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WHY PEOPLE STUPEFY THEMSELVES:
AGEEV'S NOVEL WITH COCAINE
(TOWARDS THE SOLUTION OF A LITERARY PUZZLE)

Both after its original publication and since its recent rediscovery, *Novel with Cocaine* (*Roman s kokainom*, 1936)¹ by a pseudonymous "M. Ageev" has enjoyed more than a little notoriety. One reason for this is the curious tension between the book's tawdry subject matter and elevated style: whereas the novel's basic story -- a cynical young man narrating his road to cocaine addiction and ruin -- seems close in spirit to the cheap exhibitionism of popular fiction, the book's ornamental style invites comparison with the best works of Russian modernist prose. One critic, Nikita Struve (1985), has even gone so far as to suggest that the novel was penned by no less a stylist than Vladimir Nabokov. While Struve's thesis must be viewed skeptically (cf. Johnson 1985), I would concur with him in at least one point: that the book does represent a provocative literary puzzle calling out for a solution.

The particular puzzle that I have in mind is however not one of authorship but of literary worth, and it could be phrased like this: why does *Novel with Cocaine* offer us such a seemingly valueless story wrapped in such a valuable stylistic package? As I wish to show, this discrepancy in value is deceptive: the novel's "cheapness," although readily accepted by the reader, carries with it a whole set of hidden, value-laden obligations. But let us not give away too much too soon.

The story of *Novel with Cocaine* is straightforward. The book follows its hero and narrator Vadim Maslennikov from the time when he is a 16-year old *Gymnasium* student (around 1914) to his cocaine-induced death in 1919. However, in spite of what one might expect of a fictional work narrated by a young, morally desolate cocaine addict, Maslennikov neither indulges in tales of drug-induced experiences nor does he allow the boundaries between the real and illusionary to blur. This perspectival detachment is due to Maslennikov's exceptional capacity for self-reflection: only in one last bizarre scene, in which he finds his dead mother, could one surmise that he is hallucinating rather than actually experiencing the event (Struve [1985:173] for example believes he is dreaming). Maslennikov's perspective is also corroborated in the few instances where other characters express themselves independently. There is, as we will see shortly, a very good reason for this clarity of reflection and unity of perspective: *Novel with Cocaine* is neither a psychological study nor a Nabokovian play with reality.

Novel with Cocaine and Tolstoj

Many reviewers of Ageev's book have seen in it direct ties to Dostoevsky: the novel seems to be "derivatively Dostoyevskian" (Updike 1986:117), Maslennikov a character who "continues the long line of Dostoyevskian humiliated and self-humiliating heroes" (Heim 1984:viii). While some Dostoyevskian traces are perhaps present, a concrete explanation of Maslennikov's inner workings must be sought elsewhere: in the work of the *other* great Realist writer of the Russian 19th century.

It might first appear that Ageev is simply tipping his hat to Tolstoj in the usual way. The name "Maslennikov," for example, may have been borrowed from the obsequious vice-

general in *Resurrection*, a minor character to whom the hero Nekljudov turns for help (Part 1, Chapters 50, 62, 63). A direct thematic link is however not apparent, and the functional and hierarchical relations between the two sets of characters are reversed: in Tolstoj's book, Maslennikov is a negative secondary figure who helps the positive hero Nekljudov, whereas in *Novel with Cocaine* Maslennikov is a negative hero who is rejected by the positive secondary figure Burkevic. A more telling hint can be found in Maslennikov's cocaine-induced "speech": there, Tolstoj is mentioned in the same breath as Beethoven and Voltaire -- that is, as the representative "great man" of his country (131/161). Here, however, the context allows for considerable irony, and Maslennikov's speech seems strangely inappropriate. The most specific and positive reference to Tolstoian notions appears in connection with Burkevic's pacifist repudiation of the school priest, which is described as "tol'ko tot grom ot toj molnii, kotoraja vskinulas' vot uže mnogo desjatkov let tomu nazad iz dvorjanskogo gnezda Jasnoj Poljany" ["merely the thunder following that flash of lightning which many years before had soared up over the nest of gentlefolk at Yasnaja Polyana"] (40/48). This, too, suggests little more than an indirect link to Tolstoj, and indeed this is the last explicit mention of Burkevic's ