Rainer Maria Rilke (1875—1926) speaks of a gaze coming not from the head, not from the eyes (the head of the statue is not preserved), but from the body itself, from the preserved torso. The body (which is here synonymous with the world in general — the world does not have a special head and eyes in it) looks at the man and sees him with each of its places:

*We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,*

*gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.*

*Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders*

and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

*would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.²⁹*

Whereas in Rilke's poem there is a gaze directed at a person out of every point ("for here there is no place that does not see you"), in Garcia Lorca's poem "Crossroads" there is a dagger pointed at a person from everywhere:

*East wind;
a lantern
and dagger
in the heart.
The street
vibrates
like stretched rope,
vibration
of a huge hornet.
Everywhere
I*

²⁹ Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.

Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle;

und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
die dich nicht sieht. Du musst dein Leben ändern.

*see the dagger
in the heart.*³⁰

In Akira Kurosawa's film "The Idiot", after Kameda-Myshkin sees Akamo-Rogozhin tracking him on the bridge, he walks down the street in confusion — and suddenly notices knives in one of the shop windows ("What did I see? What flashed there?"). Thus the double's persistent, "knife" gaze is multiplied. Here two signs of the double-antipode are combined: the multiplied gaze and the ritual knife:



But it is not only the terrible that sees the hero first (before the hero notices the surveillance), the beautiful does the same.

³⁰ Encrucijada

*Viento del Este,
un farol
y el puñal
en el corazón.
La calle
tiene un temblor
de cuerda
en tensión,
un temblor
de enorme moscardón.
Por todas partes
yo
veo el puñal
en el corazón.*

Take a look at a still from Jim Jarmusch's film "Paterson" (2016):



The cheerful “many-eyedness” in the film is provided by Laura, the wife of the protagonist, Paterson (a poet and bus driver), painting the interior and various things in their house in a circular black and white pattern. Laura plays the role of Muse to Paterson, not coincidentally talking about Petrarch and the fact that Petrarch's Muse was also named Laura and that Paterson thus has much in common with Petrarch. Laura's dress and the cupcakes she makes (and you see them in this still) also represent “many eyes”.

* * *

In Hesse's novel “Steppenwolf”, Harry Haller finds his antipodean double at a semblance of a chessboard:

“I found myself in a quiet twilit room where a man with something like a large chessboard in front of him sat in Eastern fashion on the floor. At the first glance I thought it was friend Pablo. He wore at any rate a similar gorgeous silk jacket and had the same dark and shining eyes. ‘Are you Pablo?’ I asked. ‘I am not anybody,’ he replied amiably. ‘We have no names here and we are not anybody. I am a chess player. Do you wish for instruction in the building up of the personality?’ ‘Yes, please.’”

As you may have noticed, chess here is combined with other features of the double-antipode: his oriental posture, his swarthinness, his “dark and shining eyes” (a special look of the representative of the other world — the one who calls himself “nobody”). The white hero comes to the dark double — this is already chess.

In the following passage from this novel, it is not difficult to notice the combination of chess with other typical signs of an antipodean double (try to detect them yourself):

“A heavy wave of anguish and darkness flooded my heart. Suddenly everything confronted me once more. Suddenly once more the sense of the last call of fate gripped my heart. Desperately I felt in my pocket for the little figures so that I might practise a little magic and rearrange the layout of the board. The figures were no longer there. Instead of them I pulled out a knife. In mortal dread I ran along the corridor, past every door. I stood opposite the gigantic mirror. I looked into it. In the mirror there stood a beautiful wolf as tall as myself. He stood still, glancing shyly from unquiet eyes. As he leered at me, his eyes blazed and he grinned a little so that his chops parted and showed his red tongue.”

(Had Hesse read my book, he would not have been able to write it all so directly: he would have had to play up the elements peculiar to the double-antipode in some unusual way. The same applies to the other authors mentioned in this book).

The image of chess is also important in Saramago's novel “The Double”:

“He had suddenly felt as if he were playing a game of chess, waiting for António Claro's next move.”

In “Dead Souls” Nozdrev imposes on Chichikov a game of draughts — and Chichikov accepts the challenge (to his own misfortune — how can one hope to win against the “master of the beasts” or Hermes?):

“ ‘We know what a poor player you are!’ said Nozdryov, advancing a piece.

‘I haven’t touched checkers in a long time!’ said Chichikov, moving a piece.”

In Nabokov's novel “Invitation to a Beheading” (1936), M'sieur Pierre (somewhat resembling Nozdrev) proposes to Cincinnatus:

“Look, I’ve brought you lots of entertaining things. Would you like a game of chess first? Or cards? Do you play anchors? Splendid game! Come, I’ll teach you!”

Chess usually appears in a work of fiction when fortune-telling takes place or when the passage through death and rebirth is narrated. For example, in Carl Theodor Dreyer's film “The Word” (1955), near the door leading to the room with the dying woman (who is to be resurrected), we repeatedly see a chessboard leaning against the wall. A kind of spoiler.

The protagonist sometimes plays chess with the devil (or with some devil-like character). In a still from Ingmar Bergman's “The Seventh Seal” (1957), a knight plays chess with the angel of death against the sea (preceded by a still of two horses against the sea):



In Thomas Mann's novel “Doctor Faustus” (1947) we notice a chessboard in the chequered clothes of the devil who appears before the protagonist: “over diagonal-striped tricot shirt a chequer jacket”. We notice similar things in Bulgakov's “Master and Margarita”:

“And here the sweltering air thickened before him, and a transparent citizen of the strangest appearance wove himself out of it. A peaked jockey’s cap on his little head, a short checkered jacket also made of air ...”

In Vsevolod Pudovkin's comedy film “The Chess Fever” (1925), a young man suffering from “chess fever” hurries to the registry office, late for his own marriage, but as he passes a chess shop, he is drawn there by an invisible force. He finds himself in front of the salesman, who is clearly a devil in both role and appearance (the “devil” plays in black, by the way):



Everything in the film is “chess-like”: the interior, objects, city views, and the protagonist's clothes. In addition, the young man is wearing glasses — a paired object, which in “gothic” plots often foreshadows the appearance of a double (with his special gaze).

The bride, unable to wait any longer for the chess-playing groom, leaves the room and suddenly sees the nanny and two young chess players:



You recognise the image, of course. If you compare it with the previous one, you can see that at the heart of the code *hero* (here: *the groom rushing to the bride*) ↔ “*source of life and death*” (here: *chess in the shop*) ↔ *antipodean double* (here: *the seller, the owner of the chess shop*) lies the code image of the “*mistress of the beasts*” with two beasts (or other beings replacing beasts) on her sides. In this last still, the “*source of life and death*” is tripled: the image of the “*mistress of the beasts*” is supplemented by a chessboard with pieces fighting on it, as well as by the white ball with black dots.

Akaky Akakiyevich from Gogol's story “The Overcoat” (1843) is also coloured in black and white:

“... instead of going home, he walked straight off in the opposite direction, quite oblivious of what he was doing. On the way a chimney-sweep brushed up against him and made his shoulder black all over. And then a whole hatful of lime fell on him from the top of a house that was being built.”

(Do you remember that Plyushkin's back was dusted with flour?)

The hero's usual falling into the mud before meeting (or after meeting, or between meetings) with representatives of the afterlife, the underworld, is here replaced by a turn, a reversal — by the fact that the hero goes “completely in the opposite direction”. The colouring of the protagonist happens immediately after a visit to the

tailor Petrovich, who plays the role of a sorcerer to whom the hero comes for help (a role similar to the role of Patsiuk from Gogol's romantic story "The Night before Christmas" and the role of the Persian from the story "Nevsky Prospect"). Petrovich is "the one-eyed devil", "...who, despite having only one eye and pockmarks all over his face, was doing rather well for himself mending the trousers and frock coats of clerks and all manner of people." (Compare him with Melville's Queequeg, whose face was "stuck over with large blackish looking squares". Queequeg is the owner of a chess face.)

Through Petrovich, Akaky Akakievich will receive his overcoat, that is, he will be united with his bride ("From then on it was as if his very existence somehow became fuller, as if he had married, as if someone else were there at his side, as if his days of loneliness were now over and some charming soulmate had agreed to walk down life's path beside him — and this companion were none other than this selfsame overcoat with its thick quilting and its strong lining that would never wear out."). Maybe he will also lose his overcoat (his bride) through Petrovich, because Petrovich is clearly not of this world. And the very way to Petrovich is the way to another world, the way to hell. I would add that it is also a way into the belly of a mythical beast (remember how Raskolnikov goes down to the tavern where he is to meet the drunkard Marmeladov — by the way, Petrovich is also a drunkard):

"As he made his way up the stairs to Petrovich's (these stairs, to describe them accurately, were running with water and slops, and were anointed with that strong smell of spirit which makes the eyes smart and is a perpetual feature of all backstairs in Petersburg), Akaky Akakievich was already beginning to wonder how much Petrovich would charge and had made up his mind not to pay more than two roubles. The door had been left open as his wife had been frying some kind of fish and had made so much smoke in the kitchen that not even the cockroaches were visible. Mrs Petrovich herself failed to notice Akaky Akakievich as he walked through the kitchen and finally entered a room where Petrovich was squatting on a broad, bare wooden table, his feet crossed under him like a Turkish Pasha. As is customary with tailors,

he was working in bare feet. The first thing that struck Akaky was his familiar big toe with its deformed nail, thick and hard as tortoiseshell."

The invisible cockroaches and the dual object (two roubles) will apparently pass to Dostoevsky (remember Ivan Karamazov's visit to Smerdyakov and the cockroaches in the crevices under the blue wallpaper, as well as the abundance of dual things in Smerdyakov's hut). Petrovich sits, "his feet crossed under him like a Turkish Pasha" — a common tailor's posture, but at the same time it brings him closer to Gogol's other oriental sorcerers. The Persian in "Nevsky Prospect" was also "sitting on a sofa with his legs crossed under him". Pablo in Hesse's novel "sat in Eastern fashion on the floor". Well, the toe of Petrovich's big foot remotely resembles Viy's finger ("and fixed an iron finger on him"). In Petrovich's toe we can recognise both a phallus and a human skull (recall Queequeg's head: "His bald purplish head now looked for all the world like a mildewed skull.").

Let us digress a little and talk, as promised, about bald men. Propp, for instance, remembers about Heracles:

"Heracles, according to one version of the myth about him, in order to save Hesione, jumped into the serpent's mouth, stayed there for three days, during which he lost all the hair on his head from the heat in the beast's stomach, and cut the belly of the beast from the inside."

In the process of the initiation rite, the man would lose his former identity, his name. After the rite, for example, the boys would put a bull's bladder on their heads and pretend memory loss, or even just madness.

You remember Odysseus' answer to Polyphemus when asked who he is ("Noman is my name. They call me Noman — / My mother, my father, and all my friends, too."), the Indian Nobody from Jarmusch's film, and Pablo's answer to Hesse ("I am nobody"). In the chapter "Bald and Hooded" of Propp's book "Historical Roots of the Wondertale", this fairy tale element is described as follows:

"The motif of unrecognised arrival is often connected with the motif of a covered or, on the contrary, uncovered, hairless head. Already in the above example we have seen: "but cover your face, do not show it". The hero often puts on his head a

bladder, or an intestine, or a rag. "Then he took the entrails, washed them properly, put them on his head — it turned out to be a hat, and wrapped his hands with the guts." Or: "Ivan the merchant's son let his horse go free, dressed up in a bull's skin, put a bull's bladder on his head and went to the seaside." "She bought three cowhide skins. He made himself a leather coat — such that he could not be seen in it, and sewed a tail of two fathoms."

We see that the hero in these cases for some reason hides his hair, hides his head. This motif of a covered head is strangely often connected with its opposite — with the motif of an uncovered, bald head. Often this motif is associated with the "Know-Nothing". "Went to the slaughterhouse where they slaughter cattle, took a bladder, put it on his head. Came to the king for alms. The king asks: "What's your name?" — "Plesh ('Bald Patch, Baldness')!" — "What's your middle name?" — "Pleshávnitsa ('Baldness-like')!" — "Where do you come from?" — "I am a passer-by, I don't know where I come from." Here the hero, who has covered his head, calls himself bald. Apparently, the guts or bladder are supposed to hide the hair, to give the impression of baldness."

Look at the Roman Gallic bronze figurine of Priapus (1st century AD):



Do we not see here “the motif of a covered or, on the contrary, uncovered, hairless head”?

One of the meanings of the word ‘plesh’ (bald patch) in Russian colloquialisms is “phallus”. The point here, perhaps, is not only the loss of the initiate's identity, but also his transformation into a phallus — so to speak, into a “bald devil” (a common popular expression). For example, Nozdrev says to Chichikov: “The bald devil is what you’ll get! I was going to, I was just going to make you a gift of them, but now you won’t get them!” (Nozdrev is talking here about the “dead souls” that Chichikov wants to buy from him.)

The colouring of Akaky Akakievich in “chess” colours — black and white — is also connected with the loss of identity. Both black and white mean the invisibility of the hero, his transition into the realm of the dead.

The “Know-Nothing” — he is also the “Neverwasher.” Here is what Propp says in connection with the motif of the “dirty bridegroom” in the fairy tale:

"In a fairy tale, the unrecognised hero is often dirty, smeared in soot, etc. This is the Neverwasher. He has made an alliance with the devil, who forbids him to wash. For this, the devil gives him untold wealth, after which the hero marries. He "does not cut his hair, does not shave, does not wipe his nose, does not change his clothes." This goes on for 14 years <...>, after which the hero says: "Well, my service is over." "Then the devil chopped him into small pieces, threw him into a cauldron and let him boil; boiled him, washed him and put him all together properly." He splashes him with living and dead water. <...> The initiate not only did not wash, but was smeared with ashes. This smearing is very important: not washing is connected with smearing with soot or clay, that is, with black or white colouring. <...> Colouring in white is connected with blindness and invisibility. Colouring in black seems to be associated with the same. <...> Being unwashed <...> is also associated with being in the land of death. <...> The Siberian shaman, going to the realm of the dead with the soul of the deceased, smears his face with soot. <...> The disguise of the hero so often met in folklore, the exchange of clothes with a beggar, etc. is a particular case of such a change of appearance associated with a stay in the other world."

Let's return to the film “Chess Fever”. Before going to meet his bride (and getting to the chess shop on the way to meet her), the bridegroom trips over a beam, falls — and a bag of lime spills out on him. Here we see him shaking it off:



Look also at a still from Akira Kurosawa's film “The Idiot”:



A passing bus pelts Kameda-Myshkin with snow (when he returns from Rogozhin-Akamo's house). (When Kameda was climbing the stairs at Akamo's house, the latter warned him not to fall: "Don't trip here.")

We find a curious example of the combination of white and black in the appearance of a man in Wolfram von Eschenbach's chivalric novel "Parzival" (about 1200—1210), where Parzival has an Oriental half-brother (his antipodean double), whose name is Feirefiz (from the Old French 'vaire fiz' — motley son). The thing is that he was born spotted ("ja ist beidiu swarz unde blanc" — for he is both black and white).

In Ryunosuke Akutagawa's autobiographical (and written just before his suicide) story "Spinning Gears" (1927), the protagonist meets his just another antipodean double, while noticing the combination of black and white that obsessively catches his eye:

"A foreigner came swaggering in my direction, a man around forty who appeared to be near-sighted. This was the neighborhood Swede who suffered from persecution delusion and whose name was actually Strindberg. I had a physical reaction to him as he passed by. This street was no more than three blocks long, but in the time it took me to cover that distance, the same dog passed by me four separate times [the number four in Japanese may be a homonym for 'death'.] Half its face was black. As I turned into a side street I recalled the Black and White whiskey, and it occurred to me that 'Strindberg' had just been wearing a black and white necktie. I could not believe this had been a coincidence, and if it was not a coincidence. I came to a momentary stop on the street, feeling as if my mind were still walking on alone. Next to the road, behind a wire fence, lay a glass bowl that someone had tossed away. It had a slight rainbow-like shimmer, and around its bottom was embossed a design that seemed to be of wings. Just then several sparrows flew down toward it from the branches of a pine tree. No sooner had they reached the bowl than they soared again upward as if making their escape together... I went to the house of my wife's family and sat in a cane chair on the veranda by the garden. In a wire mesh enclosure in a

corner of the garden, several white leghorns were quietly moving around. At my feet lay a black dog.”

By the way, why is “a black and white necktie”, worn here specifically by Strindberg? Maybe because Strindberg also played with black and white — for example, in his novel “On the Seaboard”:

“They approached Svartbodan's sinister volcanic formation. The black sparkling diorite with its death-white landmark, called ‘the white mare,’ looked still more strikingly awful in the sun's rays, which in vain tried to harmonize the extreme tones of its black and white.”

“It became silent in the boat, and the commissioner would not try to guess at the gloomy recollection that awoke in his companion, but limited himself to pointing to the bleached white skeleton of a long tailed duck, which was still left on the black ledge.”

So, black and white colours — separately and even more so in combination with each other — may mean a journey to another world (and a meeting with an antipodean double). Look at a still from Jim Jarmusch's film “Dead Man”:



William Blake's piebald horse accompanies the protagonist as he sets sail in a canoe to the Land of the Spirits. ‘Piebald’ simply means spotted (not necessarily black and white — it's a horse with white spots on a dark or red background). However, Jarmusch made the film black and white to make everything in the film just that,

black and white (with grey flowing between the two colours), because the film is about a journey to another world.

One of the horses of Chichikov's troika is “the dappled gray outrunner harnessed on the right side”. This mottled horse (which “was extremely sly”) correlates with Chichikov himself (the coachman Selifan is addressing his speech to it, with the words: “You think you can hide your behavior. No, you must live by the truth, if you want to be shown respect ...”).

The mythical beast in Melville's novel is the White Whale — “that famous, snow-white, immortal and deadly monster”. (It is not without reason that Ishmael, before his sailing, listens to the preacher telling the story of Jonah.) The White Whale is as much a symbol of all-consuming death as Thomas Mann's snow-covered Magic Mountain; it is even compared to a snow-hill (“ ‘There she blows!—there she blows! A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!’ ”) Melville devotes an entire chapter, “The Whiteness of The Whale”, to a discussion of the meaning of the white colour. It says, for instance:

“Nor, in some things, does the common, hereditary experience of all mankind fail to bear witness to the supernaturalism of this hue. It cannot well be doubted, that the one visible quality in the aspect of the dead which most appals the gazer, is the marble pallor lingering there; as if indeed that pallor were as much like the badge of consternation in the other world, as of mortal trepidation here. And from that pallor of the dead, we borrow the expressive hue of the shroud in which we wrap them.”

However, the whale in Melville's novel is not actually all white, but spotted. Moby Dick appears white because of his white spots and in contrast to the dark water:

“But even stripped of these supernatural surmisings, there was enough in the earthly make and incontestable character of the monster to strike the imagination with unwonted power. For, it was not so much his uncommon bulk that so much distinguished him from other sperm whales, but, as was elsewhere thrown out—a peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead, and a high, pyramidical white hump.

These were his prominent features; the tokens whereby, even in the limitless, uncharted seas, he revealed his identity, at a long distance, to those who knew him. The rest of his body was so streaked, and spotted, and marbled with the same shrouded hue, that, in the end, he had gained his distinctive appellation of the White Whale; a name, indeed, literally justified by his vivid aspect, when seen gliding at high noon through a dark blue sea, leaving a milky-way wake of creamy foam, all spangled with golden gleamings.”

The whale cannot be seen (from the ship) in its entirety: it only comes partially to the surface, then sinks. It goes from surface to depth — and back to the surface. The whale moves wavelike — as if pulsating. In “Moby Dick” (in the chapter “Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales”) the author reflects on it in the following way:

“But these manifold mistakes in depicting the whale are not so very surprising after all. Consider! Most of the scientific drawings have been taken from the stranded fish; and these are about as correct as a drawing of a wrecked ship, with broken back, would correctly represent the noble animal itself in all its undashed pride of hull and spars. Though elephants have stood for their full-lengths, the living Leviathan has never yet fairly floated himself for his portrait. The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight, like a launched line-of-battle ship; and out of that element it is a thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations. And, not to speak of the highly presumable difference of contour between a young sucking whale and a full-grown Platonian Leviathan; yet, even in the case of one of those young sucking whales hoisted to a ship's deck, such is then the outlandish, eel-like, limbered, varying shape of him, that his precise expression the devil himself could not catch.”

To catch “the outlandish, eel-like, limbered, varying shape” of the mythical beast on the surface is impossible, the hero must for this purpose plunge into the underwater world, into the element. Or into the underworld, into a labyrinth (our code is: Theseus ↔ the Labyrinth/Ariadne ↔ the Minotaur).

For example, the boarding school in Edgar Poe's short story "William Wilson" is a labyrinth:

"But the house!—how quaint an old building was this!—to me how veritably a palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings—to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable—inconceivable—and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars."

Sneaking through this maze at night to his namesake, the hero becomes convinced that the latter is his complete double:

"One night, about the close of my fifth year at the school, and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding every one wrapped in sleep, I arose from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages from my own bedroom to that of my rival. <...> I looked;—and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath, I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these,—these the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague, in fancying they were not. What was there about them to confound me in this manner? I gazed;—while my brain reeled with a multitude of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared—assuredly not thus—in the vivacity of his waking hours. The same name! the same contour of person! the same day of arrival at the academy! And then his dogged and meaningless imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner! Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility, that what I now saw was the result, merely, of the habitual practice of

this sarcastic imitation? Awe-stricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently from the chamber, and left, at once, the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again."

Let's go back to Melville. The Minotaur in the novel is represented by Queequeg. He is good-natured, but his tattooed skin matches "the mystic-marked whale"; he is flesh of the flesh of the mythical beast. Here is the whale:

"In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. But these marks do not seem to be impressed upon the isinglass substance above mentioned, but seem to be seen through it, as if they were engraved upon the body itself. Nor is this all. In some instances, to the quick, observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphical; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present connexion. By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm Whale in particular, I was much struck with a plate representing the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi. Like those mystic rocks, too, the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable."

And here is Queequeg (who, having fallen dangerously ill, commissioned a coffin boat from a ship's carpenter, and then, having recovered, painted it):

"With a wild whimsiness, he now used his coffin for a sea-chest; and emptying into it his canvas bag of clothes, set them in order there. Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid with all manner of grotesque figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body. And this tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous

work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last."

In Melville's novel, there is a chapter called "The Counterpane". Let's talk about this counterpane in more detail.

Ishmael meets Queequeg by getting into Peter Coffin's inn. The thing is, there are no vacant beds in the inn. As a result, Ishmael has to sleep in the same bed with an exotic swarthy harpooner — an antipodean double (who will later reveal himself as his "good genius"):

"I sought the landlord, and telling him I desired to be accommodated with a room, received for answer that his house was full—not a bed unoccupied. 'But avast,' he added, tapping his forehead, 'you haint no objections to sharing a harpooneer's blanket, have ye? I s'pose you are goin' a-whalin', so you'd better get used to that sort of thing.'

I told him that I never liked to sleep two in a bed; that if I should ever do so, it would depend upon who the harpooneer might be, and that if he (the landlord) really had no other place for me, and the harpooneer was not decidedly objectionable, why rather than wander further about a strange town on so bitter a night, I would put up with the half of any decent man's blanket. < . . . >

No man prefers to sleep two in a bed. In fact, you would a good deal rather not sleep with your own brother. I don't know how it is, but people like to be private when they are sleeping. And when it comes to sleeping with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange town, and that stranger a harpooneer, then your objections indefinitely multiply. Nor was there any earthly reason why I as a sailor should sleep two in a bed, more than anybody else; for sailors no more sleep two in a bed at sea, than bachelor Kings do ashore. To be sure they all sleep together in one apartment, but you have your own hammock, and cover yourself with your own blanket, and sleep in your own skin."

The blanket with which Ishmael and Queequeg will cover themselves is, as it were, their common skin. By the way, look at the still from Akira Kurosawa's film "The Idiot", where Akamo-Rogozhin and Kameda-Myshkin are sitting under the same blanket:



Queequeg's tomahawk is also significant, which along with the harpoon is a variant of the sacrificial knife or sacrificial axe:

“ ‘You gettee in,’ he added, motioning to me with his tomahawk, and throwing the clothes to one side. He really did this in not only a civil but a really kind and charitable way. I stood looking at him a moment. For all his tattooings he was on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to myself—the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.”

And then comes a chapter called “The Counterpane”. Why would the author devote an entire chapter to a quilt? Let's take a closer look at this piece of bedding:

“Upon waking next morning about daylight, I found Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been his wife. The counterpane was of patchwork, full of odd little parti-coloured

squares and triangles; and this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which were of one precise shade—owing I suppose to his keeping his arm at sea unmethodically in sun and shade, his shirt sleeves irregularly rolled up at various times—this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt. Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together; and it was only by the sense of weight and pressure that I could tell that Queequeg was hugging me.

My sensations were strange. Let me try to explain them. When I was a child, I well remember a somewhat similar circumstance that befell me; whether it was a reality or a dream, I never could entirely settle. The circumstance was this. I had been cutting up some caper or other—I think it was trying to crawl up the chimney, as I had seen a little sweep do a few days previous; and my stepmother who, somehow or other, was all the time whipping me, or sending me to bed supperless,—my mother dragged me by the legs out of the chimney and packed me off to bed, though it was only two o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st June, the longest day in the year in our hemisphere. I felt dreadfully. But there was no help for it, so up stairs I went to my little room in the third floor, undressed myself as slowly as possible so as to kill time, and with a bitter sigh got between the sheets. I lay there dismally calculating that sixteen entire hours must elapse before I could hope for a resurrection. Sixteen hours in bed! the small of my back ached to think of it. And it was so light too; the sun shining in at the window, and a great rattling of coaches in the streets, and the sound of gay voices all over the house. I felt worse and worse—at last I got up, dressed, and softly going down in my stockinged feet, sought out my stepmother, and suddenly threw myself at her feet, beseeching her as a particular favour to give me a good slippering for my misbehaviour; anything indeed but condemning me to lie abed such an unendurable length of time. But she was the best and most conscientious of stepmothers, and back I had to go to my room. For several hours I lay there broad awake, feeling a great deal worse than I have ever done since, even from the greatest subsequent misfortunes.

At last I must have fallen into a troubled nightmare of a doze; and slowly waking from it—half steeped in dreams—I opened my eyes, and the before sun-lit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock running through all my frame; nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bed-side. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken. I knew not how this consciousness at last glided away from me; but waking in the morning, I shudderingly remembered it all, and for days and weeks and months afterwards I lost myself in confounding attempts to explain the mystery. Nay, to this very hour, I often puzzle myself with it.

Now, take away the awful fear, and my sensations at feeling the supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their strangeness, to those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg's pagan arm thrown round me. But at length all the past night's events soberly recurred, one by one, in fixed reality, and then I lay only alive to the comical predicament. For though I tried to move his arm—unlock his bridegroom clasp—yet, sleeping as he was, he still hugged me tightly, as though naught but death should part us twain. I now strove to rouse him—'Queequeg!'—but his only answer was a snore. I then rolled over, my neck feeling as if it were in a horse-collar; and suddenly felt a slight scratch. Throwing aside the counterpane, there lay the tomahawk sleeping by the savage's side, as if it were a hatchet-faced baby. A pretty pickle, truly, thought I; abed here in a strange house in the broad day, with a cannibal and a tomahawk!"

Queequeg here is a typical double-antipode in a typical pose (embracing the protagonist — and in such a way that only death can separate them), as if he had already appeared to Ishmael in his childhood, a nightmare, an invisible man holding his hand. (Let me remind you: hugging or even squeezing the hero is one of the typical actions of an antipodean double.)

The main thing is that Queequeg and the quilt are one (Queequeg's hand seems to be part of the quilt, because the structure of his hand is similar to that of the quilt: "Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together."). Queequeg appears to the protagonist from the quilt, he is flesh from the flesh of the quilt (the quilt is his skin, his hide, which he shares with Ishmael), Queequeg is a representative, a messenger of the quilt. The quilt here symbolises life itself, or rather life and death (since it is patchwork, since it possesses a labyrinthine pattern). Here we see our code picture: the hero (Ishmael) ↔ the "source of life and death" (the quilt) ↔ the double-antipode of the hero (Queequeg).

* * *

We have discussed that in the prose poem "Dead Souls" Chichikov finds himself (when he meets Mrs Korobochka) in an underground labyrinth (in the world of death). Meanwhile, the living and the dead, the plus and the minus (the magic chess) are not only the theme of the work (reflected in the oxymoronic title of the poem), but also almost the basis of its poetics. Let us examine it.

Balthasar Gracián, in his baroque allegorical novel "El Criticón" (1651—1657), in the chapters "The Deciphered World" and "The Palace Without Doors", says (through his characters the Decipherer and the Seer) that one can see "diphthongs" in everything: "diphthongs" may be people, phrases, fruits, houses.....

"You should know, most of what appear to be people are not people at all, but diphthongs.

— What's a diphthong?

— It's such a strange mixture. A diphthong is a man with a woman's voice and a woman speaking like a man. A diphthong is a cranky husband and a wife in trousers. A diphthong is a child of sixty or a pauper in silks. <...> There are even diphthongs of an angel and a demon — cherub with his face, but with the soul of a demon. There are diphthongs of sun and moon — beauty and fickleness. You'll often find

diphthongs of yes and no. <...> But what to be surprised if among the fruits there are diphthongs: you buy pears, it turns out that it is apples, you see apples, you are told that it is pears. <...>

— You know, — said Critilo, — the science of deciphering I begin to like, I agree that without it is impossible to act in the world.

— And how many ciphers are there in the world? — Andrenio asked.

— Countless, and very difficult. I will explain to you the most common ones, but it is impossible to know them all.”

Gogol's connection with the Baroque is a well-known matter. But it is through Gracián's “diphthongs” that we can clearly see how Gogol's images are constructed. They are quite often constructed as combinations of “yes” and “no”, as plus and minus. For example:

“After dinner the gentleman took himself a cup of coffee and sat on the sofa, propping his back against a pillow, which in Russian taverns are stuffed not with springy wool, but instead with something extremely like bricks and cobbles.”

The pillow turns out to be something like a brick. That's the diphthong: pillow-brick. Another example:

“The houses were of one, two, and one and a half stories, with those eternal mezzanines so beautiful in the opinion of provincial architects.”

Are these mezzanines really beautiful? At first it is said that they are very beautiful, but the continuation of the phrase — “in the opinion of provincial architects” — immediately crosses out the statement about the beauty of mezzanines. Mezzanines are not beautiful at all. Plus and minus.

A few more examples (without commentary):

*“Then they were shown some Turkish daggers, on one of which there had been mistakenly engraved: **Savely Sibiryakov, Cutler.**”* [Saveliy Sibiryakov can't be a Turk.]

“The madeira, indeed, even burned the mouth, for the merchants, knowing the taste of landowners who like fine madeira, doctored it unmercifully with rum, and

sometimes even poured aqua regia into it, in hopes that the Russian stomach could endure anything.”

“There’s only one decent man there: the prosecutor—and to tell the truth, he, too, is a swine.”

This technique of poetics is set from the very beginning of the poem “Dead Souls” — from the conversation between “two Russian muzhiks” (peasants) who met Chichikov as he was entering the city (discussing whether he would or would not reach this or that place):

“His entrance caused no stir whatever in town and was accompanied by nothing special; only two Russian muzhiks standing by the door of the pot-house across from the inn made some remarks, which referred, however, more to the vehicle than to the person sitting in it. ‘See that?’ said the one to the other, ‘there’s a wheel for you! What do you say, would that wheel make it as far as Moscow, if it so happened, or wouldn’t it?’ ‘It would,’ replied the other. ‘But not as far as Kazan I don’t suppose?’ ‘Not as far as Kazan,’ replied the other. And with that the conversation ended.”

Moreover, it is as if Gracián sends his greetings to Gogol, directly talking about “dead souls”:

“— God help you in your clairvoyance! — Andrenio said. — You really do see through everything.

— It’s nothing! Wait, I’ll surprise you even more. I see and know who has a soul and who does not.

— Are there people without a soul?

— Oh, yes, and there are many of them, and of different kinds.

— How do they live?

— They live in the diphthong of life and death. Instead of a soul is emptiness, as in a jug, and there is no heart, as in a hare. <...>

— I refuse such a gift at once, — said Andrenio. — I don’t want to be a clairvoyant.

— Why not?

— Because you yourself have shown how unpleasant it is.

— What did you find so unpleasant?

— *Is it not disgusting to look at the dead in coffins, even if the coffins are marble and buried seven stadia underground, to see the terrible grins, the worms swarming, the terrible picture of decomposition? No, no, God forbid such a tragic spectacle, be it the king himself! I tell you, I could neither eat nor sleep for a month.*

— *You don't understand very well! We do not see the dead, there is nothing to see there — everything has turned to earth, to dust, to nothing. On the contrary, I am afraid of the living, I have never seen evil from the dead. The real dead we see and run away from are those who walk on their own feet.*

— *The dead — how do they walk?*

— *You'll see for yourself. They walk among us and give forth the plague stench of their stinking fame and their wicked disposition. Oh, how many there are, rotten through and through, with smelly breath! In others the whole gut is festering — men without conscience, women without shame, people without souls; they look like human beings, but in reality they are dead souls. These are the ones who inspire me with extreme fear, and sometimes it makes my hair stand on end.”*

This “diphthong” (the living — the dead) constitutes the main theme of Gogol's poem:

“ ‘But allow me to ask you,’ said Manilov, ‘how do you wish to buy them: with land, or simply to have them resettled—that is, without land?’

‘No, it’s not quite peasants,’ said Chichikov, ‘I would like to have the dead ...’

‘How’s that, sir? Excuse me ... I’m somewhat hard of hearing, I thought I heard a most strange word ...’

‘I propose to acquire dead ones, who would, however, be counted in the census as living,’ said Chichikov.”

* * *

One of the features (or actions) of the double-antipode is that he draws the protagonist to fall from a height, pushes him into the abyss. This is how Golyadkin feels it in Dostoevsky's story “The Double”:

“His position at that moment was like the position of a man standing over a frightful precipice, when the earth breaks away under him, is rocking, shifting, sways for a last time, and falls, drawing him into the abyss, and meanwhile the unfortunate man has neither the strength nor the firmness of spirit to jump back, to take his eyes from the yawning chasm; the abyss draws him, and he finally leaps into it himself, himself hastening the moment of his own perdition. Mr. Goliadkin knew, felt, and was completely certain that some further bad thing was bound to befall him on the way, that some further trouble would break over him, that, for instance, he would meet his stranger again; but—strange thing—he even wished for that meeting ...”

The double-antipode causes the fall of the protagonist (Nathanael) in Hoffmann's story “The Sandman”, and just before the fall Nathanael almost throws down from a height his “Beautiful Lady”. It happens as follows: Nathanael goes for a walk with his bride Clara and her brother Lothar, climbs the tower with Clara — and then notices his terrible antipodean double (Coppelius, aka Coppola):

“They were walking through the streets of the town at midday: they had done a large amount of shopping and the tall tower of the town hall threw a giant shadow over the market-place. ‘Let us go up the tower just once more,’ said Clara, ‘and look across at the mountains!’ No sooner said than done! Nathanael and Clara climbed up together, the mother went home with the serving-maid, and Lothario, disinclined to clamber up the many steps that led to the top of the tower, remained waiting below. Then the loving pair stood arm in arm in the highest gallery of the tower and gazed out at the fragrant woodland and at the blue mountains that rose like a giant city beyond.

‘Just look at that funny little grey bush that seems as if it is coming towards us,’ said Clara. Nathanael reached mechanically into his sidepocket; he found Coppola’s telescope and gazed through it. Clara was standing before the glass! Then a spasm shuddered through him; pale as death, he stared at Clara, but soon his eyes began to roll, fire seemed to flash and glow behind them, and he started to roar horribly, like a hunted animal; then he leaped high into the air and, laughing

hideously, cried in a piercing voice: 'Spin, puppet, spin! Spin, puppet, spin!'—and with terrible force he seized Clara and tried to throw her off the tower.

In mortal fear, Clara clutched at the railings of the parapet; Lothario heard the raging of the madman, heard Clara's scream of fear; a dreadful presentiment flew through him and he ran up the stairs of the tower. The door to the second landing was shut; Clara's screams grew louder. Distracted with fear and rage, he threw himself against the door, which finally gave way.

Clara's cries were now getting more and more feeble: 'Help! Save me! Save me—' her voice died away in the air. 'She is lost—murdered by the madman!' Lothario cried.

The door to the gallery was also shut. Despair gave him strength, and he burst the door from its hinges. God in Heaven! Grasped by the raving Nathanael, Clara was hanging in air over the parapet of the gallery; only one hand still kept hold on the iron railings. As quick as lightning Lothario seized his sister and drew her back in, and at the same instant dealt the raging madman a blow in the face with his clenched fist so that Nathanael stumbled backwards and let go his prey.

Lothario ran down the steps of the tower, his unconscious sister in his arms. She was saved.

Now Nathanael was running about on the gallery, raving and leaping high into the air, and screaming: 'Spin, spin, circle of fire! Spin, spin, circle of fire!' People came running at the wild screaming and collected below; among them there towered gigantically the advocate Coppelius, who had just arrived in the town and had made straight for the market-place. Some wanted to enter the tower and overpower the madman, but Coppelius laughed and said: 'Don't bother: he will soon come down by himself,' and gazed upward with the rest. Nathanael suddenly stopped as if frozen; then he stooped, recognized Coppelius, and with the piercing cry: 'Ha! Lov-ely occe! Lov-ely occe!' he jumped over the parapet.

As Nathanael was lying on the pavement with his head shattered, Coppelius disappeared into the crowd."

It is as if Nathanael is throwing himself into the abyss full of eyes that Coppola showed him earlier — when he offered Nathanael to buy glasses and laid out his goods in front of him.

Note the spin preceding the fall (“Spin, puppet, spin! Spin, puppet, spin!”). And also the fiery whirling of the elements in Nathanael's dream previous to this tragic event: *“Coppelius then seized him and threw him into a flaming circle of fire which, spinning with the velocity of a tempest, tore him away with a rushing and roaring; there was a commotion, as when the hurricane whips up the foaming waves of the sea and they rear like white-haired giants in furious combat...”*

Perhaps the spinning can be caused by the reflection of the hero in the mirror, that is, by the image of the double (hero → double → hero → double...).

The hero may fall from a height, but so may the double (it does not matter for the myth which of them falls). Thus, in Hoffmann's novel “The Devil's Elixir”, the monk Medardus accidentally pushes his double — Count Victorin — into the abyss. (Victorin is not even an antipode, but a full double of Medardus.)

At the end of the film “Metropolis”, we see the protagonist and his antipodean double (Rotwang, the creator of False Maria, naturally in black) trying to throw each other off the roof (Rotwang will be the one to be thrown). The real Maria hangs there, barely keeping herself from falling:



In Meyrink's novel "The Golem", the protagonist observes the fall of his antipodean double, specifically the fall of a puppet that has manifested features of the Golem himself:

"Vrieslander was carving away at a puppet. <...>

I was suddenly aware of Vrieslander's high voice saying, 'And now for the head,' and he took a round piece of wood from his pocket and began carving it. My eyes grew heavy with tiredness and I pushed my chair back out of the light. <...>

Vrieslander was still carving away at the puppet-head, I could hear the rasp of the blade against the wood. The sound of it was almost painful, and I looked over to see if it was soon going to be finished. The way the head moved to and fro in the painter's hand made it look as if it were alive and were peering into every corner of the room. Then the eyes stayed fixed on me for a long time, satisfied that they had finally found me. I could not turn my eyes away and stared, as if hypnotised, at the wooden face. For a while Vrieslander's knife seemed to hesitate, unsure of itself, then it scored a firm, decisive line and the wooden features suddenly took on a frightening life of their own.

I recognised the yellow face of the stranger who had brought me the book.

Then everything went blurred. The vision had only lasted for a second, but I could feel my heart stop beating and then start fluttering nervously. And yet, just as when it had brought the book, I still retained awareness of its face.

***I had turned into it** and was lying on Vrieslander's lap, peering round. My gaze wandered round the room, someone else's hand moving my head. All at once I saw an expression of dismay etch itself on Zwakh's features ["Zwakh the old puppeteer"], and heard him exclaim, 'Good God! That's the Golem!'*

There was a brief struggle as they tried to prise the carving from Vrieslander's grasp, but he pushed them off, laughing, 'What do you mean? It's just a botched job.' He tore himself away from them, opened the window and threw the head down into the street.

Consciousness left me and I plunged into a profound darkness with shimmering gold threads running through it. It seemed to me that it was only after a long, long time that I came to, and it was only then that I heard the clatter of the wooden head on the cobblestones outside."

In Homer's "Odyssey", Elpenor, one of Odysseus's companions, falls from the roof of Circe's house and smashes his head (beheading or any damage to the head the usual misfortune of the antipodean double):

*But not even from Circe's house could I lead my men
Unscathed. One of the crew, Elpenor, the youngest,
Not much of a warrior nor all that smart,
Had gone off to sleep apart from his shipmates,
Seeking the cool air on Circe's roof
Because he was heavy with wine.*

*He heard the noise of his shipmates moving around
And sprang up suddenly, forgetting to go
To the long ladder that led down from the roof.
He fell headfirst, his neck snapped at the spine,
And his soul went down to the house of Hades.*

Elpenor is the first shadow that Odysseus then meets in the underworld (since Elpenor was not buried in time):

*First to come was the ghost of Elpenor,
Whose body still lay in Circe's hall,
Unmourned, unburied, since we'd been hard pressed.*

Instead of falling, the double-antipode often finds himself in an upside-down position, doing an upside-down stance (which is quite logical, because he is an antipode, and antipodes are “inhabitants of the globe, dwelling on two diametrically opposite points of the earth and, therefore, facing each other with their feet”). For example, M'sieur Pierre in Nabokov's novel “Invitation to a Beheading”:

“Throwing him [to Cicinnatus] the handkerchief, M'sieur Pierre shouted a French exclamation and suddenly was standing on his hands. His spherical head gradually became suffused with beautiful rosy blood; his left trouser leg slid down, exposing his ankle; his upside-down eyes—as happens with anyone in this position—looked like the eyes of an octopus.”

Look at the at the stance of Matto the clown and tightrope walker (‘matto’ means ‘mad’ in Italian) in Federico Fellini's film “The Road” (1954):



In this film, the protagonist undergoing the “rite of passage” is Zampanò, a travelling circus performer. He meets a fairy (Gelsomina) and an angel (Matto) on the road (the road in the myth, as we have already noted, is synonymous with the “world tree”).

Gelsomina, by the way, is a kind of “mistress of the beasts”. Animals appear around her every now and then: a horse passes by, a dog runs by, a sheep herd meets her, a donkey approaches. In addition, Gelsomina has the gift of predicting the weather — in particular, she predicts rain (“It's gonna rain day after tomorrow.” “How do you know?” “It's gonna rain.”). Gelsomina is kind of out of this world, already at the very beginning of the film we hear: “But she's a good girl, poor thing. She'll do what she's told. She just came out a little strange.” And at the end of the film, a woman says of her (informing Zampanò that Gelsomina has died): “She seemed crazy (‘era come matta’). My father found her on the coast.” Gelsomina's insanity is a sign of her divinity.

Now back to Matto. Matto not only stands upside down, he then pretends to fall off the rope, but hangs on to it and tumbles. Later, while talking to Gelsomina, Matto will utter a premonition of his imminent death:

“That's just the way I am. No house, no roof.” “Why did you say you'd die soon?” “It just stands to reason. Goes with the job. I'll break my neck, and no one will remember me.”

Matto does not fall from a height (although he does simulate such a fall twice — the second time it occurs at the circus: Matto appears under the dome with his cardboard wings — and jumps down onto a donkey), but dies as a result of head damage. In addition, Matto's car, pushed off a bridge by Zampanò, flips over in mid-air, falls onto the riverbank and catches fire (so the clown's fall from a height does take place, head down).

Let's have a look at the famous fresco of the Palace of Knossos on the island of Crete (Minoan civilisation, 15th century BC):



In the middle we see a bull, over which a young man is jumping — he is head down over the bull. To the left and right of the bull are two young men. Even if this is just a festive circus performance, it has its origins in a initiation rite. We see a mythical beast (the bull) and young men putting themselves to a deadly test. How many young men are there? Obviously, there are three. But they are acting out, representing the rite that one initiate undergoes (in this sporting game they are just helping him). The initiate, having flown over the bull, must become his own animal double — the man-bull, the Minotaur. It is as if we see one young man: before the rite, during the rite and after the rite (and you will recognise, of course, our code picture: the hero/initiate → the “source of life and death” → the antipodean double). Here the passage through death is depicted, and at the very moment of mortal danger — over the bull — the young man is turned upside down. Notable is the different colouring of the young man passing through death: he has a dark, red-brown colouring — in harmony with the colouring of the bull.

Being an artist, by the way, is a kind of rite of passage — and therefore involves risk. Just as a mountain climber, scuba diver, tightrope walker, car racer may easily have an accident, so madness or suicide (a variant of which may be death in a duel) are always waiting in ambush for the artist. The novel “The Golem” has a poignant story to this effect:

“There is a legend that once three men descended into the realm of darkness; one went mad, the other blind, and only the third, Rabbi ben Akiba, returned safely home and said he had met himself.”

Falling is a sign of a journey into depth, of going deeper — and, of course, a sign of a way into another world. In Herbert Wells' short story “The Door in the Wall” (1911), the protagonist, Wallace, when he was more than five years old, saw a green door in a white wall — and entered it (apparently in his dream). What he saw there: a marvellous garden, a beautiful lady with a book of fate in her hands (“The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself...”), two spotted panthers playing with a ball (you recognise these images, don't you?), haunted him all his life — he kept wanting to find that green door. But it ended sadly:

“They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way...”

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious if you will, and

foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination.

We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that?"

As we see, here it is not the double-antipode ("animal double"), but the "mistress of the beasts" herself (with two spotted panthers) that has drawn the hero to the fall. This is also not uncommon in works of fiction. For example, in the novel "The Double" of José Saramago (where the protagonist first remembers his "Beautiful Lady", then his double, and then someone's hands drag him into the abyss):

"Tertuliano Máximo Afonso felt his penis grow hard, unsatisfied again. That was when he thought of Maria da Paz. He imagined another room, another bed, her prone body, of which he knew every inch, and António Claro's prone body, identical to his, and suddenly it seemed to him that he had reached the end of the road, that ahead of him, blocking the way, was a wall with a sign on it saying, STOP, abyss, and then he saw that he could not go back, that the road he had travelled had disappeared, and all that remained was the little space on which his feet were standing. He was dreaming and he did not know it. An anxiety that immediately became terror made him start violently awake just as the wall was shattering, and its arms, for worse things have been seen than a wall growing arms, were dragging him toward the precipice."

Look at the diabolical girl in Fellini's short film "Toby Dammit" (from the film "Spirits of the Dead", *ital.* "Tre passi nel delirio", 1968):



This girl appears to the protagonist now and then in a vision and will cause him to fall (quite voluntarily) by car off a collapsed bridge. The protagonist's head will be cut off by a thick wire stretched across the bridge. The ball in the girl's hands is a symbol of this head (at the end of the film, the girl picks up the ball and the head from the ground).

Later, this ball-head will make its way into Roman Polanski's film "The Tenant" (1976). The "tenant" will say: "They play football with my head." The protagonist settles into a flat where a girl who threw herself out of a window previously lived. He gradually becomes this girl (he puts on her dress left in the wardrobe, buys a woman's wig, puts on make-up) — and at some point he dreams of a bouncing ball in the window, which then turns into his severed head (in a woman's wig). Finally the "tenant" throws himself out of the window.

The ball played by the spotted panthers in Wells's story is far from harmless: it may well be a symbol of the severed head of the sacrificed hero (or the head of the hero's animal double).

(Isn't this the ancient meaning of the ritual ball game? Thus, in the Chukchi myth cited by Vladimir Bogoraz in his book "Materials for the Study of the Chukchi Language and Folklore", Dawn and Evening Light, competing with the hero, play ball with him; the ball is represented by a bear's head: "Dawn whistled: they brought a ball — a polar bear's head, a skull, a bloody snout. For when they kick it, it flies, opens its mouth on the fly, reaches the player and grabs him with its teeth.)

In the fourteenth-century English verse novel “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, the Green Knight challenges any of the knights present to strike him (with his own — the Green Knight's — huge battle axe) on the condition that he will return the blow a year later. Gawain (King Arthur's nephew) accepts the challenge, takes the Green Knight's axe and chops off his head. (Not only does the Green Knight not hinder this, but he dismounts and exposes his neck.) The head falls to the floor, rolling, which causes, of course, the general laughter. The knights even manage to play a kind of football with it: “þe fayre hede fro þe halce hit to þe erþe, / þat fele hit foyned wyth her fete, þere hit forth roled” — ‘The beautiful head from its neck fell to the ground, so that many drove it away with their feet, there it rolled on.’ The green knight, bereft of his head, goes calmly after it, picks it up by the hair, sits back on his horse. The head opens its mouth and makes an appointment for Gawain to meet it: in a year's time at the Green Chapel. The Green Chapel is a green hill (overgrown with grass), hollow inside, cave-like (so the novel says), with an entrance and an exit — a typical construction for a rite of passage.

In Nikolai Zabolotsky's poem “Football” (1926), the ball winks, being a symbol of the player's head, as well as a symbol of day and night (life and death):

*And the balloon is spinning between the walls,
Smoking, swelling, laughing,
It squeezes its little eye, “Good night!”
It opens its little eye, “Good day!”
And it wants to torture the forward. <...>
The hospital has opened. Alas!
Here the forward sleeps without his head.*

* * *

Not only the “animal” double, but also the “mistress of the beasts” herself may fall from a height.

At the end of Goethe's novel "Elective Affinities", the village girl Nanni falls from the attic, and her fall should be attributed not only to her, but also to her mistress Otilie, the "Beautiful Lady" of the novel, who is being buried at that moment:

"They dressed the gentle body in the finery she herself had prepared; they set on her head a wreath of asters, which glittered strangely like melancholy stars. To decorate the bier, the church, the chapel, all the gardens were plundered. They lay deserted as if winter had already come and blotted out all their joy. In the early morning she was borne out of the mansion in an open coffin and the rising sun again brought a glow of red to her ethereal features. The mourners crowded about the pall-bearers: no one wanted to go on ahead or follow behind, they all wanted to press close to her and again, and for the last time still be with her. The boys, the men, the women: none was left unmoved. The girls, who felt their loss most immediately, were inconsolable.

*Nanni was not there. They had kept her away, or rather concealed from her the day and hour of the funeral. She was being kept at home with her parents in a room looking on to the garden. But when she heard the bells she soon realized what was going on, and when the woman who had been left to look after her slipped away to watch the **cortège** she climbed out of the window into a passageway and, since she found all the doors locked, up into the garret.*

*The **cortège** was just winding its way along the road through the village, which had been swept clean and then strewn with leaves. Nanni saw clearly her mistress below her, more clearly, more completely, more beautifully than any who were following. In an unearthly way, as if borne on clouds or the waves of the sea, she seemed to beckon to her servant, and Nanni, confused, trembling and giddy, fell down to the ground."*

(Note also the nod of the deceased and the "glow of red" on her "ethereal features".) The statue of St Ottilia (on Mount Ottilia in Alsace) made a deep impression on the young Goethe; in his autobiographical book "Poetry and Truth", he says: "The image of her that presented itself to me, as well as the name itself, were deeply imprinted in my heart."

The scene of the girl's fall from a height seems to be foreshadowed in the novel by Ottilie's fearless equilibristic descent down the rocks (as she follows the protagonist):

"They at once made up their minds to clamber down over the moss and broken rocks. Eduard went first and when he looked back up the way he had come and saw Ottilie following fearlessly behind him, stepping lightly from stone to stone with untroubled poise, he thought it must be a creature from heaven hovering there above him."

The same penchant for equilibristics, incidentally, is shared by Mignon in the novel "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" ("... the little creature enjoyed here, she soon displayed her singular delight in climbing. To mount the highest peaks, to run long the edges of the ships, to imitate in all their strangest feats the rope-dancers, whom she often saw in the place, seemed a natural tendency in her"). In addition, Mignona's funeral also resembles a solemn rite of worship for the goddess, who in death has become even more beautiful and even seems to come to life ("the child was lying in her angel's-dress, as if asleep, in the most soft and graceful posture. They approached, and admired this show of life"). The author needs the dead woman's face to blush — you have to come up with something for that. The dead Ottilie's blush is from the rising sun, the dead Mignon's blush is from the balsamic compound that replaced the blood. (Both Ottilia and Mignon are the Muse.)

Mignon was kidnapped by the "rope-dancers", but her family thought she had fallen off a cliff and drowned (this is a significant image for us — the Muse's fall into the water):

"The child went out, and did not come again: her little hat was found swimming on the water, near the spot where a torrent rushed down into the sea. It was conjectured that, in clambering among the rocks, her foot had slipped; all our searching could not find the body."

It is also of interest that at the end of the novel, Mignona's father, the Harper (Augustin) — a double-antipode of Wilhelm Meister — slits his own throat.

Look at a still from François Truffaut's film "Jules and Jim" (1962):



You see Catherine before her unexpected jump into the Seine. Jules and Jim (whom you also see in this shot) are typical antipodean doubles, as the film's title itself emphasises. Jules is a blond Austrian, Jim is a brown-haired Frenchman. Jim is taller than Jules and dressed darker than him. Among other things, the friends practice French boxing (next to another couple engaged in fencing), play dominoes, Jim lets Jules wear his hat. And in general, Jim's hat (the usual symbol of the detachable head) gets a lot of attention in the film.

Jules and Jim first see an ancient (found at an excavation) sculpture of a woman that amazes them, and then meet a similar-looking Catherine. Catherine is a manifestation of the elements and a queen: “She is a force of nature manifested by cataclysmic events... she is a queen...” («Elle est une force de la nature qui s’exprime par des cataclysmes ... c’est une reine...») When Catherine (shortly before the end of the film) drives the car, it appears to Jim as “a riderless horse, a ghost ship”. At the very end of the film, Catherine invites Jim, who is sitting with Jules in the café, to get into her car for a ride. He leaves his hat on the table. Catherine gets behind the wheel, the car drives onto a ruined bridge and, flipping in the air, falls into the water. It is also significant that our heroes read Goethe's “Elective Affinities” (and swap this book).

Let's look at another curious still — from Alfred Hitchcock's film “Vertigo” (1958):



You see the “Beautiful Lady” who has thrown herself into the sea. The heroine (in whom three different women exist under a single guise) plays the role of the “goddess of death” — she is both an accomplice to the murder, the murdered and the suicide. The appearance of the heroine is duplicated by the appearance of her female double — in the form of a portrait. The heroine's round bouquet, to which the camera periodically directs our attention, and which in the film echoes a kind of rotating kaleidoscope that draws the protagonist into the abyss (apparently in his imagination), is very significant. Another such circular object — a curl of the woman's hair — also reveals itself to be a whirlpool drawing the hero into the depths. Moreover, the protagonist, a private detective following the “Beautiful Lady”, suffers from acrophobia (‘fear of heights’).

Acrophobia, incidentally, is also suffered by Ibsen's builder Solness (Mrs Solness says to her husband: “You can’t even step out on to the balcony on the first floor of this house.”). Inspired, however, to do the deed by young Hilda (his fatal Muse), he climbs the tower of the house he has built (to hang a wreath on it — incidentally a symbol of spinning) and falls down (“His head's smashed in. — He fell straight into the quarry.”). Hilda, naturally, is in “a sort of quiet, bewildered triumph”. (“But he got to the very top. And I heard harps playing in the air.”). Solness' fall seems to have been furthered by his double waiting for the builder on the tower (“*RAGNAR*: There is no one else. *HILDE*: Yes there is, he’s arguing with someone.”). As well as

by his Muse (“*SOLNESS*: And dreamed too, no doubt? *HILDE*: Oh yes. But *that* was horrid. *SOLNESS*: Oh? *HILDE*: Yes, because I dreamed that I fell off a terribly high, steep cliff. Don’t you ever have dreams like that, master builder? *SOLNESS*: Well, yes — now and again, I — *HILDE*: It’s *so* exciting — when you’re falling and falling like that.”)

* * *

In Goethe's ballad “The Fisherman” (1779), a woman emerges from the water and draws the fisherman with her under the water:

The waters rush’d, the waters rose,
A fisherman sat by,
While on his line in calm repose
He cast his patient eye.
And as he sat, and hearken’d there,
The flood was cleft in twain,
And, lo! a dripping mermaid fair
Sprang from the troubled main.

She sang to him, and spake the while:
“Why lurest thou my brood,
With human wit and human guile
From out their native flood?
Oh, could’st thou know how gladly dart
The fish across the sea,
Thou would’st descend, e’en as thou art,
And truly happy be!

“Do not the sun and moon with grace

Their forms in ocean lave?
Shines not with twofold charms their face,
When rising from the wave?
The deep, deep heavens, then lure thee not, —
The moist yet radiant blue, —
Not thine own form, — to tempt thy lot
‘Midst this eternal dew?’”

The waters rush’d, the waters rose,
Wetting his naked feet;
As if his true love’s words were those,
His heart with longing beat.
She sang to him, to him spake she,
His doom was fix’d, I ween;
Half drew she him, and half sank he,
And ne’er again was seen.

A guy got lost because of a woman — no surprise there, but I think it makes sense to read this ballad as a story about the poet and the Muse. Later (and influenced, of course, by the earlier Romantic tradition), Alexander Blok will say in the poem “To the Muse” (literally translated):

*In your secret music,
are messages of dark disaster.
A curse on all that’s holy,
happiness’s desecration.*

*And such an alluring power
That I’m ready to say after the rumour:
you brought down the angels,*

seducing them with your beauty...

<...>

Are you good or evil? — You're not from here at all.

They tell strange tales about you.

For some you are Muse and miracle.

For me you are torment and hell.³¹

And also in the poem “Doomed” (literally translated):

Secretly the heart begs for doom.

O light heart, glide.....

I've been led out of life

By the snowy silver of the path...

As over that distant ice-hole

The water streams a quiet vapour,

So, with your silent footsteps

You brought me here.

You lured me in, you bound me with your eyes

³¹ Есть в напевах твоих сокровенных
Роковая о гибели весть.
Есть проклятье заветов священных,
Поругание счастья есть.

И такая влекущая сила,
Что готов я твердить за молвой,
Будто ангелов ты низводила,
Соблазняя своей красотой...

<...>

Зла, добра ли? — Ты вся — не отсюда.
Мудрено про тебя говорят:
Для иных ты — и Муза, и чудо.
Для меня ты — мученье и ад.

*And embraced me with your arm,
And with cold gazes
You put me to a white death.*

*And in what other abode
I'm destined to languish in,
If my heart wants to perish
If my heart begs to go to the bottom?*

Compare it to Pushkin's mermaid (also in literal translation):

*How happy I am when I can leave
The boring noise of the capital and the court
And escape to the deserted oak woods,
To the shores of these silent waters.*

*Oh, will she soon rise from the bottom of the river,
Will she rise like a golden fish?*

*How sweet her appearance
From the still waves, in the light of the moonnight!
Covered with green hair,
She sits on the steep shore.
At her slender feet, white as foam, the waves
Are caressing, merging and murmuring.
Her eyes are now dimming, now sparkling,
Like twinkling stars in the sky;
Breath is gone from her lips, but how
Penetrating is from her moist blue lips
The cool, breathless kiss,*

*How languid and sweet in the heat of summer —
Cold mead is not so sweet to thirst.
When her playful fingers
Touch my curls, then
A momentary chill, like terror, runs
Across my head, and my heart beats loudly,
Languishing with love and dying.*

*And in this moment I'm glad to give up my life,
I want to moan and drink her kisses —
And what is her speech like... What sounds
That can compare with it, a baby's first babble,
The murmur of waters, or the sound of May skies,
Or Bojan's sonorous psaltery.³²*

The mermaid here is a drowned woman, a living dead person (“the cool, breathless kiss”), bringing chill and terror to the poet. And this is shown as inspiration (“When her playful fingers / Touch my curls, then / A momentary chill, like terror, runs / Across my head ...”). We find the same in Pushkin's poem “At the Beginning of Life I Remember School”, where the boy is inspired by the sight of “two demons” — statues of Apollo and Aphrodite (does not our basic cultural code manifest itself here too?):

*The other two marvellous creations
Drew me in with magic beauty:
They were the images of two demons.*

One (the Delphic idol) had a youthful countenance

³² Boyan was an ancient legendary Slavic poet whose works have not reached our days (similar to the Greek Orpheus).

*Which was wrathful, full of terrible pride,
Emanating an unearthly power.*

*The other was wife-shaped, voluptuous,
A dubious and false ideal —
A magic demon, false but beautiful.*

*I forgot myself before them;
My young heart beat in my breast, and the chill
Ran through me and lifted my curls.*

Compare, by the way, to the feeling of Harry Haller in Hesse's "Steppenwolf" looking at Hermine after he has killed her ("With a shudder I stared at the stony brow and the stark hair and the cool pale shimmer of the ear. The cold that streamed from them was deathly and yet it was beautiful, it rang, it vibrated. It was music!")

Let us return to the poem about the mermaid. From the last four lines we realise that it is about the Muse and poetic speech. The connection between water and the Muse is characteristic of Pushkin. The Muse appears out of water, or against the background of water, and her speech murmurs like water: "Near the waters, shining in silence, / The Muse began to appear to me"; "And she herself is majestic, / She floats queenlike; / And when she speaks, / It's like a stream murmuring" (in the last example, we see the Swan Princess from "The Lay of Tsar Saltan" — also, I think, a kind of Muse.) The Muse is the "mistress of life and death": she gives life to the poet and guides him through death.

Curiously, as we approach the twentieth century, Shakespeare's Ophelia begins to be perceived as a kind of drowned Muse — for example, by Afanasy Fet (in a poem of 1846):

*Ophelia died and sang,
And sang and wreathed her wreaths;*

With flowers and wreaths and song
She sank to the bottom of the river.

And many things will sink with her singing
Into my soul's dark bottom,
And many a feeling and song I've been given,
And tears and dreams.

The bottom of the river, to which Ophelie sinks, here coincides with the “dark bottom” of the poet's soul.

We see a similar Ophelia-Muse in Arthur Rimbaud's famous poem “Ophelie” (1870). Here are two stanzas from it:

more than a thousand years that pale Ophelia
passes, a white phantom, on the long black river;
More than a thousand years that her gentle craziness
murmurs her romantic story to the evening breeze.

<...>

— And the poet says that by starlight
you come looking at night for the flowers you gather,
and that he saw on the water, lying in her long veils,
the white Ophelia floating like a great lily.³³

And this is how she is shown in John Everett Millais' painting “Ophelia” (1852):

³³ Voici plus de mille ans que la triste Ophélie
Passe, fantôme blanc, sur le long fleuve noir,
Voici plus de mille ans que sa douce folie
Murmure sa romance à la brise du soir.

<...>

— Et le Poète dit qu'aux rayons des étoiles
Tu viens chercher, la nuit, les fleurs que tu cueillis ;
Et qu'il a vu sur l'eau, couchée en ses longs voiles,
La blanche Ophélia flotter, comme un grand lys.



In this painting, the drowned girl looks perfectly alive. Note also the spread arms, so characteristic of the archaic representation of goddesses.

From the drowned Muse, let us now turn to the Muse-Goddess of Autumn from Pushkin's poem "Autumn" (1833), to the Muse—"consumptive girl":

*Ordinarily the days of late autumn are abused,
But I, dear reader, love her for her quiet beauty
That glows so modestly. I love her as one loves
A child unloved in its own family. To speak truth,
Of all the seasons of the year I welcome her alone.
There is much in her that is good, and I,
Who am not a vainglorious lover, have found
In my wayward fantasy something special in her.*

*How can I explain this? She pleases me
As sometimes, perhaps, you have been drawn to
A consumptive girl. Condemned to death, the waif
— Poor girl — declines, fades uncomplainingly,
Without resentment; a smile on her vanished lips.*

*She is inattentive to the waiting grave;
On her face a crimson colour's playing.
She is alive today — tomorrow, not.*³⁴

This description may have been influenced by the image of Astarte from Byron's poem "Manfred" (1817) (Astarte is the name of Manfred's deceased beloved, here he sees her ghost):

*Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic — like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perished leaf.
It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same — Astarte! — No,
I cannot speak to her — but bid her speak —
Forgive me or condemn me.*

The Romantics (not to mention the "damned poets") usually imagined their lady in this way: either dying or being killed (Manfred laments about Astarte: "I loved her, and destroyed her!").

³⁴ Дни поздней осени бранят обыкновенно,
Но мне она мила, читатель дорогой,
Красою тихою, блистающей смиренно.
Так нелюбимое дитя в семье родной
К себе меня влечет. Сказать вам откровенно,
Из годовых времен я рад лишь ей одной,
В ней много доброго; любовник не тщеславный,
Я нечто в ней нашел мечтою своенравной.

Как это объяснить? Мне нравится она,
Как, вероятно, вам чахоточная дева
Порою нравится. На смерть осуждена,
Бедняжка клонится без ропота, без гнева.
Улыбка на устах увянувших видна;
Могильной пропасти она не слышит зева;
Играет на лице еще багровый цвет.
Она жива еще сегодня, завтра нет.

Let us return to Pushkin and the element of water. In essence, Pushkin's "Autumn" is a poem about the Muse, ending with an exit into the sea — into the boundless (conveyed by the multipoint) water space of poetic speech:

*Thoughts whirl audaciously in the mind,
Airy rhymes are running forth to meet them,
Fingers cry out for a pen, the pen for paper,
A moment — lines and verses freely flow.
So a ship slumbers in the stirless vapour,
But hark: sailors leap out, all hands are swarming
Up and down the masts, sails fill with wind;
The monster's moving and it cleaves the deep.*

It sails. Where shall we sail?

.
.³⁵

* * *

When a poet says that the Muse has appeared to him, it may not be said just for the beauty of expression. It may happen that the poet actually meets the Muse: either he sees her in a dream (including a daydream), or he perceives her in some actual being or phenomenon (in a woman, in an element of nature, in a tree, in a bird...).

³⁵ И мысли в голове волнуются в отваге,
И рифмы легкие навстречу им бегут,
И пальцы просятся к перу, перо к бумаге,
Минута — и стихи свободно потекут.
Так дремлет недвижим корабль в недвижной влаге,
Но чу! — матросы вдруг кидаются, ползут
Вверх, вниз — и паруса надулись, ветра полны;
Громада двинулась и рассекает волны.

Плывет. Куда ж нам плыть?

.
.

Stephen, the protagonist of James Joyce's autobiographical novel "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (1914), sees a girl on the seashore one day. It is a real girl, not a dream. But he suddenly begins to daydream, and through this girl he sees something else. Some magical force transforms her "into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird". This "strange and beautiful seabird" changes, deforms the whole world that Stephen is to face. His soul is "swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings". He recognises in the girl "the advent of the life that had cried to him". In other words, in her image Stephen sees life itself — as a living being looking at him, calling him: *"He was alone. He was unheeded, happy and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and wilful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the sea-harvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air."*

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips, where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.

She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the

silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither; and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

— Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.

He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea, crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on!

He halted suddenly and heard his heart in the silence. How far had he walked?

What hour was it?

There was no human figure near him nor any sound borne to him over the air. But the tide was near the turn and already the day was on the wane. He turned landward and ran towards the shore and, running up the sloping beach, reckless of the sharp shingle, found a sandy nook amid a ring of tufted sandknolls and lay down there that the peace and silence of the evening might still the riot of his blood.

He felt above him the vast indifferent dome and the calm processes of the heavenly bodies; and the earth beneath him, the earth that had borne him, had taken him to her breast.

He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. His eyelids trembled as if they felt the vast cyclic movement of the earth and her watchers, trembled as if they felt the strange light of some new world. His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings. A world, a glimmer or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to

itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes, every flush deeper than the other.

Evening had fallen when he woke and the sand and arid grasses of his bed glowed no longer. He rose slowly and, recalling the rapture of his sleep, sighed at its joy”.

Such is the appearance of the Muse for Joyce. (She appears to him simultaneously as a woman, as a bird, as an element and as a flower). It is an incredibly powerful vision, which is perceived as something more real than ordinary reality, and which turns a person's whole life upside down: “Her image had passed into his soul for ever.”

Take a look at a still from Emer Kavur's film “The Hidden Face” (based on a screenplay by Orhan Pamuk):



The “woman out of a dream” (dressed in blue, arriving in a blue car) holds out a watch to the protagonist. This is also the Muse. True, the protagonist does not write poetry. Let's just call her “The Beautiful Lady.” Or goddess.

In Apuleius' novel “Metamorphoses” (2nd century AD), the protagonist Lucius is saved by Isis, who appears to him. The goddess appears “out of the sea”. Here is a short excerpt from the magnificent description of Isis' appearance to Lucius:

“Such were the prayers that I poured forth, accompanied with pitiful lamentations; then sleep once more enveloped my fainting senses and overcame me in the same

resting-place as before. I had scarcely closed my eyes when out of the sea there emerged the head of the goddess, turning on me that face revered even by the gods; then her radiant likeness seemed by degrees to take shape in its entirety and stand, shaking off the brine, before my eyes. Let me try to convey to you too the wonderful sight that she presented, that is if the poverty of human language will afford me the means of doing so or the goddess herself will furnish me with a superabundance of expressive eloquence.

First her hair: long, abundant, and gently curling, it fell caressingly in spreading waves over her divine neck and shoulders. Her head was crowned with a diadem variegated with many different flowers; in its centre, above her forehead, a disc like a mirror or rather an image of the moon shone with a white radiance. This was flanked on either side by a viper rising sinuously erect; and over all was a wreath of ears of corn. Her dress was of all colours, woven of the finest linen, now brilliant white, now saffron yellow, now a flaming rose-red. <...>

'I come, Lucius, moved by your entreaties: I, mother of the universe, mistress of all the elements, first-born of the ages, highest of the gods, queen of the shades, first of those who dwell in heaven, representing in one shape all gods and goddesses. My will controls the shining heights of heaven, the health-giving sea-winds, and the mournful silences of hell; the entire world worships my single godhead in a thousand shapes, with divers rites, and under many a different name. <...> I am here in pity for your misfortunes, I am here with favour and goodwill. Cease now your weeping, put an end to your lamentation, banish your grief: now by my Providence the day of your release is dawning. Attend therefore with your whole mind to the orders I give you.' ”

Having passed all the trials, the protagonist of “Metamorphoses” will say:

“I came to the boundary of death and after treading Proserpine’s threshold I returned having traversed all the elements...”

Apuleius' Isis, by the way, is recognisable in the image of the Swan Princess from Pushkin's “The Lay of Tsar Saltan” (in particular, in the case of Isis we see: “above her forehead, a disc like a mirror or rather an image of the moon shone with a white

radiance”, and in the case of Pushkin's Princess we notice that “a crescent moon shines in her hair, / and a star sparkles on her forehead”). And it is not by chance, apparently, that in “Eugene Onegin” Pushkin mentions Apuleius and the Muse in the same stanza:

*In those days when in the Lyceum's gardens
I bloomed serenely,
would eagerly read Apuleius,
while Cicero I did not read;
in those days, in mysterious valleys,
in springtime, to the calls of swans,
near waters radiant in the stillness,
to me the Muse began appearing.*³⁶

* * *

Once I saw the Muse. I was twenty years old, studying at university, learning foreign languages, reading books (mostly foreign prose) and I had absolutely no intention of doing any creative work (not only not having any aptitude for it, but also not feeling any need to do it). Now I don't even remember whether I was sitting at home or walking down the street, but I remember well the vision that visited me (one cannot help but switch to a high syllable). As I continued to see the actual world around me, it was as if on its surface— or should I say, unconnected to it — that I saw the following picture: the autumn sea (or just the sea on a cloudy day), a girl in the background, a dolphin thrown ashore near her, seaweed and all sorts of rubbish scattered around the shore, as happens on the day after a storm. (I spent part of my childhood in Gurzuf, a small Crimean town, and often saw dolphins washed ashore after a storm. I even touched them out of childish curiosity: their torn skin reminded

³⁶ «В те дни, когда в садах Лицея / Я безмятежно расцветал, / Читал охотно Апулея, / А Цицерона не читал, / В те дни в таинственных долинах, / Весной, при кликах лебединых, / Близ вод, сиявших в тишине, / Являться Муза стала мне».

me of cardboard. A year after this vision of mine, reading Rilke's poem "Birth of Venus", I recognised this dead dolphin: "But at noon, in the heaviest hour, / the sea rose up once more and threw / a dolphin on that selfsame spot. / Dead, red, and open."). Then — in my eyes — the girl began to blur, to decompose, to fall apart and merge with the sea and the seaweed on the shore, with the smell of the sea and seaweed growing stronger and stronger. That was it. Yet this vision was incredibly powerful — stronger than any actual reality. After it I started writing poetry, the first poem (which I unfortunately haven't kept) just described what I saw, and not by chance was equally formless. Through this picture, decomposing, smelling of sea water and seaweed, I got a flavour of the individual sounds of speech and the possibility of the consonant connection of words. In saying this, I am not at all theorising: in my perception, my picture and my new sense of speech (and of the world in general) were completely united. In addition, I felt the possibility of a new connection of things — things seemingly quite disparate (and even wrote several pages of prose in which different phrases were linked together as if at random). Then I started writing, and also reading poetry: I became interested in what and how others write (and how they see the world). Here I developed a strange ability (which lasted only a couple of weeks): when reading a text, I foresaw what images would follow (for example, before turning the pages, I already knew that the moon or a dog would be mentioned next).

My second poem was a humorous ode to the phallus (also not preserved). A few days after writing it, I "encountered" my antipodean double. More precisely, one evening while at home, I felt him in me. It was someone inside me, matching me in contour, as dark as possible and incredibly heavy. What made him particularly terrifying was the fact that he was multi-eyed. After a few moments the sensation passed. (Later, reading "The Idiot", I recognised my experience in words: "Can anything that has no shape appear in a shape? But I seemed to fancy at times that I saw in some strange, incredible form that infinite Power, that dull, dark, dumb force." And also in Pushkin's line about the face of Apollo: "Emanating an unearthly power". And I know who Gogol's Viy is.) In general, it was something like

“possession” (or the Socratic “daimon”, “genius”). As a result of this “encounter”, I had then (just for a while) the ability to foresee various small events of my life. I acquired, so to speak, a sense of fate.

I realise that both of these visions-sensations are not difficult to explain in purely physiological, bodily terms. But look at the male body (I'll be consistent in my madness): isn't the *head ↔ belly ↔ penis* our code picture? And how does inspiration work? Does not consciousness go down the spine to the solar plexus, does not dissolve, does not disintegrate there, does not it then meet its “little friend” or “little brother”, its “goldfish”, in order to reassemble and ascend upwards? Isn't the process of artistic creation reflected by a kind of initiation rite in the human body itself?

* * *

In Haruki Murakami's novel “Norwegian Wood” (1987), the protagonist (Watanabe), after the death of his girlfriend (Naoko), goes travelling in Japan (at random, in sadness and lostness), wandering along the seashore:

“I went on with my travels. Every now and then I'd stay at a dosshouse and have a bath and shave. What I saw in the mirror looked terrible.

The sun had dried out my skin, my eyes were sunken, and odd stains and cuts marked my cheekbones. I looked as if I had just crawled out of a cave somewhere, but it was me after all. It was me.

By that time, I was moving down the coast, as far from Tokyo as I could get—maybe in Tottori or the hidden side of Hyogo. Walking along the seashore was easy. I could always find a comfortable place to sleep in the sand. I'd make a fire from driftwood and roast some dried fish I bought from a local fisherman. Then I'd swallow some whisky and listen to the waves while I thought about Naoko. It was too strange to think that she was dead and no longer part of this world.

I couldn't absorb the truth of it. I couldn't believe it. I had heard the nails being driven into the lid of her coffin, but I still couldn't adjust to the fact that she had returned to nothingness.

No, the image of her was still too vivid in my memory. I could still see her enclosing my penis in her mouth, her hair falling across my belly. I could still feel her warmth, her breath against me, and that helpless moment when I could do nothing but come. I could bring all this back as clearly as if it had happened only five minutes ago, and I felt sure that Naoko was still beside me, that I could just reach out and touch her. But no, she wasn't there; her flesh no longer existed in this world.

Nights when it was impossible for me to sleep, images of Naoko would come back to me. There was no way I could stop them. Too many memories of her were crammed inside me, and as soon as one of them found the slightest opening, the rest would force their way out in an endless stream, an unstoppable flood: Naoko in her yellow raincape cleaning the aviary and carrying the feed bag that rainy morning; the caved-in birthday cake and the feel of Naoko's tears soaking through my shirt (yes, it had been raining then, too); Naoko walking beside me in winter wearing her camel-hair coat; Naoko touching the hairslide she always wore; Naoko peering at me with those incredibly clear eyes of hers; Naoko sitting on the sofa, legs drawn up beneath her blue nightdress, chin resting on her knees.

The memories would slam against me like the waves of an incoming tide, sweeping my body along to some strange new place—a place where I lived with the dead. There Naoko lived, and I could speak with her and hold her in my arms. Death in that place was not a decisive element that brought life to an end. There, death was but one of many elements comprising life. There Naoko lived with death inside her. And to me she said, 'Don't worry, it's only death. Don't let it bother you.'

I felt no sadness in that strange place. Death was death, and Naoko was Naoko.

'What's the problem?' she asked me with a bashful smile, "I'm here, aren't I?" Her familiar little gestures soothed my heart like a healing balm. 'If this is death,' I thought to myself, 'then death is not so bad.' 'It's true,' said Naoko, 'death is

nothing much. It's just death. Things are so easy for me here.' Naoko spoke to me in the spaces between the crashing of the dark waves.

Eventually, though, the tide would pull back, and I would be left on the beach alone. Powerless, I could go nowhere; sadness itself would envelop me in deep darkness until the tears came. I felt less that I was crying than that the tears were simply oozing out of me like perspiration.

I had learned one thing from Kizuki's death [Kizuki was a mutual friend of Watanabe and Naoko], and I believed that I had made it a part of myself in the form of a philosophy: 'Death exists, not as the opposite but as a part of life.'

<...> Hearing the waves at night, listening to the sound of the wind, day after day I focused on these thoughts of mine. Knapsack on my back, sand in my hair, I moved farther and farther west, surviving on a diet of whisky, bread and water."

As you can see, the dead (suicide) girl turned into a goddess of death for Watanabe, but also a goddess of the water element ("The memories would slam against me like the waves of an incoming tide, sweeping my body along to some strange new place—a place where I lived with the dead. There Naoko lived, and I could speak with her and hold her in my arms."). The driftwood, the memory of a rainy morning, "the caved-in birthday cake", the "yellow raincape" are not accidental, I think. The goddess gets blurred, falls apart, crumbles like sand before the protagonist's inner gaze. And before that we see Watanabe looking in the mirror and barely recognising himself in his reflection, feeling alienated from himself, seeing himself as a dead double, also — like the "goddess of death" — decaying ("What I saw in the mirror looked terrible. The sun had dried out my skin, my eyes were sunken, and odd stains and cuts marked my cheekbones. I looked as if I had just crawled out of a cave somewhere, but it was me after all. It was me.").

After the words "I moved farther and farther west" (west, the place of sunset, is one of the most traditional symbols of death) the appearance of the double is spoken of:

“One windy evening, as I lay wrapped in my sleeping bag, weeping, by the side of an abandoned hulk, a young fisherman passed by and offered me a cigarette. I accepted it and had my first smoke in over a year. He asked why I was crying, and almost by reflex I told him that my mother had died. I couldn't take the sadness, I said, and so I was on the road. He expressed his deep sympathy and brought a big bottle of sake and two glasses from his house.

The wind tore along the sand beach as we sat there drinking. He told me that he had lost his mother when he was 16.”

It is significant that Naoko thus appears not only as a beloved girl, but also as a mother (that is, she couples with the hero and then gives birth to him — according to the “mental basis of the rite”).

The young fisherman is not the main double; he is only a sign of the doubleness, a reminder of doubleness. The main double (radically connected to Naoko, the “goddess of death”) is mentioned at the very beginning of the novel:

“Naoko was the girlfriend of my best (and only) friend, Kizuki. The two of them had been close almost from birth, their houses not 200 yards apart. <...> After a while, Kizuki gave up trying to arrange dates for me, and instead the three of us would do things together. Kizuki and Naoko and I: odd, but that was the most comfortable combination.”

Kizuki committed suicide long before Naoko's suicide. After Naoko's death, Watanabe reflects:

“The rooms I had set aside in there for Naoko were shuttered, the furniture draped in white, the windowsills dusty. I spent the better part of each day in those rooms. And I thought about Kizuki. ‘So you finally made Naoko yours,’ I heard myself telling him. ‘Oh, well, she was yours to begin with. Now, maybe, she's where she belongs. But in this world, in this imperfect world of the living, I did the best I could for Naoko. I tried to establish a new life for the two of us. But forget it, Kizuki. I'm giving her to you. You're the one she chose, after all. In woods as dark as the depths of her own heart, she hanged herself.

Once upon a time, you dragged a part of me into the world of the dead, and now Naoko has dragged another part of me into that world.

Sometimes I feel like the caretaker of a museum—a huge, empty museum where no one ever comes, and I'm watching over it for no one but myself.' ”

Naoko committed suicide in a sanatorium for the mentally ill in the mountains.

Watanabe had managed to visit her there:

“As soon as I woke at seven o'clock on Monday morning, I washed my face, shaved, and went straight to the dorm Head's room without eating breakfast to say that I was going to be gone for two days hiking in the hills.

<...> I bought a ticket and went to a bookshop across the street for a map.

Back in the waiting room, I studied the map to see if I could find exactly where the Ami Hostel was located. It turned out to be much farther into the mountains than I had imagined. The bus would have to cross several hills in its trek north, then turn around where the canyon road dead-ended and return to the city. My stop would be just before the end of the line. There was a footpath near the bus stop, according to Naoko, and if I followed it for 20 minutes I would reach Ami Hostel. No wonder it was such a quiet place, if it was that deep in the mountains!’ ”

The trip to the mountain sanatorium is described as a trip to another world, “to some strange new place”.

In this “strange new place” Naoko is split into a young girl and an old woman (in the language of the myth: into a beauty and a witch). Naoko is living with a “mysterious woman”, Reiko, who meets Watanabe and offers him a place to stay with her and Naoko:

“... a mature, bristly-haired woman appeared. She swept across the lobby, sat down next to me, crossed her legs and took my hand. Instead of just shaking it, she turned my hand over, examining it front and back.

‘You haven't played a musical instrument, at least not for some years now, have you?’ were the first words out of her mouth.

‘No,’ I said, taken aback. ‘You're right.’

‘I can tell from your hands,’ she said with a smile.

*There was something almost mysterious about this woman. Her face had lots of wrinkles. These were the first thing to catch your eye, but they didn't make her look old. Instead, they emphasized a certain youthfulness in her that transcended age. The wrinkles **belonged** where they were, as if they had been part of her face since birth. When she smiled, the wrinkles smiled with her; when she frowned, the wrinkles frowned, too. And when she was neither smiling nor frown-ing, the wrinkles lay scattered over her face in a strangely warm, ironic way. Here was a woman in her late thirties who seemed not merely a nice person but whose niceness drew you to her. I liked her from the moment I saw her."*

" 'So you can stay with us. That way it won't cost you anything and you can talk without having to worry about the time.'

'With "us"?' I asked.

'Naoko and me, of course,' said Reiko. "We have a separate bedroom, and there's a sofa bed in the living room, so you'll be able to sleep fine. Don't worry."

'Do they allow that?' I asked. "Can a male visitor stay in a Woman's room?"

'I don't suppose you're going to come in and rape us in the middle of the night?'

'Don't be silly.' "

As you can see, Reiko herself combines youth and old age. Reiko will have erotic conversations with Watanabe, and will even sleep with him after Naoko's death (after she leaves the sanatorium, on her way north, which is another symbol of death):

" 'We're going to have our own funeral for Naoko, just the two of us. One that's not so sad.' <...>

... she played her favourite Bach fugue. When she was through, she said in a voice just above a whisper, 'How about doing it with me, Watanabe?'

'Strange,' I said. 'I was thinking the same thing.'

We went inside and drew the curtains. Then, in the darkened room, Reiko and I sought out each other's bodies as if it were the most natural thing in the world for us to do. I removed her blouse and trousers, and then her underwear.

'I've lived a strange life,' said Reiko, 'but I never thought I'd have my panties removed for me by a man 19 years my junior.'

'Would you rather take them off yourself?'

'No, go ahead. But don't be too shocked at all my wrinkles.'

'I like your wrinkles.'

'You're gonna make me cry,' she whispered.

I kissed her all over, taking special care to follow the wrinkled places with my tongue. She had the breasts of a little girl. I caressed them and took her nipples in my teeth, then slid a finger inside her warm, moist vagina and began to move it.

'Wrong spot, Watanabe,' Reiko whispered in my ear. 'That's just a wrinkle.'

'I can't believe you're telling jokes at a time like this!'

'Sorry,' she said. 'I'm scared. I haven't done this for years. I feel like a 17-year-old girl: I just went to visit a guy in his room, and all of a sudden I'm naked.'

'To tell you the truth, I feel as if I'm violating a 17-year-old girl.' ”

Reiko is Watanabe's lover (a forty-year-old woman — and at the same time a seventeen-year-old girl), but she plays the role of a wise counsellor, a mentor to the young man (a role that is quite maternal). And shortly before the love scene, she says: “I'm going to tell him I'm your aunt on your mother's side, visiting from Kyoto”. Chichikov's remark in his conversation with Mrs Korobochka comes to mind: “Nastasya Petrovna? A nice name, Nastasya Petrovna. My aunt, my mother's sister, is Nastasya Petrovna.”

Reiko and Naoko are two hypostases of the same goddess, hence their shared clothing:

“ 'I'll give you a lesson later. Absolutely free.' Reiko put down the guitar and took off her tweed jacket. Sitting against the veranda post, she smoked a cigarette. She was wearing a madras check short-sleeve shirt.

'Nice shirt, don't you think?' she asked.

*"It is," I said. In fact it **was** a good-looking shirt with a handsome pattern.*

'It's Naoko's,' said Reiko. 'I bet you didn't know we were the same size. Especially when she first came to the sanatorium. She put on a little weight after that, but still

we were pretty much the same size: blouses, trousers, shoes, hats. Bras were about the only thing we couldn't share. I've got practically nothing here. So we were always swapping clothes. Actually, it was more like joint ownership.'

Now that she mentioned it, I saw that Reiko's build was almost identical to Naoko's. Because of the shape of her face and her thin arms and legs, she had always given me the impression of being smaller and slimmer than Naoko, but in fact she was surprisingly solid.

'The jacket and trousers are hers, too,' said Reiko. 'It's all hers. Does it bother you to see me wearing her stuff?'

'Not at all,' I said. 'I'm sure Naoko would be glad to have somebody wearing her clothes—especially you.'

'It's strange,' Reiko said with a little snap of the fingers. 'Naoko didn't leave a will or anything—except where her clothes were concerned. She scribbled one line on a memo pad on her desk. "Please give all my clothes to Reiko." She was a funny one, don't you think? Why would she be concerned about her clothes of all things when she's getting ready to die? Who gives a damn about clothes? She must have had tons of other things she wanted to say.'

'Maybe not,' I said."

At the sanatorium, this dual (consisting of two women) “mistress of the beasts and birds” takes care of the birds and rabbits:

“Spotting Reiko, the birds started chattering and flying about inside the cage. The women entered the shed by the cage and came out with a bag of feed and a garden hose. Naoko screwed the hose to a tap and turned on the water. Taking care to prevent any birds from flying out, the two of them slipped into the cage, Naoko hosing down the dirt and Reiko scrubbing the floor of the cage with a deck brush. The spray sparkled in the glare of the morning sun. The peacocks flapped around the cage to avoid getting splashed. A turkey raised its head and glowered at me like a crotchety old man, while a parrot on the perch above screeched its displeasure and beat its wings. Reiko meowed at the parrot, which slunk over to the far corner but soon was calling: 'Thank you!'

'Crazy!' 'Shithead!'

*'I wonder who taught him **that** kind of language?' said Naoko with a sigh.*

'Not me,' said Reiko. 'I would never do such a thing.' She started meowing again, and the parrot shut up.

Laughing, Reiko explained, 'This guy once had a run-in with a cat. Now he's scared to death of them.'

When they had finished cleaning, the two set down their tools and went around filling each of the feeders. Splashing its way through puddles on the floor, the turkey darted to its feed box and plunged its head in, too obsessed with eating to be bothered by Naoko's smacks on its tail.

'Do you do this every morning?' I asked Naoko.

'Every morning!' she said. 'They usually give this job to new women. It's so easy. Like to see the rabbits?'

'Sure,' I said. The rabbit hutch was behind the aviary. Some ten rabbits lay inside, asleep in the straw. Naoko swept up their droppings, put feed in their box, and picked up one of the babies, rubbing it against her cheek.

'Isn't it precious?' she gushed. She let me hold it. The warm, little ball of fur cringed in my arms, twitching its nose.

'Don't worry, he won't hurt you,' she said to the rabbit, stroking its head with her finger and smiling at me. It was such a radiant smile, without a trace of shadow, that I couldn't help smiling myself.'

And again Mrs Korobochka, her poultry yard, comes to mind:

"The clock again let out a hiss and struck ten; a woman's face peeked in the door and instantly hid itself, for Chichikov, wishing to sleep better, had thrown off absolutely everything. The face that had peeked in seemed somehow slightly familiar to him. He began recalling to himself: who might it be?—and finally remembered that it was the mistress. He put on his shirt; his clothes, already dried and brushed, lay next to him. Having dressed, he went up to the mirror and sneezed again so loudly that a turkey cock, who was just then approaching the window—the window being very near the ground—started babbling something to

him suddenly and quite rapidly in his strange language, probably 'God bless you,' at which Chichikov called him fool. Going to the window, he began to examine the views that spread before him: the window opened almost onto the poultry yard; at least the narrow pen that lay before him was all filled with fowl and every sort of domestic creature. There were turkeys and hens without number; among them a rooster paced with measured steps, shaking his comb and tilting his head to one side as if listening to something..."

Chichikov, who has entered Korobochka's realm, is reflected for a moment in a talking turkey, and Watanabe, who has arrived at the sanatorium, is reflected in a turkey and a talking parrot who has passed through death ("This guy once had a run-in with a cat. ").

And look what book Watanabe took with him when he went to the mountain sanatorium:

"Naoko and Reiko came back together at 5.30. Naoko and I exchanged proper greetings as if meeting for the first time. She seemed truly embarrassed. Reiko noticed the book I had been reading and asked what it was. Thomas Mann's "The Magic Mountain", I told her.

'How could you bring a book like that to a place like this?' she demanded. She was right, of course."

Later, the winter theme from "The Magic Mountain" comes up:

" 'Ah, but you haven't seen the winters here,' said Reiko, touching my back to guide me to the sofa and sitting down next to me. 'They're long and harsh. Nothing but snow and snow and more snow everywhere you look. It gets damp and chills you to the bone. We spend the winter shovelling snow. Mostly you stay inside where it's warm and listen to music or talk or knit. If you didn't have this much space, you'd suffocate. You'll see if you come here in the winter.' "

Watanabe will follow Reiko's advice and visit the sanatorium next time in the winter.

In Thomas Mann's novel describing Hans Castorp's initiation in a sanatorium on the snowy "Magic Mountain", there was no double goddess (old and young), no

aviary. But there was all this in Gogol's prose poem. By combining plot elements from different works, Murakami reconstructed the “mental basis of the rite”. The last lines of this Japanese novel about a young man's initiation are remarkable. Watanabe is on the phone with Midori, the girl to whom he must eventually return (after a mournful journey through Japan and an erotic encounter with Reiko, after Thanatos-Eros):

“I phoned Midori.

‘I have to talk to you,” I said. “I have a million things to talk to you about. A million things we have to talk about. All I want in this world is you. I want to see you and talk. I want the two of us to begin everything from the beginning.’

Midori responded with a long, long silence—the silence of all the misty rain in the world falling on all the new-mown lawns of the world. Forehead pressed against the glass, I shut my eyes and waited.

At last, Midori's quiet voice broke the silence: ‘Where are you now?’

Where was I now?

Gripping the receiver, I raised my head and turned to see what lay beyond the phone box. Where was I now? I had no idea. No idea at all. Where was this place? All that flashed into my eyes were the countless shapes of people walking by to nowhere. Again and again I called out for Midori from the dead centre of this place that was no place.”

The protagonist once more is in “some strange new place”. The novel ends with his sense of alienation from the world — and at the same time with his sense of love for the girl who is apparently destined for him. This feeling of alienation (the feeling of death in life) is discussed ahead. For now, let's just note that the “mysterious woman” Reiko is Watanabe's Muse. Reiko is going to give Watanabe a free lesson in guitar playing, she sings songs to the guitar before making love to him. Her role as Muse is obvious from their very first meeting:

“She swept across the lobby, sat down next to me, crossed her legs and took my hand. Instead of just shaking it, she turned my hand over, examining it front and back.

'You haven't played a musical instrument, at least not for some years now, have you?' were the first words out of her mouth.

'No,' I said, taken aback. 'You're right.'

'I can tell from your hands,' she said with a smile. <...>

"Chin drawn in and lips curled, she took some time to look me over from head to toe. I imagined that any minute now she was going to whip out her tape measure and start measuring me everywhere.

'Can you play an instrument?' she asked. 'Sorry, no,' I said.

'Too bad,' she said. 'It would have been fun.'

'I suppose so,' I said. Why all this talk about musical instruments?'"

* * *

Sometimes we hear words that do not apply to us, and suddenly we realise that they have a meaning in relation to us. We have already mentioned how Yurii Zhivago, having accidentally heard an old song by the female cattle healer Kubarikha, took the words of it as a message addressed to him ("I'll break from durance bitterly, I'll go to my red berry, to my lovely bride.").

In Dostoevsky's novel "The Brothers Karamazov", something similar happens to Ivan Karamazov when he suddenly hears a solitary drunken peasant's annoyingly repetitive song "Ach, Vanka's gone to Petersburg; / I won't wait till he comes back" before his visit to Smerdyakov, after his father's murder. This song, being an underlying accusation, causes Ivan "an intense hatred" and then aggression towards the little peasant.

In Tolstoy's novel "Anna Karenina", Anna is sitting on a train and unwittingly hears what her carriage neighbours are saying:

"Anna forgot her companions in the carriage and, to the slight rocking of the train, breathing in the fresh air, again began to think.

'Yes, where did I leave off? At the fact that I'm unable to think up a situation in which life would not be suffering, that we're all created in order to suffer, and that

we all know it and keep thinking up ways of deceiving ourselves. But if you see the truth, what can you do?’

‘Man has been given reason in order to rid himself of that which troubles him,’ the lady said in French, obviously pleased with her phrase and grimacing with her tongue between her teeth.

The words were like a response to Anna’s thought.

‘To rid himself of that which troubles,’ Anna repeated. And, glancing at the red-cheeked husband and the thin wife, she realized that the sickly wife considered herself a misunderstood woman and that her husband deceived her and supported her in this opinion of herself. It was as if Anna could see their story and all the hidden corners of their souls, turning her light on them. But there was nothing interesting there, and she went on with her thinking.

‘Yes, troubles me very much, and reason was given us in order to rid ourselves of it. So I must rid myself of it. Why not put out the candle, if there’s nothing more to look at, if it’s vile to look at it all? But how? Why was that conductor running along the footboard? Why are those young men in the other carriage shouting? Why do they talk? Why do they laugh? It’s all untrue, all a lie, all deceit, all evil!...’ ”

Here is one further example, from Charles Dickens' novel “David Copperfield”.

David is in love with Dora and confides this to his grandmother:

“As I bent forward, she put her tumbler on my knee to detain me, and said:

‘Oh, Trot, Trot! And so you fancy yourself in love! Do you?’

‘Fancy, aunt!’ I exclaimed, as red as I could be. ‘I adore her with my whole soul!’

‘Dora, indeed!’ returned my aunt. ‘And you mean to say the little thing is very fascinating, I suppose?’

‘My dear aunt,’ I replied, ‘no one can form the least idea what she is!’

‘Ah! And not silly?’ said my aunt.

‘Silly, aunt!’

I seriously believe it had never once entered my head for a single moment, to consider whether she was or not. I resented the idea, of course; but I was in a manner struck by it, as a new one altogether.

'Not light-headed?' said my aunt.

'Light-headed, aunt!' I could only repeat this daring speculation with the same kind of feeling with which I had repeated the preceding question.

'Well, well!' said my aunt. 'I only ask. I don't depreciate her. Poor little couple! And so you think you were formed for one another, and are to go through a party-supper-table kind of life, like two pretty pieces of confectionery, do you, Trot?' She asked me this so kindly, and with such a gentle air, half playful and half sorrowful, that I was quite touched.

'We are young and inexperienced, aunt, I know,' I replied; 'and I dare say we say and think a good deal that is rather foolish. But we love one another truly, I am sure. If I thought Dora could ever love anybody else, or cease to love me; or that I could ever love anybody else, or cease to love her; I don't know what I should do — go out of my mind, I think!'

'Ah, Trot!' said my aunt, shaking her head, and smiling gravely; 'blind, blind, blind!'

'Someone that I know, Trot,' my aunt pursued, after a pause, 'though of a very pliant disposition, has an earnestness of affection in him that reminds me of poor Baby. Earnestness is what that Somebody must look for, to sustain him and improve him, Trot. Deep, downright, faithful earnestness.'

'If you only knew the earnestness of Dora, aunt!' I cried.

'Oh, Trot!' she said again; 'blind, blind!' and without knowing why, I felt a vague unhappy loss or want of something overshadow me like a cloud.'

David is missing what he is destined for, but what he does not yet see: another love, namely the love for Agnes, whom his grandmother hints at and whom he now is currently treating as a sister. After talking to his grandmother, David meets Agnes and talks to her about his love for Dora:

“And how she spoke to me of Dora, sitting at the window in the dark; listened to my praises of her; praised again; and round the little fairy-figure shed some glimpses of her own pure light, that made it yet more precious and more innocent to me! Oh, Agnes, sister of my boyhood, if I had known then, what I knew long afterwards! —

There was a beggar in the street, when I went down; and as I turned my head towards the window, thinking of her calm seraphic eyes, he made me start by muttering, as if he were an echo of the morning: ‘Blind! Blind! Blind!’ ”

What's going on here? First the grandmother says to David: “Blind, blind!” Then he hears the same words repeated by a beggar in the street — and he startles. Why does he startle? Apparently, because in this accidental repetition he feels an appeal to himself — someone's call, someone's warning.

And this appeal is unobtrusive. If you want it, receive it; if you don't want it, don't receive it.

Isn't this what the Chinese call “Tao” (‘The Way’)?

Carl Gustav Jung in “The Tavistock Lectures” (1935) recounts an amusing conversation between one of his friends and a Chinese about the Tao:

“My friend McDougall has a Chinese student, and he asked him: ‘What exactly do you mean by Tao?’ Typically Western! The Chinese explained what Tao is and he replied: ‘I do not understand yet.’ The Chinese went out to the balcony and said: ‘What do you see?’ ‘I see a street and houses and people walking and tramcars passing.’ ‘What more?’ ‘There is a hill.’ ‘What more?’ ‘Trees.’ ‘What more?’ ‘The wind is blowing.’ The Chinese threw up his arms and said: ‘That is Tao.’

*There you are. Tao can be anything. I use another word to designate it, but it is poor enough. I call it **synchronicity**. The Eastern mind, when it looks at an ensemble of facts, accepts that ensemble as it is, but the Western mind divides it into entities, small quantities. You look, for instance, at this present gathering of people, and you say: ‘Where do they come from? Why should they come together?’ The Eastern mind is not at all interested in that. It says: ‘What does it **mean** that these people are together?’ That is not a problem for the Western mind. You are*

interested in what you come here for and what you are doing here. Not so the Eastern mind; it is interested in being together.

It is like this: you are standing on the sea-shore and the waves wash up an old hat, an old box, a shoe, a dead fish, and there they lie on the shore. You say: 'Chance, nonsense!' The Chinese mind asks: 'What does it mean that these things are together?' "

In short, a person is able to perceive the combination of things or phenomena he meets as a certain meaningful message, personally directed to him. Such combination-message can be of two kinds: synchronous (combination of things or phenomena in space, that is, when they appear before a person at the same time) and diachronic (correspondence, connection of things or phenomena in the flowing time). Vladimir Nabokov happily called the first kind of combination a "tower" and the second a "bridge" (in his novel "Ada, or Ardor"):

"Three or more things occurring at the same time formed a 'tower,' or, if they came in immediate succession, they made a 'bridge.' 'Real towers' and 'real bridges' were the joys of life..."

(‘Real’ here means ‘non-random, meaningful.’)

Let us take the examples of "tower" and "bridge" from the works of Leo Tolstoy.

"Tower" is what Levin sees when he is in love (in the novel "Anna Karenina"):

"And what he saw then, he afterwards never saw again. He was especially moved by children going to school, the grey-blue pigeons that flew down from the roof to the pavement, and the white rolls sprinkled with flour that some invisible hand had set out. These rolls, the pigeons and the two boys were unearthly beings. All this happened at the same time: a boy ran up to a pigeon and, smiling, looked at Levin; the pigeon flapped its wings and fluttered off, sparkling in the sun amidst the air trembling with snowdust, while the smell of baked bread wafted from the window as the rolls appeared in it. All this together was so extraordinarily good that Levin laughed and wept from joy."

The "unearthly beings" are angels (messengers), are they not? All the more so because they are doves (a symbol of spirits or human souls). The baked bread and

the invisible hand setting out the white rolls are the appearance of the “mistress of the beasts” (who in myth or fairy tale can be represented by an oven), are they not? And then the “two boys” are also quite recognisable — this is our code picture, isn't it? One of the boys “looked at Levin” (and one pigeon fluttered away) — the picture winked. And the “dust specks of snow trembling in the air” (so literally in Russian) — isn't it the element of nature, isn't it the blessed plurality of its items (“dust specks of snow” are the “white bees” of Andersen's “Snow Queen”, only with a plus sign)? However, I do not insist on it.

“Bridge” is when (in the novel “War and Peace”) Prince Andrey sees an oak tree: before his trip to the Otrádnoye estate — devoid of leaves, and after the trip (after meeting Natasha) — covered with leaves.

Here is the oak before the trip to Otradnoye:

“At the edge of the road stood an oak. Probably ten times the age of the birches that formed the forest, it was ten times as thick and twice as tall as they. It was an enormous tree, its girth twice as great as a man could embrace, and evidently long ago some of its branches had been broken off and its bark scarred. With its huge ungainly limbs sprawling unsymmetrically, and its gnarled hands and fingers, it stood an aged, stern, and scornful monster among the smiling birch trees. Only the dead-looking evergreen firs dotted about in the forest, and this oak, refused to yield to the charm of spring or notice either the spring or the sunshine.

‘Spring, love, happiness!’ this oak seemed to say. ‘Are you not weary of that stupid, meaningless, constantly repeated fraud? Always the same and always a fraud? There is no spring, no sun, no happiness! Look at those cramped dead firs, ever the same, and at me too, sticking out my broken and barked fingers just where they have grown, whether from my back or my sides: as they have grown so I stand, and I do not believe in your hopes and your lies.’

As he passed through the forest Prince Andrey turned several times to look at that oak, as if expecting something from it. Under the oak, too, were flowers and grass, but it stood among them scowling, rigid, misshapen, and grim as ever.

'Yes, the oak is right, a thousand times right,' thought Prince Andrey. 'Let others — the young — yield afresh to that fraud, but we know life, our life is finished!' A whole sequence of new thoughts, hopeless but mournfully pleasant, rose in his soul in connection with that tree. During this journey he, as it were, considered his life afresh and arrived at his old conclusion, restful in its hopelessness: that it was not for him to begin anything anew — but that he must live out his life, content to do no harm, and not disturbing himself or desiring anything.'

Here's the same oak tree after the trip to Otradnoye:

"It was already the beginning of June when on his return journey he drove into the birch forest where the gnarled old oak had made so strange and memorable an impression on him. In the forest the harness bells sounded yet more muffled than they had done six weeks before, for now all was thick, shady, and dense, and the young firs dotted about in the forest did not jar on the general beauty but, lending themselves to the mood around, were delicately green with fluffy young shoots. The whole day had been hot. Somewhere a storm was gathering, but only a small cloud had scattered some raindrops lightly, sprinkling the road and the sappy leaves. The left side of the forest was dark in the shade, the right side glittered in the sunlight, wet and shiny and scarcely swayed by the breeze. Everything was in blossom, the nightingales trilled, and their voices reverberated now near, now far away.

'Yes, here in this forest was that oak with which I agreed,' thought Prince Andrey. 'But where is it?' he again wondered, gazing at the left side of the road, and without recognizing it he looked with admiration at the very oak he sought. The old oak, quite transfigured, spreading out a canopy of sappy dark-green foliage, stood rapt and slightly trembling in the rays of the evening sun. Neither gnarled fingers nor old scars nor old doubts and sorrows were any of them in evidence now. Through the hard century-old bark, even where there were no twigs, leaves had sprouted such as one could hardly believe the old veteran could have produced. 'Yes, it is the same oak,' thought Prince Andrey, and all at once he was seized by an unreasoning springtime feeling of joy and renewal. All the best moments of his

life suddenly rose to his memory. Austerlitz with the lofty heavens, his wife's dead reproachful face, Pierre at the ferry, that girl thrilled by the beauty of the night, and that night itself and the moon, and.... all this rushed suddenly to his mind.

'No, life is not over at thirty-one!' Prince Andrey suddenly decided finally and decisively. 'It is not enough for me to know what I have in me — everyone must know it: Pierre, and that young girl who wanted to fly away into the sky, everyone must know me, so that my life may not be lived for myself alone while others live so apart from it, but so that it may be reflected in them all, and they and I may live in harmony!' "

The oak tree (the “world tree”) winked at Prince Andrey — “and all at once he was seized by an unreasoning springtime feeling of joy and renewal”. In essence, this is our code picture again, only expanded in time: *hero/naked oak* → *trip to Otradnoye/Natasha* → *hero/green oak (that is, antipodean double)*.

Look in this connection at the mosaic from Ravenna winking at us:



In “Solomon's Song of Songs” the two doves do indeed signify the eyes of the beloved: “His eyes are like doves beside springs of water, bathed in milk, fitly set.” Here we see that the dove on the left has turned away from the cup, looking back, while the dove on the right drinks from the spring of life. In fact, there is only one

dove: the mosaic depicts the spirit that is receiving the communion of immortality. This coded image unfolds itself through time. Piero della Francesca's painting "The Resurrection" (1460) similarly winks at us:



To the left of Jesus are naked winter trees, to the right are spring trees clothed with leaves. Well, the guards sleeping below are those who do not hear or see the Tao. (Just kidding.)

The Tao in time was keenly felt by Goethe. This is what Eckermann records in his "Conversations of Goethe":

"Dined with Goethe. <...> Goethe told me that his 'Metamorphosis of Plants,' with Soret's translation, was going on well, and that, in his supplementary labours on these subjects, particularly on the 'Spiral,' quite unexpected favourable things had come to his aid from without.

'We have,' said he, 'as you know, been busy with this translation for more than a year; a thousand hindrances have come in our way; the enterprise has often come to an absolute standstill, and I have often cursed it in silence. But now I can do reverence to all these hindrances; for during these delays things have ripened

abroad among other excellent men, so that they now bring the best grist to my mill, advance me beyond all conception, and will bring my work to a conclusion which I could not have imagined a year ago. The like has often happened to me in life; and, in such cases, one is led to believe in a higher influence, in something dæmonic, which we adore without trying to explain it further.’ ”

What principle is used to combine random parts into a non-random combination? In Nabokov's novel “Glory”, the protagonist reflects on the extent to which the words of an obituary can convey the image of a deceased person:

“But when, one July day, old Iogolevich heavily fell prone on the sidewalk, dead of heart failure, and the émigré papers carried a great deal of stuff about the “irreplaceable loss” and the “true toiler,” and Mihail Platonovich Zilanov, improperly hatless, with his briefcase under his arm, walked in the vanguard of the funeral procession among the roses and the black marble of Jewish graves, Martin had the impression that the obituary writer’s words “he burned with love for Russia” or “he always held high his pen” somehow debased the deceased inasmuch as those same words would have been equally applicable both to Zilanov and to the venerable necrologist himself. Most of all Martin felt sorry for the originality of the deceased, who was truly irreplaceable—his gestures, his beard, his sculpturesque wrinkles, the sudden shy smile, the jacket button that hung by a thread, and his way of licking a stamp with his entire tongue before sticking it on the envelope and banging it with his fist. In a certain sense this was all of greater value than the social merits for which there existed such easy little clichés ...”

In the combination of Iogolevich's individual traits there is the same Tao as in “an old hat, an old box, a shoe, a dead fish” washed ashore by a wave in Jung's example. Martyn could hardly tell what a jacket button hanging by a thread has to do with the manner of licking a stamp with one's entire tongue, or with a sudden shy smile. But he realises that all these incoherent features are actually connected. And when asked, “How exactly?” — he could only answer one thing: “Iogolevich”, that is, he could only give the name. Behind all those things there is a personality that pulls them

together in a certain pattern, just as a magnet pulls together metal shavings scattered on a sheet of paper if you bring it to the back of the sheet.

And what is behind the boy, the pigeon, the white rolls sprinkled in flour in “Anna Karenina”? May it be Levin himself? More precisely: the transfigured Levin, Levin's double-antipode?

In Gregory Skovoroda's (1722—1794) philosophical work “Narcissus. Discourse on: Recognise Thyself” a man is leaning over the water (which I think in this story symbolises the world at large) — and seeing himself as a “true man”, an “exact man”. He sees himself on the other side of the water surface, so to speak (just as Levin sees himself in the boy, the dove and the white rolls).

A similar thing happens in Vladislav Khodasevich's poem “Noon” (1918). The poet on the boulevard looks at some young lady with a book sitting next to him, at some boy “with a bucket and a trowel” playing at his feet, and suddenly feels himself as Narcissus encountering himself (falling into the depths of himself, as if undergoing a rite of passage in himself):

*And everything I hear,
Transformed by some miracle
So fully falls inside my heart,
That I need neither words nor thoughts,
And I look with a kind of backwards glance
Into myself.
And so captivating is the living moisture of the soul,
That, like Narcissus, from the earth's shore
I'm off and flying where I'm alone,
In my own original world,
Face to face with myself, once lost —
And found again...*

In short, the role of the Muse can also be played by Narcissus. In Goethe's ballad "The Fischerman" we notice not only a mermaid, but also Narcissus: "The deep, deep heavens, then lure thee not, — / The moist yet radiant blue, — / Not thine own form, — to tempt thy lot / 'Midst this eternal dew?"

In Melville's novel "Moby Dick, or the White Whale", the role of the poet falls to the "little negro" Pip, who finds himself overboard and spends some time alone with the ocean:

"... but from that hour the little negro went about the deck an idiot; such, at least, they said he was. The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman, Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God."

And at the very beginning of Melville's novel, there is talk of Narcissus:

"Why is almost every robust healthy boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all."

Take a look at Caravaggio's painting “Narcissus” (1594—1596):



Narcissus-reflection here, arguably, is not drawing the corporeal Narcissus into the depths, but rather supporting him.

* * *

Take a look at a still from Roman Polanski's film “The Tenant” (1976):



The protagonist, having moved into a creepy flat, finds a hole in the wall, sticks his finger in it and extracts a tooth wrapped in cotton wool (something human, but separated from the person and stiff in itself — a message from the “living dead”). Just before this, the new tenant sees the antipodean double for the first time (in the window of the opposite house).

In the Coen brothers' film “Barton Fink” (1991), Barton Fink finds himself in a creepy hotel with peeling wallpaper:



In this still he is trying to glue the wallpaper back on and getting his hand dirty (in the next shot Barton Fink will be looking at his glue-stained fingers). The hero has just been visited by his antipodean double, the insurance agent Charlie (the tenant of the next room), who, like Nozdrev, is a quite convivial guy — and (as it will turn

out at the end of the film) a maniac who cuts off heads. Barton Fink has to wrestle-cuddle with Charlie, swap shoes, etc. (that is, they are united by a whole set of features typical of doubles). At a certain point, Charlie comes to the protagonist with a box containing, one would assume, a severed head. For Charlie, this gloomy hotel his home (the ogre's labyrinth, so to speak), as he later declares to Barton Fink ("And you come into my home.... and you complain that I'm making too much noise.").

So, the hero touches the wall — and an antipodean double appears. Why?

Sofya Agranovich in her article "My Sadness is Gladsome"³⁷ (2003) speaks about the ancient ritual gesture of touching the wall of the cave:

"Through this wall the magical contact of descendants with ancestors is realised by means of touching palms of hands."

"In the game "ladushki" ('palms') the players touch each other with their palms, probably imitating the meeting, the connection of the living and the dead, ancestors and descendants. It is indicative that nowadays this game is practised between a child, whose consciousness is just awakening, and an adult. Folklore has preserved and brought down to us a song that is not as innocent and childish as it seems now:

Hey, palms, palms,

Where have you been? — At Grandma's.

What did you eat? — Porridge.

What did you drink? — Brew.

The porridge was sweet,

The brew was strong.

The ritual dialogue preserved in this song introduces us to the setting of the funeral feast and ritual communication with ancestors by means of touching palms."

Such communication occurs, for example, in the Armenian epic "David of Sassoun" (in the chapter "Mher the Younger"):

"Mher spoke: — Tell me, where is Bagdassar's grave? — The old man said to him: — That tomb is opposite the royal palace. — Mher said: — Bagdassar was from the house of Sassoun. Will you show me his grave? — The old man got up and led Mher

³⁷ A line from Pushkin's poem.

to the grave. Mher dismounted from his horse in the garden and bowed to the grave. He prayed. And when he prayed, he touched the stone with his hand, — the trace of his fingers the stone keeps.”

Take a look at the famous “Cave of the Hands” in Patagonia (9th millennium BC):



There are mostly left hands, mostly teenage boys' hands. No one knows what this means, of course. Maybe imprinting an image of one's hand was part of the initiation rite.

And here is a reconstruction of a burial in the settlement of Çatalhöyük (from the 8th to the 6th millennium BC):



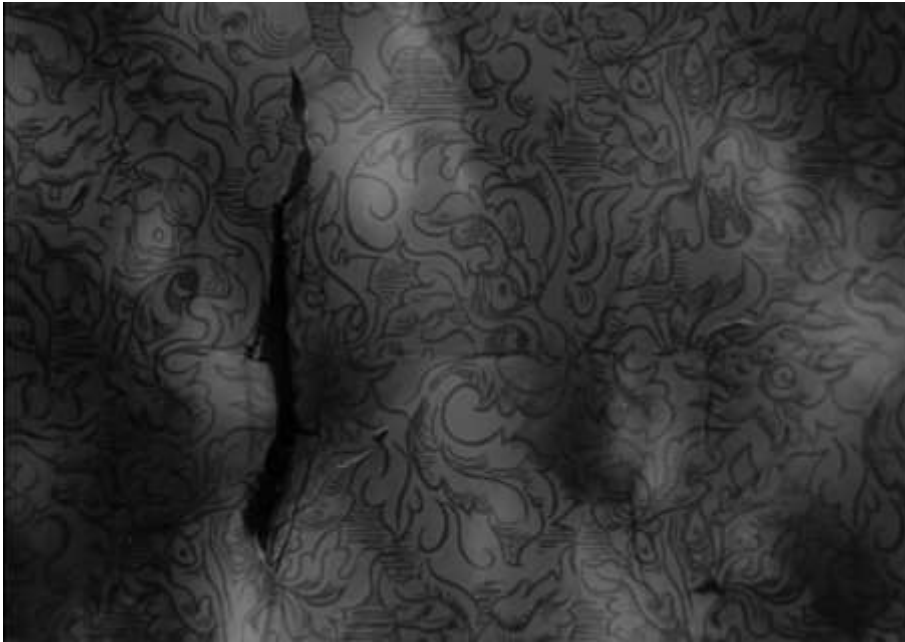
The dead were buried under the floor of the house, that is, the ancestors were always near and ready for communication.

(The hero's double can also emerge from beneath the floor, as we have already witnessed in a passage from Hoffmann's novel "The Devil's Elixir": "I had risen up, and was walking with the lamp in my hand, when suddenly I felt the floor shake beneath my tread. I stepped aside, and then saw, on the spot whereon I had stood, a stone lift itself out of the pavement, and sink again. The phenomenon was repeated, but at the second time I seized hold of the stone, and easily removed it from the flooring. The aperture beneath was but narrow, and little or no light rose from the gulf. Suddenly, however, as I was gazing on it, a naked arm, emaciated, but muscular, with a knife, or dagger, in the hand, was stretched up towards me. Struck with the utmost horror, I recoiled from the sight.")

Modern man does not touch his palms with his ancestor through a certain wall (unless he comes to the grave of a relative in a cemetery and talks to him, tending the grave and thus touching it). In front of him there is only a wall (what kind of wall — we will talk about it ahead). But the primordial, primitive human nature is at work — and from the wall, through the wall, an antipodean double (a dead man who has come to life) appears.

Look at the rip in the wallpaper from Ingmar Bergman's film "Through a Glass Darkly" (1961), which is quite clearly reminiscent of a vulva (and remember at the

same time the “big rip lower down” in Plyushkin's dressing gown, whom Chichikov first mistakes for a female housekeeper):



Karin, the film's heroine (who develops a mental illness), stands at this time with her palm against the wall. Later she tells her brother:

“One day, someone called me from behind the wallpaper. I looked in the closet, but there was no one there. But the voice kept calling me, so I pressed myself against the wall, and it gave way, like foliage ... and I was inside.”

At the end of the film, the spider-god appears from behind the wall. The spider-god itself is not seen in the film (it is in Karin's imagination), but at the beginning of Bergman's film “Persona” (1966) the spider really shows up (there we also see the gesture of putting the palms of the hands — to the cloudy glass).

Take a look at a still from Jean Cocteau's film “Orpheus”:



Orpheus approaches the mirror through which Princess Death has passed — and touches it. The viewer of the film is looking at Orpheus from the land beyond “the Looking-Glass” — from the land of the dead. (Orpheus then “will pass through mirrors as if they were water”, as it is said in Cocteau's play “Orpheus”).

Look at the boy putting his palm to the frost-patterned window and looking out into the thawed circle to the street — a still from Bergman's film “Fanny and Alexander”:



This is a scene from the very beginning of the film, from a kind of preface to the film. In this preface, Alexander walks around the empty house and calls out to his family and friends (which means: the author calls for the resurrection of the world

of his childhood), and then goes to the window. Throughout the film itself, Alexander sees the ghost of his dead father now and again and communicates with him. (Alexander's grandmother also sees her son's ghost — and says to him: “May I take your hand?” This scene rhymes with the scene in which Alexander shakes his father's hand as his father lies on his deathbed).

Alexander also sees the ghost of his stepfather (bishop), who was burnt because of the spell cast over him by Alexander (as Alexander himself believes). With this, a parallel to “Hamlet” is insistently drawn. Alexander's father is stricken with apoplexy when he plays the ghost of Hamlet's father. Alexander's mother Emilie says to her son (at his stepfather's house): “Don't play Hamlet, my son. I'm not Queen Gertrude, your kind stepfather isn't the King of Denmark, and this is not Elsinore Castle, even if it does look rather gloomy.” And before that: “There are no such things as ghosts.” Meanwhile, Alexander knows that there are ghosts because they appear to him. And that means to him that he is Hamlet and that his stepfather must be destroyed. And before Alexander has a chance to “put the evil eye” on his foe, he asks his father's ghost for help:

“Father. *It's not my fault it's all gone wrong. I can't leave you. I just can't.*

Alexander. *It would be better if you'd take off for heaven. You can't help us anyway.* Father. *I lived my whole life with you children and Emilie. Death makes no difference. What is it, Alexander?* Alexander. *Why can't you go to God and tell him to kill the bishop [the stepfather]? <...>* Father. *You must be gentle with people.”*

At the end of the film, the stepfather's ghost (dressed in black — while the father's ghost always appeared in light clothes) comes up behind Alexander, knocks him to the floor and says: “Now you are with me forever.” And we realise that the stepfather's ghost is Alexander's Shadow.

So, a mythical, magical wall, which can become transparent, can let the hero in (that is, let him into another world) or send an antipodean double to meet him. Something similar happens in the fairy tale as well. In his book “The Historical Roots of the Wondertale” Propp writes:

"What's going on here? Why does the hut have to be turned round? Why can't you just go in? Often there is a smooth wall in front of Ivan — "without windows and without doors" — the entrance is from the opposite side. "This hut has neither windows nor doors — nothing." But why not go round the hut and enter from the other side? Obviously, you can't do that. Obviously, the hut stands on some visible or invisible boundary that Ivan cannot cross. The only way to get to this boundary is through the hut, and the hut has to be turned "so that I can go in and out"."

For the protagonist of Dostoevsky's story "Notes from Underground" (1864), the wall is a metaphor for the immutable laws of nature that deprive man of his freedom: *"What do I mean by a stone wall? Well, of course, the laws of nature or the conclusions of the natural sciences or of mathematics. When it is proved, for example, that you are descended from an ape, it's no use scowling about it — accept it as a fact. <...>*

'Excuse me,' they cry, 'you can't fight it; twice two is four! Nature doesn't ask you about it; she's not concerned with your wishes or with whether you like her laws or not. You must take her as she is, and consequently all her results as well. I mean to say, a wall is a wall,' etc., etc. But good God! what have the laws of nature and arithmetic to do with me, when for some reason I don't like those laws or twice two? Naturally I shan't break through the wall with my head, if I'm really not strong enough, but I won't be reconciled to it simply because it's a stone wall and I haven't enough strength to break it down.'

Around the same time, the young Émile Zola, at the beginning of his novel "Thérèse Raquin" (1867), depicts a terrible, hideous stone wall:

"At the end of the Rue Guénégaud, if you follow it away from the river, you find the Passage du Pont-Neuf, a sort of dark, narrow corridor linking the Rue Mazarine to the Rue de Seine. This passageway is, at most, thirty paces long and two wide, paved with yellowish, worn stones which have come loose and constantly give off an acrid dampness. The glass roof, sloping at a right angle, is black with grime.

On fair summer days when the sun burns down heavily on the streets, a whitish light penetrates the dirty panes of glass and lurks miserably about the arcade. On foul

winter days, on a foggy morning, the glass roof casts only shadows over the slimy paving: mean, soiled shadows.

Built into the left wall are dark, low, flattened shops which exhale the dank air of cellars. There are secondhand booksellers, toyshops and paper merchants whose displays sleep dimly in the shades, grey with dust. The little square panes of the shop windows cast strange, greenish reflections on the goods inside. Behind them, the shops are full of darkness, gloomy holes in which weird figures move around.

On the right, along the whole length of the passageway, there is a wall, against which the shopkeepers opposite have set up narrow cupboards; nameless objects, goods forgotten for twenty years, lie there on narrow shelves painted a repellent shade of brown. A woman selling costume jewellery does business from one of the cupboards, offering rings at fifteen sous, delicately placed on a bed of blue velvet at the bottom of a mahogany box.

Above the glass roof, the wall extends, black, crudely rendered, as though stricken with leprosy and crisscrossed with scars.”

Zola believes that human behaviour is entirely determined by heredity and biologically inherent motives, as well as by the influence of society. In the preface to the novel “Thérèse Racken” the writer states: “... my point of departure is the study of temperament and of the profound modifications of an organism through the influence of environment and circumstances.” Compare: “What do I mean by a stone wall? Well, of course, the laws of nature or the conclusions of the natural sciences or of mathematics <...> it’s no use scowling about it — accept it as a fact.” The terrible wall in the Passage du Pont-Neuf becomes the main metaphor of the work (in which everything is rather similar to this wall) and quite corresponds to the abstract wall about which Dostoevsky's protagonist speculates.

Whatever Zola's “starting point” may be, the myth is at work in his novel (otherwise it would be uninteresting and non-talented): the husband (Camille) — who was murdered (drowned) by Thérèse and her lover Laurent — seems to come to life (in their feelings and imagination) and haunts them (the revived drowned man). In particular, the soul of the drowned man seems to inhabit a cat that frightens the

murderers. This cat had been following them with a “devil's eye” even before Camille's murder:

“The tabby cat, François, was sitting on his bottom right in the middle of the room. Solemn and motionless, he was looking at the two lovers with wide-open eyes. He seemed to be examining them carefully, without blinking, lost in a sort of diabolical trance. <...>

François, sitting still as a rock, kept on looking at her [Thérèse]. Only his eyes seemed to be alive and, in the corners of his mouth, there were two deep folds that made this stuffed animal's face seem to break out laughing.”

(Do you remember the old woman in Raskolnikov's dream laughing at her murderer?)

Laurent (an inept painter) paints a portrait of Camille (in order to get a chance to see Thérèse) — and this botched portrait successfully predicts Camille's fate (that is, it turns out in the end to be, to use Nabokov's words, intuitively ingenious — conveying a message from another world, predicting the future):

“The portrait was vile, a dirty grey colour with large violescent patches. Laurent could not use even the brightest colours, without making them dull and muddy. In spite of himself he had exaggerated the wan complexion of his model, and the countenance of Camille resembled the greenish visage of a person who had met death by drowning. The grimacing drawing threw the features into convulsions, thus rendering the sinister resemblance all the more striking.”

(The description of the portrait is done in the same vein as the description of the wall in the Passage du Pont-Neuf.)

Having drowned Camille (by throwing him off the boat), Laurent then searches for his body in the Morgue — and finds it:

“The next day, on coming into the Morgue, he felt a vicious blow in his chest: opposite him, on a slab, Camille was staring at him, lying on his back with his head raised and his eyes half open. <...>

Camille was hideous. He had spent a fortnight in the water. His face still seemed firm and stiff, the features were preserved, but the skin had taken on a muddy,

yellowish tint. The head, thin and bony, slightly puffy, was twisted into a grimace; it was leaning a bit to one side, the hair stuck to the temples, the eyelids raised, revealing the pallid globe of the eyes; the lips were twisted, drawn to one side of the mouth, giving a horrible sneer; the blackish tip of the tongue was visible between the whiteness of the teeth."

Camille is sneering, as the cat François was sneering before.

Later, Laurent marries Thérèse, and then the portrait of Camille seems to come to life in his bedroom. (Thus Zola's declared naturalism turns out to be the legacy of the Gothic themes of Maturin, Hoffmann, and Gogol. Naturalism is, in fact, a heightened attention to the scars on the wall, to the decaying body of the drowned man. The stronger and more prolonged is the touch on the "stone wall", the sharper is the counter gaze of the antipodean double). The portrait comes to life with the help of the cat François:

"Suddenly, Laurent thought he experienced a hallucination. As he was turning to go from the window back to the bed, he saw Camille, in a corner plunged in shadow between the fireplace and the wardrobe. [Isn't it similar to the corner from the dream of Raskolnikov, in which he sees the old woman he murdered now laughing at him?] His victim's face was greenish in colour and convulsed, as it had been on the slab in the Morgue. He stayed, rooted to the spot, faint and supporting himself on a piece of furniture. Hearing his dull moan, Thérèse looked up.

'There!' Laurent said in a terrified voice. 'There!'

He stretched out his hand, pointing to the dark corner in which he could see Camille's sinister face. Thérèse, seized with the same terror, came over and pressed herself to him.

'It's his portrait,' she muttered, in a whisper, as though the painted face of her husband could hear what she was saying.

'His portrait?' Laurent said, his hair standing on end.

'Yes, you know, the painting you did. My aunt was going to have it in her room from today. She must have forgotten to take it down.'

'Of course, his portrait ...'

For a time, the murderer did not recognize the picture. He was so disturbed by it that he forgot that he had himself drawn the clumsy outlines of those features and filled in the dirty colours that now appalled him. Terror made him see the canvas as it really was: crude, badly composed and muddy, showing the grimacing face of a corpse against its black background. His work astonished him and crushed him with its atrocious ugliness. Worst of all were the two white eyes swimming in their soft, yellowish sockets, which precisely reminded him of the decaying eyes of the drowned man in the Morgue. <...>

One event, which would have brought a smile to anyone else's lips, drove him entirely out of his mind. When he was in front of the fireplace, he heard a sort of scratching noise. The blood drained from his face: he thought that the scratching was coming from the portrait and that Camille was getting down out of his frame. Then he realized that the noise was coming from the little door leading to the staircase. He looked at Thérèse, who was again seized by fear.

'There's someone on the stairs,' he murmured. 'Who can be coming through there?' The young woman said nothing. Both of them were thinking about the drowned man and an icy sweat broke out on their brows. They fled to the back of the room, expecting to see the door open suddenly and the corpse of Camille fall through it on to the floor. The noise continued, sharper and less regular, so that it seemed to them that their victim was scratching at the wood with his fingernails, trying to get in. For more than five minutes, they did not dare move. Finally, there was a miaow. Laurent went across and saw Mme Raquin's tabby cat, which had been shut into the bedroom by mistake and was trying to get out by scraping the little door with its claws. François was afraid of Laurent. In a bound, he leaped on to a chair, then, his hair on end and paws stiff, he gave his new master a hard, cruel stare. The young man did not like cats and François almost scared him. In this moment of fear and anguish, he thought the cat was going to leap at his face, to avenge Camille. The creature must know everything: there were thoughts behind those round, oddly dilated eyes. Laurent looked down, away from this animal's stare. He was about to give François a kick, when Thérèse shouted:

'Don't hurt him!'

Her cry gave him an odd feeling and a ridiculous idea came into his head:

'Camille has entered into the cat,' he thought. 'I must kill this animal. It looks human.'

He did not kick it, afraid that François would speak to him with Camille's voice."

Later, the cat François seems to take possession of Mme Raquin (Camille's mother) as well, who is shattered by paralysis, that is, as if petrified, as if turned into a wall with eyes:

"It was like the decayed mask of a dead woman, with two living eyes in it: the eyes alone moved, rapidly turning in their sockets, while the cheeks and mouth looked as though they were petrified, possessing a horrifying immobility."

(Compare, in "The Queen of Spades": "The dead woman sat as though turned to stone.")

The criminal newlyweds live with the victim's paralysed mother (at her shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf). Therese and Laurent are haunted by the ghost of the murdered man, and their passion turns to mutual hatred. From their bickering, the paralysed woman eventually understands exactly what has happened to her son. Her terrifying gaze (she can't speak) haunts the murderers relentlessly. Camille's mother is the petrified goddess of death, the immovable wall; Camille is Laurent's animal (feline) double-antipode, the spawn of this wall.

Through the dense naturalism of "Thérèse Raquin" we feel the eyes of the goddess of death staring back at us. It is like the gaze from Gérard de Nerval's famous poem "Golden Verses":

Fear, in the blind wall, a watchful gaze:

The Logos is bound even to matter ...

Ensure it serves no impious use!

Often in the obscure being, dwells a hidden God;

And like a nascent eye masked by its lid,

*Beneath the skin of stones ripens a purer spirit!*³⁸

Speaking about “attempts to go beyond the known limits of cognition”, Lev Shestov in his book “The Apotheosis of Groundlessness” (1905) gives such a comparison:

“Some naturalist made the following experiment: in a glass vessel, divided into two halves by a glass partition, also completely transparent, they placed on one side a pike, and on the other various small fish, which usually serves as prey for the pike. The pike did not notice the transparent partition and rushed at the prey, but, of course, only mashed its mouth. Many times it did its experience — and all with the same results. In the end, seeing that all its attempts so sadly end, the pike no longer tried to hunt, so that even when a few days later the partition was removed, it continued to swim calmly between small fish and was already afraid to attack it Doesn't the same thing happen with humans? Maybe their assumptions about the boundaries separating the “natural” world [literally: the world that is here] from the “supernatural” world [the world that is beyond] are also essentially of experiential origin and are not at all rooted either in the nature of things, as was thought before Kant, or in the nature of our reason, as it was argued after Kant. It may be that the partition does exist and makes ordinary attempts to go beyond the known limits of cognition futile, but at the same time, it may be that there comes a moment in our lives when the partition has already been removed.”

Taking out the partition, of course, means danger. Let us remember the green door in the white wall into which Wallace entered.

Captain Ahab in the novel “Moby Dick” also dies — while trying to destroy the partition. Ahab believes that “some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask.” He sees this “unknown but still reasoning thing” carrying out hostile actions against him through the White Whale — as if from behind a wall. (The White Whale plays the role of

³⁸ Crains, dans le mur aveugle, un regard qui t'épie: / À la matière même un verbe est attaché... / Ne la fais pas servir à quelque usage impie! / Souvent dans l'être obscur habite un Dieu caché; / Et, comme un œil naissant / couvert par ses paupières, / Un pur esprit s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres!

the ogre, of Polyphemus: it is both the mythical beast and Captain Ahab's antipodean double.) Ahab accepts the challenge. He tells his assistant:

“Hark ye yet again—the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him.”

Incidentally, the reasoning of the protagonist of “Notes from Underground” about “twice two is four” (that is, about the partition wall) refers us to a much earlier text — to the conversation between Don Juan and Sganarelle in Moliere's play “Don Juan, or the Statue at the Feast” (1665):

Sganarelle: *I'd like to know what you truly think. Is it really the case that you don't believe in Heaven?*

Don Juan: *Let's not go into that.*

Sganarelle: *That means you don't. What about Hell?*

Don Juan: *Pshaw!*

Sganarelle: *No, again. And the Devil, if I might make so bold?*

Don Juan: *Oh, absolutely.*

Sganarelle: *No more than the rest. Don't you believe in a life after this?*

Don Juan: *Ha ha ha!*

Sganarelle (*aside*): *Here's someone who'll take a bit of converting. And just tell me this: the Bogey Man, what do you reckon to him?*

Don Juan: *Too stupid for words.*

Sganarelle: *Now I can't allow that. There's nothing truer than the Bogey Man – I'd go to the stake for it. But a man's got to believe in something. What is it you believe?*

Don Juan: *What do I believe?*

Sganarelle: *Yes.*

Don Juan: *I believe that two and two make four, Sganarelle, and that four and four are eight.*

Sganarelle: *Now there's a fine set of beliefs! As far as I can see then, your religion is arithmetic.*

You know how it ends: a reanimated (nodding head) statue of the knight-commander appears — an antipodean double who shakes the hero's hand and thereby sends him to the underworld.

It is also interesting that Don Juan, expressing his disbelief in the reality of the statue's nodding, will outline the way in which the animated portrait or animated statue will be introduced in later literature:

Don Juan (*to Sganarelle*). *Whatever it was, let's leave it at that. It wasn't anything. We may have been deceived by a trick of the light or exposed to fumes of some sort which affected our eyes.*

* * *

An antipodean double appearing from behind a wall (or on a wall) can take the form of an insect, such as a tarantula or similar. Here is a still from Denis Villeneuve's film “Enemy” (2013), based on José Saramago's novel “The Double”. The protagonist of the film suddenly sees a giant tarantula moving its legs:



In Dostoevsky's novel "The Idiot" (in the narration of Hippolyte), after the vivid image of "a huge and loathsome tarantula", enters Rogozhin:

"Can anything that has no shape appear in a shape? But I seemed to fancy at times that I saw in some strange, incredible form that infinite Power, that dull, dark, dumb force. I remember that some one seemed to lead me by the hand, holding a candle, to show me a huge and loathsome tarantula, and to assure me, laughing at my indignation, that this was that same dark, dumb and almighty Power. There is always a little lamp lighted at night before the ikon in my room. It is a dim and feeble light, yet one can make out everything, and even read just under the lamp. I believe it must have been after midnight. I had not slept at all and lay with wide-open eyes. Suddenly my door opened and Rogozhin walked in. He walked in, shut the door, looked at me without speaking, and went quietly to the chair standing just under the lamp. I was awfully surprised and looked at him in suspense. Rogozhin put his elbows on the little table and began to stare at me without speaking."

At almost about the same time, Comte de Lautréamont (Isidor Ducasse) in his "Chants de Maldoror" (1969) describes (ironically as always) an encounter with a spider:

"Every night, at the hour when sleep has reached its highest degree of intensity, an old spider of the large species slowly protrudes its head from a hole in the ground at one of the intersections of the angles of the room. It listens carefully, to hear if

any rustling sound is still moving its mandibles in the atmosphere. Given its insect conformation, it can do no less, if it means to increase the treasures of literature with brilliant personifications, than to attribute the mandibles to the rustling sound. When it has ascertained that silence reigns all around, it draws out, one after the other, without the help of meditation, the several parts of its body, and advances with slow, deliberate steps towards my bed. And a remarkable thing happens! I, who can repulse sleep and nightmares, feel paralysed through my entire body when with its long ebony legs it climbs along my satin bed. It clasps my throat with its legs and with its abdomen it sucks my blood. As simple as that! How many litres of deep reddish liquor, the name of which you know well, has it not drunk, since it started going through this same procedure with perseverance worthy of a nobler cause. I do not know what I have done to it that it should act in this way towards me. Did I inadvertently tread on one of its legs? Did I take away some of its little ones? These two hypotheses, which are both highly suspect, do not bear serious scrutiny; it is even quite easy for them to make me shrug my shoulders and bring a smile to my lips, though one ought never to laugh at anyone. Take care, black tarantula; if your behaviour does not have an irrefutable syllogism to justify it, one night I will awaken with a start, and with a final effort of my dying will, I shall break the spell by which you paralyse my limbs, and crush you between the bones of my fingers like a piece of pulpy substance. Yet I vaguely recall that I have given you permission for your legs to climb over my breast; and from there on to the skin which covers my face; that consequently I have no right to do violence to you. Oh, who will untangle my disordered memories?"

In Nabokov's unfinished (because of the author's death) novel "The Original of Laura", life itself appears as "a crustacean-like monster":

"In a recurrent dream of my childhood I used to see a smudge on the wallpaper or on a whitewashed door, a nasty smudge that started to come alive, turning into a crustacean-like monster. As its appendages began to move, a thrill of foolish horror shook me awake; but the same night or the next I would be again facing idly some wall or screen on which a spot of dirt would attract the naive sleeper's attention by

starting to grow and make groping and clasping gestures — and again I managed to wake up before the bloated bulk got unstuck from the wall. But one night when some trick of position, some dimple of pillow, some fold of bed clothes made me feel brighter and braver than usual, I let the smudge start its evolution and, drawing on an imagined matter, I simply-rubbed out the beast. Three or four times it appeared again in my dreams but now I welcomed its growing shape and gleefully erased it. Finally it gave up — as some day life will give up — bothering me.”

How is this image of the insect connected to the antipodean double? Why does a person who stares at a wall see a spider or a cockroach on it — like his reflection in a distorting mirror? Why might he feel himself to be an insect?

* * *

In Jean-Paul Sartre's novel “Nausea” (1938), Antoine Roquentin (the novel's protagonist) perceives “a good, solid, bourgeois city” Bouville, where “everything happens mechanically”, where “the world obeys fixed, unchangeable laws”, as Dostoevsky's stone wall (“twice two is four”), which will at some point “start throbbing” (in Dostoevsky: “Come on, gentlemen, why shouldn't we get rid of all this calm reasonableness with one kick, just so as to send all these logarithms to the devil and be able to live our own lives at our own sweet will?”):

*“I feel so far away from them, on the top of this hill. It seems as though I belong to another species. They come out of their offices after their day of work, they look at the houses and the squares with satisfaction, they think it is **their** city, a good, solid, bourgeois city. They aren't afraid, they feel at home. All they have ever seen is trained water running from taps, light which fills bulbs when you turn on the switch, half-breed, bastard trees held up with crutches. They have proof, a hundred times a day, that everything happens mechanically, that the world obeys fixed, unchangeable laws. In a vacuum all bodies fall at the same rate of speed, the public park is closed at 4 p.m. in winter, at 6 p.m. in summer, lead melts at 335 degrees centigrade, the last streetcar leaves the Hotel de Ville at 11.05 p.m. [Let*

us recall here Gregor Samsa from Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis" (1912), namely his life of a commercial traveller: "travelling about day in, day out <...> worrying about train connections."] *They are peaceful, a little morose, they think about Tomorrow, that is to say, simply, a new today; cities have only one day at their disposal and every morning it comes back exactly the same. They scarcely doll it up a bit on Sundays. Idiots. It is repugnant to me to think that I am going to see their thick, self-satisfied faces. They make laws, they write popular novels, they get married, they are fools enough to have children. And all this time, great, vague nature has slipped into their city, it has infiltrated everywhere, in their house, in their office, in themselves. It doesn't move, it stays quietly and they are full of it inside, they breathe it, and they don't see it, they imagine it to be outside, twenty miles from the city. I see it, I see this nature ... I know that its obedience is idleness, I know it has no laws: what they take for constancy is only habit and it can change tomorrow.*

What if something were to happen? What if something suddenly started throbbing? Then they would notice it was there and they'd think their hearts were going to burst. Then what good would their dykes, bulwarks, power houses, furnaces and pile drivers be to them? It can happen any time, perhaps right now: the omens are present. For example, the father of a family might go out for a walk, and, across the street, he'll see something like a red rag, blown towards him by the wind. And when the rag has gotten close to him he'll see that it is a side of rotten meat, grimy with dust, dragging itself along by crawling, skipping, a piece of writhing flesh rolling in the gutter, spasmodically shooting out spurts of blood. Or a mother might look at her child's cheek and ask him: 'What's that—a pimple?' and see the flesh puff out a little, split, open, and at the bottom of the split an eye, a laughing eye might appear. Or they might feel things gently brushing against their bodies, like the caresses of reeds to swimmers in a river. And they will realize that their clothing has become living things. And someone else might feel something scratching in his mouth. He goes to the mirror, opens his mouth: and his tongue is an enormous, live centipede, rubbing its legs together and scraping his palate. He'd like to spit it out, but the

centipede is a part of him and he will have to tear it out with his own hands. And a crowd of things will appear for which people will have to find new names—stone-eye, great three-cornered arm, toe-crutch, spider-jaw. And someone might be sleeping in his comfortable bed, in his quiet, warm room, and wake up naked on a bluish earth, in a forest of rustling birch trees, rising red and white towards the sky like the smokestacks of Jouxtebouville, with big bumps half-way out of the ground, hairy and bulbous like onions. And birds will fly around these birch trees and pick at them with their beaks and make them bleed. Sperm will flow slowly, gently, from these wounds, sperm mixed with blood, warm and glassy with little bubbles. Or else nothing like that will happen, there will be no appreciable change, but one morning people will open their blinds and be surprised by a sort of frightful sixth sense, brooding heavily over things and seeming to pause. Nothing more than that: but for the little time it lasts, there will be hundreds of suicides. Yes! Let it change just a little, just to see, I don't ask for anything better. Then you will see other people, suddenly plunged into solitude. Men all alone, completely alone with horrible monstrosities, will run through the streets, pass heavily in front of me, their eyes staring, fleeing their ills yet carrying them with them, open-mouthed, with their insect-tongue flapping its wings. Then I'll burst out laughing even though my body may be covered with filthy, infected scabs which blossom into flowers of flesh, violets, buttercups. I'll lean against a wall and when they go by I'll shout: 'What's the matter with your science? What have you done with your humanism? Where is your dignity?' I will not be afraid—or at least no more than now."

The perception of reality becomes a surrealistic one, like in the paintings of Salvador Dali. Nature is ready to awaken — the unregulated movement of things (their revolt against humans) is about to begin, the usual links between them will be broken and new, monstrous, at first glance completely arbitrary ones will emerge.

At the beginning of the novel, Sartre gives the key to his work. Antoine takes a flat pebble in his hand (to launch it across the water). From underneath, this pebble turns out to be damp and muddy. After holding the pebble squeamishly for a while, Antoine drops it and walks away.

Anyone who has launched pebbles in this way is familiar with such a mishap — every once in a while you get a stone that is muddy from below. It is unpleasant, but life goes on after that, as they say. But for Antoine Rocantin it stops there: he is overcome by Nausea. This change in the protagonist constitutes the content of the novel:

*“The best thing would be to write down events from day to day. Keep a diary to see clearly—let none of the nuances or small happenings escape even though they might seem to mean nothing. And above all, classify them. I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since **those** are the things which have changed. I must determine the exact extent and nature of this change. <...>*

Saturday the children were playing ducks and drakes and, like them, I wanted to throw a stone into the sea. Just at that moment I stopped, dropped the stone and left. Probably I looked somewhat foolish or absent-minded, because the children laughed behind my back.

So much for external things. What has happened inside of me has not left any clear traces. I saw something which disgusted me, but I no longer know whether it was the sea or the stone. The stone was flat and dry, especially on one side, damp and muddy on the other. I held it by the edges with my fingers wide apart so as not to get them dirty.”

Antoine will remember this pebble more than once:

*“Objects should not **touch** because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being in contact with them as though they were living beasts.*

Now I see: I recall better what I felt the other day at the seashore when I held the pebble. It was a sort of sweetish sickness. How unpleasant it was! It came from the stone, I’m sure of it, it passed from the stone to my hand. Yes, that’s it, that’s just it—a sort of nausea in the hands.”

*“I was going to throw that pebble, I looked at it and then it all began: I felt that it **existed**. Then after that there were other Nauseas; from time to time objects start existing in your hand.”*

Antoine, touching that pebble, unwittingly made a ritual gesture. The pebble here replaces the wall. You touch the wall and suddenly you feel that there is someone behind it. Someone alive (“damp”) and scary (“muddy”). Some kind of dead person coming back to life (when contacting you).

Antoine, touching different things, seems to keep touching the same pebble:

*“My hand is clutching the handle of the dessert knife. I **feel** this black wooden handle. My hand holds it. My hand. Personally, I would rather let this knife alone: what good is it to be always touching something? Objects are not made to be touched. It is better to slip between them, avoiding them as much as possible. Sometimes you take one of them in your hand and you have to drop it quickly. The knife falls on the plate.”*

It is as if Antoine's palm is palpating a dead man who comes back to life while continuing to decompose. Even so: it is thanks to its decomposition that it lives and moves. All the decaying parts of the dead man seem to become tentacles that reach out to our hero. For example, here Antoine gets on a tram and touches the red plush seat with the palm of his hand:

*“I lean my hand on the seat but pull it back hurriedly: it exists. This thing I’m sitting on, leaning my hand on, is called a seat. They made it purposely for people to sit on, they took leather, springs and cloth, they went to work with the idea of making a seat and when they finished, **that** was what they had made. They carried it here, into this car and the car is now rolling and jolting with its rattling windows, carrying this red thing in its bosom. I murmur: ‘It’s a seat,’ a little like an exorcism. But the word stays on my lips: it refuses to go and put itself on the thing. It stays what it is, with its red plush, thousands of little red paws in the air, all still, little dead paws. This enormous belly turned upward, bleeding, inflated—bloating with all its dead paws, this belly floating in this car, in this grey sky, is not a seat. It could just as well be a dead donkey tossed about in the water, floating*

with the current, belly in the air in a great grey river, a river of floods; and I could be sitting on the donkey's belly, my feet dangling in the clear water. Things are divorced from their names. They are there, grotesque, headstrong, gigantic and it seems ridiculous to call them seats or say anything at all about them: I am in the midst of things, nameless things. Alone, without words, defenceless, they surround me, are beneath me, behind me, above me."

The tram seat that Antoine touches is obviously reminiscent of the poem "A Carcass" ("Une charogne") by Charles Baudelaire, in which the poet invites his "Beautiful Lady" to contemplate the corpse of a large animal (most likely a horse):

*The flies buzzed and droned on these bowels of filth
Where an army of maggots arose,
Which flowed with a liquid and thickening stream
On the animate rags of her clothes.*

*And it rose and it fell, and pulsed like a wave,
Rushing and bubbling with health.
One could say that this carcass, blown with vague breath,
Lived in increasing itself.*

*And this whole teeming world made a musical sound
Like babbling brooks and the breeze,
Or the grain that a man with a winnowing-fan
Turns with a rhythmical ease.³⁹*

³⁹ Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride,
D'où sortaient de noirs bataillons
De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide
Le long de ces vivants haillons.

Tout cela descendait, montait comme une vague,
Ou s'élançait en pétillant ;
On eût dit que le corps, enflé d'un souffle vague,
Vivait en se multipliant.

Et ce monde rendait une étrange musique,

The decomposing animal seems to live precisely because of its decomposition into a multitude of particles, each of which moves on its own — as a living thing (“from time to time objects start existing”). The carrion “incarnates” the whole world, and especially the “Beautiful Lady” herself, which the author hastens to tell her (thus turning her into a zoomorphic “goddess of death”):

—*And you, in your turn, will be rotten as this:*

Horrible, filthy, undone,

O sun of my nature and star of my eyes,

*My passion, my angel in one!*⁴⁰

Antoine wants to run away from all those “thousands of <...> little dead paws”, ready to become alive:

*“A real panic took hold of me. I didn’t know where I was going. I ran along the docks, turned into the deserted streets in the Beauvoisis district; the houses watched my flight with their mournful eyes. I repeated with anguish: Where shall I go? where shall I go? **Anything** can happen. Sometimes, my heart pounding, I made a sudden right-about-turn: what was happening behind my back? Maybe it would start behind me and when I would turn around, suddenly, it would be too late. As long as I could stare at things nothing would happen: I looked at them as much as I could, pavements, houses, gaslights; my eyes went rapidly from one to the other, to catch them unawares, stop them in the midst of their metamorphosis. They didn’t look too natural, but I told myself forcibly: this is a gaslight, this is a drinking fountain, and I tried to reduce them to their everyday aspect by the power of my gaze. <...>*

Comme l’eau courante et le vent,
Ou le grain qu’un vanneur d’un mouvement rythmique
Agite et tourne dans son van.

⁴⁰ — Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,
À cette horrible infection,
Étoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,
Vous, mon ange et ma passion !

I suddenly came out on the Quai des Bassins du Nord. Fishing smacks and small yachts. I put my foot on a ring set in the stone. Here, far from houses, far from doors, I would have a moment of respite. A cork was floating on the calm, black-speckled water.

*‘And **under** the water? You haven’t thought what could be **under** the water.’*

A monster? A giant carapace? sunk in the mud? A dozen pairs of claws or fins labouring slowly in the slime. The monster rises. At the bottom of the water. I went nearer, watching every eddy and undulation. The cork stayed immobile among the black spots.’

The carapace of this monster apparently corresponds to the dry side of the very pebble that started it all, and “claws or fins labouring in the slime” — to its damp and muddy side.

Antoine runs away, and all around him are things ready to metamorphose into something like polyps that can grab him. All this is very similar to the creepy underwater world in Andersen's “The Little Mermaid” (as it appears during the mermaid's visit to the sea witch):

“And then the little mermaid went out from her garden, and took the road to the foaming whirlpools, behind which the sorceress lived. She had never been that way before: neither flowers nor grass grew there; nothing but bare, gray, sandy ground stretched out to the whirlpool, where the water, like foaming mill-wheels, whirled round everything that it seized, and cast it into the fathomless deep. Through the midst of these crushing whirlpools the little mermaid was obliged to pass, to reach the dominions of the sea witch; and also for a long distance the only road lay right across a quantity of warm, bubbling mire, called by the witch her turfmoor.

Beyond this stood her house, in the centre of a strange forest, in which all the trees and flowers were polypi, half animals and half plants; they looked like serpents with a hundred heads growing out of the ground. The branches were long slimy arms, with fingers like flexible worms, moving limb after limb from the root to the top. All that could be reached in the sea they seized upon, and held fast, so that it never escaped from their clutches. The little mermaid was so alarmed at what she

saw, that she stood still, and her heart beat with fear, and she was very nearly turning back; but she thought of the prince, and of the human soul for which she longed, and her courage returned. She fastened her long flowing hair round her head, so that the polypi might not seize hold of it. She laid her hands together across her bosom, and then she darted forward as a fish shoots through the water, between the supple arms and fingers of the ugly polypi, which were stretched out on each side of her. She saw that each held in its grasp something it had seized with its numerous little arms, as if they were iron bands. The white skeletons of human beings who had perished at sea, and had sunk down into the deep waters, skeletons of land animals, oars, rudders, and chests of ships were lying tightly grasped by their clinging arms; even a little mermaid, whom they had caught and strangled; and this seemed the most shocking of all to the little princess.

She now came to a space of marshy ground in the wood, where large, fat water-snakes were rolling in the mire, and showing their ugly, drab-colored bodies. In the midst of this spot stood a house, built with the bones of shipwrecked human beings. There sat the sea witch, allowing a toad to eat from her mouth, just as people sometimes feed a canary with a piece of sugar. She called the ugly water-snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl all over her bosom.

'I know what you want,' said the sea witch; 'it is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, and it will bring you to sorrow, my pretty princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail, and to have two supports instead of it, like human beings on earth, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may have an immortal soul.' And then the witch laughed so loud and disgustingly, that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground, and lay there wriggling about."

Andersen's sea witch is in no way inferior to Sartre's red plush seat or Baudelaire's dead horse.

Not only objects, but also the people the protagonist meets, as well as parts of a person's body, and even parts of our hero's own body (which Antoine perceives with alienation and fear), are subject to transformation, metamorphosis (into an insect or a crab moving its legs, into a wriggling worm):

“I see my hand spread out on the table. It lives—it is me. It opens, the fingers open and point. It is lying on its back. It shows me its fat belly. It looks like an animal turned upside down. The fingers are the paws. I amuse myself by moving them very rapidly, like the claws of a crab which has fallen on its back.

The crab is dead: the claws draw up and close over the belly of my hand.”

A complete metamorphosis also happens to the protagonist himself:

“I don’t know where to go, I stay planted in front of the cardboard chef. I don’t need to turn around to know they are watching me through the windows: they are watching my back with surprise and disgust; they thought I was like them, that I was a man, and I deceived them. I suddenly lost the appearance of a man and they saw a crab running backwards out of this human room. Now the unmasked intruder has fled: the show goes on. It annoys me to feel on my back this stirring of eyes and frightened thoughts.”

Antoine turns into a crab, as it were. Compare with the very beginning of Kafka's story “The Metamorphosis”:

“As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his domelike brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes.”

“Nature” has “started throbbing”, its laws have ceased to operate, the wall has disintegrated into separately existing living particles that have no name. And these particles are ready to attack you, and they look at you like eyes in Gogol's portrait. And even you yourself are just such a part (like a leg of an insect) — miserably thin and helplessly moving.

That's what a tarantula moving its legs is all about, for example the one in Denis Villeneuve's film “The Enemy”.

* * *

To understand how Nausea can be overcome, let's look at the tattered poster in Sartre's novel:

“This time I walked with both feet in the gutter. I cross the street: on the opposite sidewalk, a single gaslight, like a beacon at the extreme end of the earth, lights up a dilapidated fence, broken down in places.

Bits of old posters still clung to the boards. A fine face full of hatred, grimacing against a green background torn into the shape of a star; just below the nose someone had pencilled in a curling moustache. On another strip I could still decipher the word ‘purâtre’ from which red drops fall, drops of blood perhaps. The face and the word might have been part of the same poster. Now the poster is lacerated, the simple, necessary lines which united them have disappeared, but another unity has established itself between the twisted mouth, the drops of blood, the white letters, and the termination ‘âtre’: as though a restless and criminal passion were seeking to express itself by these mysterious signs. I can see the lights from the railroad shining between the boards. A long wall follows the fence.”

The fence and the wall are (in the “mental basis” of the plot) the wall of “twice two is four”. The poster is tattered — all rational connections have disintegrated. However, the disintegrated pieces have reconnected: “but another unity has established itself”. In other words, the tattered poster turned not into meaningless rubbish, but (unexpectedly and quite independently of any human intention) into a painting (for example, a surrealist one). Someone (apparently from the other side of the wall) “was seeking to express itself by these mysterious signs”. In short, the Tao is being revealed.

This is how a work of art comes into being. First, the artist (quite unexpectedly) sees the world alienated (and almost goes mad in the process): all the usual connections between things break down, each thing becomes unrecognisable and aggressive. Then (just as suddenly) all things connect — but in a completely different way and independently of the artist's will. They are so connected by someone standing behind

the things, on the other side of the wall. The artist embodies this new vision in his work (and the new connections reveal themselves only in the course of his work, giving him creative happiness at every turn along the way).

Here is an example of the emergence of new connections between familiar things in art — from the book “Auguste Rodin” (1903) by Rainer Maria Rilke:

“Rodin knows <...> that the body consists solely of scenes of life, a life that can become great and individual in any place, and he has the power to provide any part of this broad, variegated plane with the autonomy and richness of a whole. Just as the human body is a whole for Rodin only insofar as all its limbs and powers respond to one common (inner or outer) movement, so do the parts of various bodies come together of inner necessity to make up a single organism. <...> There is really just one single surface, which undergoes thousands of shifts and transformations.”

It is precisely such “parts of various bodies coming together by inner necessity” that Antoine perceives in the non-manmade work that emerges from the tattered poster. Of course, such a vision is accessible not only to an artist in the literal sense of the word, but also to any “artist in his or her soul”, so to speak. (And not only what appears before the eyes in the form of an image can be perceived artistically, but also what happens to a man or woman — the plot of his or her destiny, the cinema of his or her life).

Let us have a look at Tolstoy's novel “War and Peace” (1869), in which the sharp division of the perception of reality into the nauseating and the artistic seems to be reflected in its very title. “War” is the disintegration of the bonds between things; “peace”, on the other hand, is the state of things after “another unity has established itself”. (In the words of Ecclesiastes: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: <...> a time to tear, and a time to sew; <...> a time for war, and a time for peace.”)

Here is the breakdown of the connections between things (objects and phenomena):

“ ‘Then it must be so!’ thought Prince Andrey as he drove out of the avenue from the house at Bald Hills. ‘She, poor innocent creature, is left to be victimized by an old man who has outlived his wits. The old man feels he is guilty, but cannot change

himself. My boy is growing up and rejoices in life, in which like everybody else he will deceive or be deceived. And I am off to the army. Why? I myself don't know. I want to meet that man whom I despise, so as to give him a chance to kill and laugh at me!'

These conditions of life had been the same before, but then they were all connected, while now they had all tumbled to pieces. Only senseless things, lacking coherence, presented themselves one after another to Prince Andrey's mind."

"And from the height of this perception all that had previously tormented and preoccupied him suddenly became illumined by a cold white light without shadows, without perspective, without distinction of outline. All life appeared to him like magic-lantern pictures at which he had long been gazing by artificial light through a glass. Now he suddenly saw those badly daubed pictures in clear daylight and without a glass. 'Yes, yes! There they are, those false images that agitated, enraptured, and tormented me,' said he to himself, passing in review the principal pictures of the magic lantern of life and regarding them now in the cold white daylight of his clear perception of death. 'There they are, those rudely painted figures that once seemed splendid and mysterious. Glory, the good of society, love of a woman, the Fatherland itself—how important these pictures appeared to me, with what profound meaning they seemed to be filled! And it is all so simple, pale, and crude in the cold white light of this morning which I feel is dawning for me.' "

The same alienating light is in "Nausea."

"A perfect day to turn back to one's self: these cold clarities which the sun projects like a judgment shorn of pity, over all creatures—enter through my eyes; I am illuminated within by a diminishing light («je suis éclairé, au-dedans, par une lumière appauvrissante»)." "

Or, in Tolstoy we read:

"From the moment Pierre had witnessed those terrible murders committed by men who did not wish to commit them, it was as if the mainspring of his life, on which everything depended and which made everything appear alive, had suddenly been wrenched out and everything had collapsed into a heap of meaningless rubbish."

In Sartre:

“I have a broken spring: I can move my eyes but not my head. The head is all pliable and elastic, as though it had been simply set on my neck; if I turn it, it will fall off.”

Here is a famous description of opera (which Tolstoy disliked as a genre — it was for him an example of fake, meaningless action):

“The floor of the stage consisted of smooth boards, at the sides was some painted cardboard representing trees, and at the back was a cloth stretched over boards. In the center of the stage sat some girls in red bodices and white skirts. One very fat girl in a white silk dress sat apart on a low bench, to the back of which a piece of green cardboard was glued. They all sang something. When they had finished their song the girl in white went up to the prompter’s box and a man with tight silk trousers over his stout legs, and holding a plume and a dagger, went up to her and began singing, waving his arms about.

First the man in the tight trousers sang alone, then she sang, then they both paused while the orchestra played and the man fingered the hand of the girl in white, obviously awaiting the beat to start singing with her. They sang together and everyone in the theater began clapping and shouting, while the man and woman on the stage — who represented lovers — began smiling, spreading out their arms, and bowing.”

The performance is going on, all the old connections seem to be preserved in it.

But for Tolstoy's protagonist, watching this performance, they have already disintegrated. The poster has ruptured. And here is life itself, which is similar to a badly staged and poorly performed opera:

“The little princess entered the room. The passage broke off in the middle, a cry was heard, then Princess Mary’s heavy tread and the sound of kissing. When Prince Andrey went in the two princesses, who had only met once before for a short time at his wedding, were in each other’s arms warmly pressing their lips to whatever place they happened to touch. Mademoiselle Bourienne stood near them pressing her hand to her heart, with a beatific smile and obviously equally ready to cry or to laugh. Prince Andrey shrugged his shoulders and frowned, as lovers of

music do when they hear a false note. The two women let go of one another, and then, as if afraid of being too late, seized each other's hands, kissing them and pulling them away, and again began kissing each other on the face, and then to Prince Andrey's surprise both began to cry and kissed again. <...>

The little princess talked incessantly, her short, downy upper lip continually and rapidly touching her rosy nether lip when necessary [literally: "The short upper lip with its little moustache flickered downwards now and then for a moment, touching, where necessary, the ruddy lower lip..."] and drawing up again next moment when her face broke into a smile of glittering teeth and sparkling eyes."

In this movement of the "short, downy upper lip" one can already recognise the insect of Kafka or Sartre. Here is a similar example of alienated vision of reality from "Nausea" (people are acting like puppets):

"On the other side of the street a gentleman, holding his wife by the arm, has just whispered a few words in her ear and has started to smile. She immediately wipes all expression from her chalky, cream coloured face and blindly takes a few steps. There is no mistaking these signs: they are going to greet somebody. Indeed, after a moment, the gentleman throws his hands up. When his fingers reach his felt hat, they hesitate a second before coming down delicately on the crown. While he slowly raises his hat, bowing his head a little to help its removal, his wife gives a little start and forces a young smile on her face. A bowing shadow passes them: but their twin smiles do not disappear immediately: they stay on their lips a few instants by a sort of magnetism. The lady and gentleman have regained their impassibility by the time they pass me, but a certain air of gaiety still lingers around their mouths."

Victor Shklovsky, in his article "Art as Device" (1917), citing Tolstoy's description of the opera, called such a technique "estrangement" or "defamiliarisation" ('ostranénie' [making-strange]): "If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. Thus, for example, all of our habits retreat into the area of the unconscious automatic <...> [Art] exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things

as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object itself is not important.*”

To “recover the sensation of life”, “to make one feel things” — this is exactly what so horrified Antoine (“from time to time objects start existing in your hand”). And they cannot be recognised or named (“But the word stays on my lips: it refuses to go and put itself on the thing.”).

Defamiliarisation, the root of art, can be either with a “minus” sign or with a “plus” sign (Sartre says: “... it's like the Nausea and yet it's just the opposite.”). And a plus can only come after a minus. It is necessary that the poster should be torn, then a surprising picture may (or may not — there is a risk here) appear in its place. First “war” — and only then “peace”.

Compare with the words of Pablo Picasso: “Every act of creation is initially an act of destruction.” Or with Nabokov's words from the essay “The Creative Writer”: “... the creative process consists as it were of two stages: a complete dislocation or dissociation of things, and their association in terms of a new harmony.” Or with Hans Castorp's maxim from Thomas Mann's novel “The Magic Mountain”: “There are two ways to life: one is the regular, direct and good way; the other is bad [*but can also be translated as ‘severe / dangerous’*], it leads through death, and that is the way of genius.” (“Zum Leben gibt es zwei Wege: Der eine ist der gewöhnliche, direkte und brave. Der andere ist schlimm, er führt über den Tod, und das ist der geniale Weg!”).

Let us look at the “defamiliarisation” with a plus sign in “War and Peace”, that is, an example of “peace” in Tolstoy's writing (such moments of “altered consciousness” in the characters of Tolstoy's various works are by no means rare): *“Again checking his horses, Nicholas looked around him. They were still surrounded by the magic plain bathed in moonlight and spangled with stars.*

‘Zakhar is shouting that I should turn to the left, but why to the left?’ thought Nicholas. ‘Are we getting to the Melyukovs?’ Is this Melyukovka? Heaven only knows where we are going, and heaven knows what is happening to us — but it is very strange and pleasant whatever it is.’ And he looked round in the sleigh.

‘Look, his mustache and eyelashes are all white!’ said one of the strange, pretty, unfamiliar people — the one with fine eyebrows and mustache.

‘I think this used to be Natasha,’ thought Nicholas, ‘and that was Madame Schoss, but perhaps it’s not, and this Circassian with the mustache I don’t know, but I love her.’

‘Aren’t you cold?’ he asked.

They did not answer but began to laugh. Dimmler from the sleigh behind shouted something — probably something funny — but they could not make out what he said.

‘Yes, yes!’ some voices answered, laughing.

‘But here was a fairy forest with black moving shadows, and a glitter of diamonds and a flight of marble steps and the silver roofs of fairy buildings and the shrill yells of some animals. And if this is really Melyukovka, it is still stranger that we drove heaven knows where and have come to Melyukovka,’ thought Nicholas.”

“And if this is really Melyukovka, it is still stranger that we drove heaven knows where and have come to Melyukovka.” And if this is really me — and I am standing here, it is even stranger that I have been there, behind the wall, and talked to my ancestor, and not only talked to him, but coincided with him, and was him, and now I am standing here — and it is me.

* * *

After getting off the tram (in which he was almost eaten by a red plush seat), Antoine enters the city park. He looks at the chestnut tree and its root. And then there is a great alienation, a “defamiliarisation”. Antoine suddenly sees that all connections between things are far-fetched; in fact, each thing is a thing in its own right (and not

defined by its belonging to any category of things or by any relation to other things). Every thing is absurd, superfluous (for example, this chestnut root is absurd). Everything begins with the fact that a thing simply exists. (If it were not there, what would you do with all your connections?)

Just as absurd as any thing is Antoine himself. He realises this by looking at the root of a chestnut tree:

“So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn’t remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me. Then I had this vision.

*“It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of “existence.” I was like the others, like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery. I said, like them, “The ocean **is** green; that white speck up there **is** a seagull,” but I didn’t feel that it existed or that the seagull was an “existing seagull”; usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is **us**, you can’t say two words without mentioning it, but you can never touch it. When I believed I was thinking about it, I must believe that I was thinking nothing, my head was empty, or there was just one word in my head, the word “to be.” Or else I was thinking . . . how can I explain it? I was thinking of **belonging**, I was telling myself that the sea belonged to the class of green objects, or that the green was a part of the quality of the sea. Even when I looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed: they looked like scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their resistance. But that all happened on the surface. If anyone had asked me what existence was, I would have answered, in good faith, that it was nothing, simply an empty form which was added to external things without changing anything in their nature. And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an*

abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. <...>

*I kept myself from making the slightest movement, but I didn't need to move in order to see, behind the trees, the blue columns and the lamp posts of the bandstand and the Velleda, in the midst of a mountain of laurel. All these objects ... how can I explain? They inconvenienced me; I would have liked them to exist less strongly, more dryly, in a more abstract way, with more reserve. The chestnut tree pressed itself against my eyes. Green rust covered it half-way up; the bark, black and swollen, looked like boiled leather. <...> **In the way** [«de trop»]: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones. In vain I tried to **count** the chestnut trees, to **locate** them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees: each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself, and overflowed. Of these relations (which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the crumbling of the human world, measures, quantities, and directions)—I felt myself to be the arbitrator; they no longer had their teeth into things. **In the way**, the chestnut tree there, opposite me, a little to the left. **In the way**, the Velleda ... And I—soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling with dismal thoughts—I, too, was **In the way**. <...>*

*“The word absurdity is coming to life under my pen; a little while ago, in the garden, I couldn't find it, but neither was I looking for it, I didn't need it: I thought without words, **on** things, **with** things. Absurdity was not an idea in my head, or the sound of a voice, only this long serpent dead at my feet, this wooden serpent. Serpent or claw or root or vulture's talon, what difference does it make. And without formulating anything clearly, I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nauseas, to my own life. In fact, all that I could grasp beyond that returns to this fundamental absurdity. Absurdity: another word; I struggle against words; down there I touched the thing. But I wanted to fix the absolute character of this absurdity here. A movement, an event in the tiny coloured world of men is only relatively absurd: by relation to the accompanying circumstances. A madman's*

ravings, for example, are absurd in relation to the situation in which he finds himself, but not in relation to his delirium. But a little while ago I made an experiment with the absolute or the absurd. This root—there was nothing in relation to which it was absurd. Oh, how can I put it in words? Absurd: in relation to the stones, the tufts of yellow grass, the dry mud, the tree, the sky, the green benches. Absurd, irreducible; nothing—not even a profound, secret upheaval of nature—could explain it. Evidently I did not know everything, I had not seen the seeds sprout, or the tree grow. But faced with this great wrinkled paw, neither ignorance nor knowledge was important: the world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence. A circle is not absurd, it is clearly explained by the rotation of a straight segment around one of its extremities. But neither does a circle exist. This root, on the other hand, existed in such a way that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, brought me back unceasingly to its own existence. In vain to repeat: “This is a root”—it didn’t work any more. I saw clearly that you could not pass from its function as a root, as a breathing pump, **to that**, to this hard and compact skin of a sea lion, to this oily, callous, headstrong look. The function explained nothing: it allowed you to understand generally that it was a root, but not **that one** at all. <...>

How long will this fascination last? I **was** the root of the chestnut tree. Or rather I was entirely conscious of its existence. Still detached from it—since I was conscious of it—yet lost in it, nothing but it. <...>

I got up and went out. Once at the gate, I turned back. Then the garden smiled at me. I leaned against the gate and watched for a long time. The smile of the trees, of the laurel, **meant** something; that was the real secret of existence. I remembered one Sunday, not more than three weeks ago, I had already detected everywhere a sort of conspiratorial air. Was it in my intention? I felt with boredom that I had no way of understanding. No way. Yet it was there, waiting, looking at one. It was there on the trunk of the chestnut tree ... it was **the** chestnut tree.”

Antoine saw both the chestnut root and himself in the same detached, alienated way: he is as “absurd” as any thing, as any being or phenomenon. He is himself, he simply “exists”.

In Leo Tolstoy's story “Cossacks” (1863) Dmitri Olenin, being swarmed by mosquitoes in the forest, realised the same thing. However, this perception fills him with happiness:

“ ‘...above me, flying in among the leaves which to them seem enormous islands, mosquitoes hang in the air and buzz: one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million mosquitoes, and all of them buzz something or other and each one of them is separate from all else and is just such a separate Dmitri Olenin as I am myself.’ He vividly imagined what the mosquitoes buzzed: ‘This way, this way, lads! Here’s some one we can eat!’ They buzzed and stuck to him. And it was clear to him that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all around him.”

As stated in the ancient Chinese (Taoist) book “Zhuang-zi”:

“We talk of the Nine Provinces where men are most numerous, and yet of the whole area where grain and foods are grown and where boats and carts pass back and forth, man occupies only one fraction. Compared to the ten thousand things, is he not like one little hair on the body of a horse?”

* * *

In the state of “defamiliarisation” (with the “minus” sign), words cease to correspond to things, as if they fall away from them, slip off them (“The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface.”).

You probably know the feeling: you start repeating a word and at a certain point something strange happens: the word becomes unrecognisable. It is as if the word is just an empty, meaningless shell, an unnecessary peel.

In the novel “War and Peace”, the word ‘Madagascar’ pops up in the mind of Natasha, who who is pining and distraught in Prince Andrey's absence — and this word expresses the meaninglessness and dreariness of everything that surrounds her and what is happening around her (and along with the emergence of this alienated word, Natasha experiences a state of “already seen” — of “déjà-vu”, akin to “defamiliarisation”):

“ ‘O Lord, O Lord, it’s always the same! Oh, where am I to go? What am I to do with myself?’ And tapping with her heels, she ran quickly upstairs to see Vogel and his wife who lived on the upper story.

Two governesses were sitting with the Vogels at a table, on which were plates of raisins, walnuts, and almonds. The governesses were discussing whether it was cheaper to live in Moscow or Odessa. Natasha sat down, listened to their talk with a serious and thoughtful air, and then got up again.

‘The island of Madagascar,’ she said, ‘Ma-da-gas-car,’ she repeated, articulating each syllable distinctly, and, not replying to Madame Schoss who asked her what she was saying, she went out of the room.

Her brother Petya was upstairs too; with the man in attendance on him he was preparing fireworks to let off that night.

‘Petya! Petya!’ she called to him. ‘Carry me downstairs.’

Petya ran up and offered her his back. She jumped on it, putting her arms round his neck, and he pranced along with her.

‘No, don’t ... the island of Madagascar!’ she said, and jumping off his back she went downstairs. <...>

Sonya passed to the pantry with a glass in her hand. Natasha glanced at her and at the crack in the pantry door, and it seemed to her that she remembered the light falling through that crack once before and Sonya passing with a glass in her hand.

‘Yes it was exactly the same,’ thought Natasha.

‘Sonya, what is this?’ she cried, twanging a thick string.

‘Oh, you are there!’ said Sonya with a start, and came near and listened. ‘I don’t know. A storm?’ she ventured timidly, afraid of being wrong.

'There! That's just how she started and just how she came up smiling timidly when all this happened before,' thought Natasha, 'and in just the same way I thought there was something lacking in her.' "

We see a similar defamiliarisation of a single word in Nabokov's short story "Terror" (1926). (The story was translated into German in 1928 and, according to Nabokov, may have influenced Sartre's "Nausea".) And defamiliarisation — or, as Nabokov calls it, "that fleeting sensation of estrangedness" — is connected in the story with not recognising oneself in the mirror, that is, with defamiliarisation of oneself, that is, with the appearance of an antipodean double in the mirror:

"Here is what sometimes happened to me: after spending the first part of the night at my desk—that part when night trudges heavily uphill—I would emerge from the trance of my task at the exact moment when night had reached the summit and was teetering on that crest, ready to roll down into the haze of dawn; I would get up from my chair, feeling chilly and utterly spent, turn on the light in my bedroom, and suddenly see myself in the looking glass. Then it would go like this: during the time I had been deep at work, I had grown disacquainted with myself, a sensation akin to what one may experience when meeting a close friend after years of separation: for a few empty, lucid, but numb moments you see him in an entirely different light even though you realize that the frost of this mysterious anesthesia will presently wear off, and the person you are looking at will revive, glow with warmth, resume his old place, becoming again so familiar that no effort of the will could possibly make you recapture that fleeting sensation of estrangedness. Precisely thus I now stood considering my own reflection in the glass and failing to recognize it as mine. And the more keenly I examined my face—those unblinking alien eyes, that sheen of tiny hairs along the jaw, that shade along the nose—and the more insistently I told myself 'This is I, this is So-and-so,' the less clear it became why this should be "I," the harder I found it to make the face in the mirror merge with that "I" whose identity I failed to grasp. When I spoke of my odd sensations, people justly observed that the path I had taken led to the madhouse. <...> When I came out on the street, I suddenly saw the world such as it really is. You see, we find comfort in telling ourselves that

the world could not exist without us, that it exists only inasmuch as we ourselves exist, inasmuch as we can represent it to ourselves. Death, infinite space, galaxies, all this is frightening, exactly because it transcends the limits of our perception. Well—on that terrible day when, devastated by a sleepless night, I stepped out into the center of an incidental city, and saw houses, trees, automobiles, people, my mind abruptly refused to accept them as "houses," "trees," and so forth—as something connected with ordinary human life. My line of communication with the world snapped, I was on my own and the world was on its own, and that world was devoid of sense. I saw the actual essence of all things. I looked at houses and they had lost their usual meaning—that is, all that we think when looking at a house: a certain architectural style, the sort of rooms inside, ugly house, comfortable house—all this had evaporated, leaving nothing but an absurd shell, the same way an absurd sound is left after one has repeated sufficiently long the commonest word without heeding its meaning: house, howss, whowss. It was the same with trees, the same with people. I understood the horror of a human face. Anatomy, sexual distinctions, the notion of "legs," "arms," "clothes"—all that was abolished, and there remained in front of me a mere something—not even a creature, for that too is a human concept, but merely something moving past. <...> Overwhelmed with terror, I sought support in some basic idea, some better brick than the Cartesian one, with the help of which to begin the reconstruction of the simple, natural, habitual world as we know it. By that time I was resting, I believe, on the bench of a public park. I have no precise recollection of my actions. Just as a man who is having a heart attack on a sidewalk does not give a hoot for the passersby, the sun, the beauty of an ancient cathedral, and has only one concern: to breathe, so I too had but one desire: not to go mad. I am convinced that nobody ever saw the world the way I saw it during those moments, in all its terrifying nakedness and terrifying absurdity. Near me a dog was sniffing the snow. I was tortured by my efforts to recognize what "dog" might mean, and because I had been staring at it hard, it crept up to me trustingly, and I felt so nauseated that I got up from the bench and walked away. It was then that my terror reached its highest point. I gave up struggling. I was no longer a man, but a naked

eye, an aimless glance moving in an absurd world. The very sight of a human face made me want to scream."

The same thing is said by Ulrich (to his sister) in Robert Musil's novel "The Man Without Qualities" (volume two, chapter "Moonbeams by Sunlight"):

" 'The self never grasps its impressions and utterances singly, but always in context, in real or imagined, similar or dissimilar, harmony with something else; and so everything that has a name leans on everything else in regular rows, as a link in large and incalculable unities, one relying on another and all penetrated by a common tension. But for that reason,' he suddenly went on, differently, 'if for some reason these associations fail and none of them addresses the internal series of orders, one is immediately left again to face an indescribable and inhuman creation, indeed a disavowed and formless one. Understanding gives way to irrepressible astonishment, and the smallest experience—of this tiny blade of grass, or the gentle sounds when your lips over there utter a word—becomes something incomparable, lonely as the world, possessed of an unfathomable selfishness and radiating a profound narcosis...!' "

Unsurprisingly (with that kind of reasoning), Ulrich acquires an antipodean double. It's "the woman-killer Moosbrugger":

"For some unknown reason Moosbrugger concerned him more deeply than the life he himself was leading. Moosbrugger seized him like an obscure poem in which everything is slightly distorted and displaced, and reveals a drifting meaning fragmented in the depths of the mind."

In short, such is the first (and deadly) step in art: "My line of communication with the world snapped <...> all this had evaporated, leaving nothing but an absurd shell, the same way an absurd sound is left after one has repeatedly sufficiently long the commonest word without heeding its meaning." Here is another example, from Nabokov's novel "Gift":

*"You know, like taking a simple word, say 'ceiling' and seeing it as 'sealing' or 'sea-ling' until it becomes completely strange and feral, something like 'iceling' or 'inglice.' I think that some day that will happen to the whole of life."*⁴¹

(Remember, in the already quoted passage from the novel "The Original of Laura", it was said of the creep on the wall: "Finally it gave up — as some day life will give up — bothering me.")

The word must go through "defamiliarisation", through "war", in order to be able to find itself in "peace". It must lose its meaning as an individual word (to become "completely strange and feral") in order to be reflected in other words, to be lost in them — and thus to be reborn. And then it can touch the thing itself (in "Nausea" Antoine thinks: "... I struggle against words; down there I touched the thing.").

Let's go back to what Nabokov said in his essay "The Creative Writer" and continue the quote:

"... the creative process consists as it were of two stages: a complete dislocation or dissociation of things, and their association in terms of a new harmony. The first stage presupposes the capacity of the artist to make any object depart from its traditional series,—seeing for instance a mailbox utterly apart from the idea of posting letters, or the face of a person one knows in a new way quite unrelated to one's knowledge of him. Children possess something of that capacity—at least the good dreamy kind of child does, the child that indulges in the exquisite game of fondling a most ordinary word such as "chair" until gradually it loses all contact with the object; its sense peels off, and what subsists in the mind is the core of the word, something plumper and more alive than any known chair and colored perhaps a kind of pale leathery blue if moreover the child is endowed with the mental luxury of colored hearing. <...> The passage from the dissociative stage to the associative one is thus marked by a kind of spiritual thrill which in English is very loosely termed "inspiration." <...> It is a combined sensation of having the whole universe entering you and of yourself wholly dissolving in the universe

⁴¹ «Знаешь: потолок, па-та-лок, pas ta loque, патолог, — и так далее, — пока "потолок" не становится совершенно чужим и одичалым, как "локотоп" или "покотол". Я думаю, что когда-нибудь со всей жизнью так будет».

surrounding you. It is the prison wall of the ego suddenly crumbling away with the non-ego rushing in from the outside to save the prisoner—who is already dancing in the open.”

“Non-ego”, coming to “ego” through the broken wall, is, in fact, the antipodean double. It should be noted, however, that such a double can be both liberating — for the creative person, so to speak, for the winner — and destructive, that is, bringing ruin or madness to the loser (the one to whom the “non-ego” appears only as a terrible shadow of his “ego”, who is unable to connect with the universe around him). Nabokov says the following about this in the same article:

“A madman is reluctant to look at himself in a mirror because the face he sees is not his own: his personality is beheaded; that of the artist is increased. <...> Lunatics are lunatics just because they have thoroughly and recklessly dismembered a familiar world but have not the power—or have lost the power—to create a new one as harmonious as the old. The artist on the other hand disconnects what he chooses and while doing so he is aware that something in him is aware of the final result.”

In Meyrink's novel “The Golem”, the hero feels the terror of an approaching antipodean double (the Golem) — and all words become meaningless to him:

“I started saying words out loud, any words that came into my head: “prince”, “tree”, “child”, “book”, and repeating them mechanically until they suddenly stood before me, naked, stripped of sense, fearful sounds from a distant, barbaric past, and I had to cudgel my brains to rediscover their meaning: p-r-i-n-c-e? b-o-o-k?

Had I gone mad? Or was I dead? I pinched myself to see.

‘Stand up,’ I commanded. ‘Sit down in that chair.’

I collapsed into the armchair.

If only death would come! If only I could escape from the sense of this intangible, lurking presence! ‘I won’t!’ I screamed. ‘I WON’T! – Can’t you hear me?!’

Drained of all strength, I slumped back into the chair; incapable of thought, incapable of action, I stared dully into space. <...>

I slowly realised there was a strange being standing there — perhaps had been standing before me since I had sat down in the chair — holding out his hand towards me. It was a grey, broad-shouldered creature, about the size of a sturdily built human, leaning on a knotted, corkscrew stick of white wood. Where the head should have been I could see nothing but a sphere of pale mist. The apparition gave off a dismal odour of sandalwood and damp slate.

I was in the grip of a feeling of utter helplessness, which almost robbed me of my senses. All the torment, which for weeks had been gnawing at my nerves, had condensed into mortal fear and taken shape in this abortion.”

So, in the destruction of the habitual perception of words, the antipodean double is to be blamed. But he also restores the perception of the word in a person, renewing it. There is a direct connection between doubleness and artistry. Artistry is based on repetition, both in poetry and prose (“From what depth is this re-nonsense?” — is said in “Lolita”). The double-antipode himself is the embodied “re-nonsense”, the male hypostasis of the Muse. Tracking down the repetitions in one's destiny summons the double, opens doors for the double. This is what happens in Vladimir Nabokov's “Despair” (1930), a mocking, autoparodic story (it could be called “The Anti-double”):

“Once again I looked at the yellow signpost, and walked through the wood with my mind already plotting; again on an autumn day my wife and I stood watching a leaf which fell to meet its reflection; and there was I myself, softly falling into a Saxon town full of strange repetitions, and there was my double softly rising to meet me.”

This is what concerns the “work of fate” (an expression from Nabokov's novel “Gift”, 1938), as well as the construction of prose (repetitions in the fabula). And here about the relation of the double to poetry (ibid.):

“I liked, as I like still, to make words look self-conscious and foolish, to bind them by the mock marriage of a pun, to turn them inside out, to come upon them

unawares. What is this jest in majesty? This ass in passion? How do God and Devil combine to form a live dog? ”⁴²

“I liked, as I like still, to make words look self-conscious and foolish, to bind them by the mock marriage of a pun, to turn them inside out, to come upon them unawares. What is this jest in majesty? This ass in passion? How do God and Devil combine to form a live dog?

For several years I was haunted by a very singular and very nasty dream: I dreamed I was standing in the middle of a long passage with a door at the bottom, and passionately wanting, but not daring to go and open it, and then deciding at last to go, which I accordingly did; but at once awoke with a groan, for what I saw there was unimaginably terrible; to wit, a perfectly empty, newly whitewashed room. That was all, but it was so terrible that I never could hold out ...” [Such a room would have been comfortable for Gregor Zamza to crawl around in]. <...>

Bold and scoffing but inwardly tortured

(O, my soul, will your torch not ignite?),

From the porch of your God and His orchard

Why take off for the Earth and the night?⁴³

My own, my own! My juvenile experiments in the senseless sounds ... Now, there is one thing I should like to know: was I endowed in those days with any so-called criminal inclinations? Did my adolescence, so dun and dull to all appearances, secrete the possibility of producing a lawbreaker of genius? Or was I, perhaps, only making my way along that ordinary corridor of my dreams, time after time shrieking with horror at finding the room empty, and then one unforgettable day finding it empty no more — there was my double softly rising to meet me.”

We see doubleness in words (the words "zuBRa" and "aRBuz" are mirrored doubles). (I bring the play of sounds from the Russian text, as it is less skilful in the

⁴² «Мне нравилось — и до сих пор нравится — ставить слова в глупое положение, сочетать их шутовской свадьбой каламбура, выворачивать наизнанку, заставлять их врасплох. Что делает советский ветер в слове ветеринар? Откуда томат в автомате? Как из зубра сделать арбуз?»

⁴³ Хохоча, отвечая находчиво,
(отлучиться ты очень не прочь!),
от лучей, от отчаянья отчего,
Отчего ты отчалила в ночь?

English translation.) The poetic text cited by the narrator is also based on doubleness: “HoHoCha, otveCHaya naHodChivo...”. H — H-CH — CH-H — CH. Here it is, the double coming out to meet the protagonist (this is how the corridor leading to the double is arranged). Here, of course, is an auto-parody (the hero of the story is talentless and his double is not real), but the easier it is to see the technique of contact with the double.

The rearrangement of letters, by the way, is a common joke of the double-antipode. Look at the overcoat that Petrovich offers to make for Akaky Akakievich:

“Akaky Akakiyevich tried again to say something about mending, but Petrovich refused to listen and said, ‘I shall most certainly sew you a new one. Depend upon it, sir, I shall make every effort. And seeing as it's now the fashion, we could even have little silver appliqué⁴⁴ clasps to fasten the collar.’ ”

LaPKi — aPLiKe. It's already poetry.

(Look, for example, at Pushkin's line from the poem “Autumn”: “uNylaya poRa! oCHEy oCHaRoVanie!” (A dreary time! An enchantment for the eyes!): N — R-CH — CH-R — N.)⁴⁵

* * *

In the line “A host, of golden daffodils” of the famous poem by William Wordsworth (When all at once I saw a crowd, / A host, of golden daffodils) it is easy to notice the following play of consonant sounds:

A host, oF goLDen DaFFoDiLs

F—L—D—D—F—D—L

Apart from the simple repetition of individual sounds, we notice here mirror pairs of sounds — pairs-antipodes (FD—DF; LD—DL).

The poem itself also has a mirror structure: the poet meets golden daffodils on his way and undergoes a metamorphosis in his soul. Golden daffodils appear to the poet as a luminous infinite element, nodding and winking at him, drawing his soul

⁴⁴ In Russian: «лапки под апплике» [láпки pod apliké].

⁴⁵ «уНылая поРа! оЧей оЧаРоВаНье!».

into a blissful dance. In short, here is our familiar code (hero → element of nature → transfigured, initiated hero):

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

As a matter of fact, the very first line foreshadowed a meeting with golden daffodils — with the natural element serving as a mirror:

I wanDereD LoneLy as a cLouD

D—D—L—L—L—D (mirroring pairs of sounds: DL—LD)

The sound of a word is conventional, the sound composition of a word is only a sign of its meaning (and these conventional signs are different in different languages). However, in the poem the word ceases to be a conventional sign, ceases to be a random set of sounds. When we read Wordsworth's poem, we realise that the word 'daffodils' must sound like this, because daffodils DanCe, because their look "my heart with pLeasure FILLS", because "They FLash upon that inwarD eye / Which is the bLISS of SoLituDe", because they are like stars that "twInkLe on the mILkY way".

Moreover, the word 'daffodils' hooks, involves in its dance all the other sounds of the poem (which are not part of the word itself). For example, 'daffodils' echoes the word 'golden' — and through the word 'golden' attracts the sounds of **G** and **N** to itself. **G** then echoes in 'glee', 'gay', 'gazed', **N** echoes in 'continuous', 'shine', 'twinkle', 'never-ending', in 'jocund company' — and especially in 'dances'.

Some sounds are attached to the sounds of the word 'daffodils' through rhythmic repetition. For example, the repeated and foreshadowing rhythm of the dance sound **B** in the line "Beside the lake, beneath the trees" is reflected in the rhythmic repetition of the sound **D** in the last line of the poem: "And dances with the daffodils."

In the line "And twinkle on the milky way" we hear the same rhythmic (dancing) repetition of the consonant sounds, moreover, mirrored: WKL—LKW.

The poem unfolds, branches out, explains the word 'daffodils'. 'Daffodils' is the queen bee, and all the other words, like worker bees, are produced by it and serve it. Some words are directly consonant with this main word — attached to the magnet itself, others are attached to these already magnetised words.

Any word can be turned from a worker bee into a queen bee. In the poem, each word breaks off into its constituent sounds so that these sounds, once combined with the sounds of other words, return to it. It is like the hero of a fairy tale being chopped up and then brought back to life — and he turns out to be more handsome than before. Each word in the poem undergoes a rite of passage to become, so to speak, a big word — a word-poem, a word-artwork — endowed with a meaningful sound: phonetically justified and rhythmically complete. (Compare with what is said in the Avatamsaka-sutra): “In Indra's heaven there is, it is said, a string of pearls, selected in such a way that if you look at one pearl, you will see all others reflected in it. And in the same way every thing in the world is not simply itself, but encloses all other things and is in fact everything else.”)

Look, by the way, at the word ‘daffodils’ itself — doesn't it have a mirror inserted in it?

* * *

This is what the children once told me after listening to the word ‘metro’:

M — slowing motion, the train is coming up; E — the train is pushing through the air flowing around it; TR — it shows braking, stopping, and then the subsequent acceleration, the roar of the departing train; O — the train is going into the tunnel, pulling the flow of air behind it, leaving emptiness and echoes.

It is easy to see that words containing the same sounds were used to explain the non-randomness of the sound composition of the word ‘metro’: to explain the M sound — the words ‘motion’, ‘comes up’; to explain the E sound — the words ‘train’, ‘air’, ‘around’; to explain the T sound — ‘stopping’, ‘departing’; to explain the R sound — ‘braking’, ‘acceleration’, ‘roar’, ‘departing’, ‘train’; to explain the O sound — ‘goes’, ‘into’, ‘flow’, ‘echo’, even ‘tunnel’.

It turns out that interpreters expand, extend the word ‘metro’, turning it into a kind of poem.

And then a surprising side effect occurs: our test word, like a poem, will acquire rhythmic completeness, loopedness (for example, in the word ‘metro’ the train comes — and goes away). A kind of suspended moment of time — a small immortality.

Such perception of words is common not only for the poet, but also for any person who has reached the state of defamiliarisation with a plus sign — the state of “peace”.

* * *

Poetry gives power over the world — not the kind of power that Alexander the Great or Napoleon aspired to, of course, but the kind that is felt, for instance, in Virginia Woolf's “Mrs. Dalloway” (1925) by a World War I veteran, Septimus Smith, who has gone mad. He discovers a new religion (in which, however, one can see the Tao): *“But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion— ‘Septimus!’ said Rezia. He started violently. People must notice.”*

The same thing happens to the protagonist of Gérard de Nerval's story “Aurélia”: *“From the moment when I became certain that I was being subjected to certain trials as a sacred rite of initiation, a feeling of invincibility came over me. I deemed myself a hero living under the watchful eye of the gods; all things in nature took on new aspects, and secret voices spoke to me from plants, trees, animals, even the humblest insects, to inform and encourage me. In my companions' speech there were mysterious turns of phrase whose secret meaning I was able to comprehend; objects without form or life lent themselves voluntarily to my mental calculations: from the*

configuration of pebbles, from the shape of corners, cracks or apertures, from the indentations of leaves, from colors, odors and sounds, I saw emerge hitherto-unrecognized, harmonious patterns.”

That's coming from a deranged person. So you'd have to be crazy to see like that? The danger is undoubtedly there. In the story “Signs and Symbols” (1948), Nabokov writes about his protagonist (who is treating reality as if it is his dream):

“The system of his delusions had been the subject of an elaborate paper in a scientific monthly, but long before that she and her husband had puzzled it out for themselves. ‘Referential mania,’ Herman Brink had called it. In these very rare cases the patient imagines that everything happening around him is a veiled reference to his personality and existence. <...> Pebbles or stains or sun flecks form patterns representing in some awful way messages which he must intercept. Everything is a cipher and of everything he is the theme.”

I think it's like in art — like when you write, say, a poem. It's not about constant, inevitably boring and ridiculous attempts to decipher everything, but about special moments that are important to notice and to be ready for. And then — at such a special moment — you will feel that the outer world coincides with your inner music and you can direct it, conduct it — as it suddenly happened to Petya Rostov in “War and Peace”:

“Petya’s eyes began to close and he swayed a little.

The trees were dripping. Quiet talking was heard. The horses neighed and jostled one another. Someone snored.

‘Ozheg-zheg, Ozheg-zheg ...’ hissed the saber against the whetstone, and suddenly Petya heard an harmonious orchestra playing some unknown, sweetly solemn hymn. Petya was as musical as Natasha and more so than Nicholas, but had never learned music or thought about it, and so the melody that unexpectedly came to his mind seemed to him particularly fresh and attractive. The music became more and more audible. The melody grew and passed from one instrument to another. And what was played was a fugue — though Petya had not the least conception of what a fugue is. Each instrument — now resembling a violin and now a horn, but better

and clearer than violin or horn — played its own part, and before it had finished the melody merged with another instrument that began almost the same air, and then with a third and a fourth; and they all blended into one and again became separate and again blended, now into solemn church music, now into something dazzlingly brilliant and triumphant.

‘Oh — why, that was in a dream!’ Petya said to himself, as he lurched forward.

‘It’s in my ears. But perhaps it’s music of my own. Well, go on, my music! Now! ...’ He closed his eyes, and, from all sides as if from a distance, sounds fluttered, grew into harmonies, separated, blended, and again all mingled into the same sweet and solemn hymn. ‘Oh, this is delightful! As much as I like and as I like!’ said Petya to himself. He tried to conduct that enormous orchestra.

‘Now softly, softly die away!’ and the sounds obeyed him. ‘Now fuller, more joyful. Still more and more joyful!’ And from an unknown depth rose increasingly triumphant sounds. ‘Now voices join in!’ ordered Petya. And at first from afar he heard men’s voices and then women’s. The voices grew in harmonious triumphant strength, and Petya listened to their surpassing beauty in awe and joy.

With a solemn triumphal march there mingled a song, the drip from the trees, and the hissing of the saber, ‘Ozheg-zheg-zheg ...’ and again the horses jostled one another and neighed, not disturbing the choir but joining in it.”

Something similar happens to Antoine Rocantin when he suddenly finds himself “in the music”:

*“What has just happened is that the Nausea has disappeared. When the voice was heard in the silence, I felt my body harden and the Nausea vanish. Suddenly: it was almost unbearable to become so hard, so brilliant. At the same time the music was drawn out, dilated, swelled like a waterspout. It filled the room with its metallic transparency, crushing our miserable time against the walls. I am **in** the music. Globes of fire turn in the mirrors; encircled by rings of smoke, veiling and unveiling the hard smile of light. My glass of beer has shrunk, it seems heaped up on the table, it looks dense and indispensable. I want to pick it up and feel the weight of it, I stretch out my hand ... God! That is what has changed, my gestures. This movement of my*

arm has developed like a majestic theme, it has glided along the song of the Negress; I seemed to be dancing.”

Antoine does not simply perceive an artistic work, he becomes part of the artistic work. Antoine now perceives his own movements as artistic (“I seemed to be dancing”). And the things around Antoine become part of the work of art (it is in this sense that the glass of beer has become necessary — “dense and indispensable”) — and one wants to touch them, which means the vanishing of the Nausea.

“Not disturbing the choir but joining in it.” But that can't happen (not in a dream, but in reality), can it? You can't have trees dripping, sabres hissing and horses neighing in a way that makes your music, can you? So that free (absurd) things and phenomena could join together and, remaining free (not bound by the abstract “thinking of belonging”), acquire mutual meaning — at least for a short time, at least for Petya Rostov alone?

(About such a free, artistic connection of things in the ancient Chinese book “Chuang Tzu” it is said: “The fusion of things is not achieved by glue and varnish, the connectedness of things is not achieved by ropes and knots.”)

I, perhaps, will not give an answer to this (the most important question in art and in life). As usual, I'll hide behind a quote — from Melville's novel “Moby Dick, or the White Whale”:

“And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston, to fill up some morass in the Milky Way.”

* * *

“Chance, free will, and necessity—nowise incompatible—all interweavingly working together” — this is how Ishmael defines the artistic sense of life in the novel “Moby Dick”. Ishmael experiences this feeling when he and Queequeg are weaving a mat — and it seems to him that they are “weaving and weaving away at the Fates”. The warp of the fabric forms “necessity”, Ishmael is responsible for “free will”, and

Queequeg is responsible for “chance”, which brings freedom and necessity together with the “concluding blow” (that is, Queequeg is responsible for the final artistic gesture). And everything happens in “an incantation of reverie”:

“It was a cloudy, sultry afternoon; the seamen were lazily lounging about the decks, or vacantly gazing over into the lead-coloured waters. Queequeg and I were mildly employed weaving what is called a sword-mat, for an additional lashing to our boat. So still and subdued and yet somehow preluding was all the scene, and such an incantation of reverie lurked in the air, that each silent sailor seemed resolved into his own invisible self.

I was the attendant or page of Queequeg, while busy at the mat. As I kept passing and repassing the filling or woof of marline between the long yarns of the warp, using my own hand for the shuttle, and as Queequeg, standing sideways, ever and anon slid his heavy oaken sword between the threads, and idly looking off upon the water, carelessly and unthinkingly drove home every yarn: I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermitting dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. There lay the fixed threads of the warp subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and that vibration merely enough to admit of the crosswise interblending of other threads with its own. This warp seemed necessity; and here, thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into these unalterable threads. Meantime, Queequeg's impulsive, indifferent sword, sometimes hitting the woof slantingly, or crookedly, or strongly, or weakly, as the case might be; and by this difference in the concluding blow producing a corresponding contrast in the final aspect of the completed fabric; this savage's sword, thought I, which thus finally shapes and fashions both warp and woof; this easy, indifferent sword must be chance—aye, chance, free will, and necessity—nowise incompatible—all interweavingly working together. The straight warp of necessity, not to be swerved from its ultimate course—its every alternating vibration, indeed, only tending to that; free will still free to ply her shuttle between

given threads; and chance, though restrained in its play within the right lines of necessity, and sideways in its motions directed by free will, though thus prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events.”

* * *

I remember well one school physical education lesson in my senior year. Actually, we were just playing football. Not knowing where to put me (I used to run slowly and reluctantly), I was always appointed goalkeeper. I wasn't much of a goalkeeper either. But one day I didn't miss a single goal. But one day I didn't miss a single ball. I would catch it wherever it came from and wherever it flew. Everyone was very surprised. The captain of our team said: “How Ilya coped with this today! I couldn't do that.” (The nice things are memorable!) How did such a miracle happen that I caught balls? I think the thing is that I knew in advance when and where the ball would fly. The ball and I were working together: it obeyed me. It was like I was dreaming about this ball. The ball was me, and I was it.

But that only happened once: afterwards I was the kind of goalkeeper I'd always been, which is to say, pretty poor.

(I hope I managed to repeat my one-time football luck with this book, in which various other authors's texts seem to be obedient pieces of my dream.)

In conclusion, let's look at Captain Tushin from the novel “War and Peace”, inspiringly conducting the battle:

“His soldiers, for the most part fine, handsome fellows (two heads taller and twice as broad as their officer, as always in a battery company), all looked to their commander, like children in a difficult situation, and the expression on his face was inevitably mirrored on theirs.

As a result of the dreadful rumbling, the noise, the necessity for attention and activity, Tushin did not experience the slightest unpleasant feeling of fear, and the thought that he could be killed or painfully wounded did not occur to him. On the contrary, he felt ever merrier and merrier. It seemed to him that the moment when

he saw the enemy and fired the first shot was already very long ago, maybe even yesterday, and that the spot on the field where he stood was a long-familiar and dear place to him. Though he remembered everything, considered everything, did everything the best officer could do in his position, he was in a state similar to feverish delirium or to that of a drunken man.

From the deafening noise of his guns on all sides, from the whistling and thud of the enemy's shells, from the sight of the sweaty, flushed crews hustling about the guns, from the sight of the blood of men and horses, from the sight of the little puffs of smoke on the enemy's side (after each of which a cannon-ball came flying and hit the ground, a man, a cannon, or a horse)—owing to the sight of all these things, there was established in his head a fantastic world of his own, which made up his pleasure at that moment. In his imagination, the enemy's cannon were not cannon but pipes, from which an invisible smoker released an occasional puff of smoke.

'Look, he's puffing away again,' Tushin said to himself in a whisper, as a puff of smoke leaped from the hillside and was borne leftwards in a strip by the wind, 'now wait for the ball—and send it back.'

'What orders, Your Honor?' asked the fireworker, who was standing close to him and heard him mutter something.

'Nothing... a shell...' he replied.

*'Now for our Matvevna,' he said to himself. In his imagination, Matvevna [the woman's patronymic, meaning 'Matvei's daughter'] was the big cannon at the end, of ancient casting. The French looked like ants around their guns. A handsome man and a drunkard, the number one at the second gun was known in his world as **uncle**; Tushin looked at him more often than at the others and rejoiced at his every movement. The sound of musket fire at the foot of the hill, now dying down, now intensifying again, seemed to him like someone's breathing. He listened to the fading and flaring up of these sounds.'*

Tushin listens to the music of the world — like Petya Rostov. He was visited by inspiration ("... he was in a state similar to feverish delirium or to that of a drunken man."). The world coincided with his fantasy, that is, the outer world

merged with the inner world (“... owing to the sight of all these things, there was established in his head a fantastic world of his own, which made up his pleasure at that moment.”). And this, oddly enough, is the key to Tushin's successful actions as a battery commander. (Remember the sleigh that came to Melyukovka: “And if this is really Melyukovka, it is still stranger that we drop heaven knows where and have come to Melyukovka.”) Well, about “Matvevna” and “uncle”, I probably won't say anything (otherwise, God forbid you will think that I have an *idée fixe*).

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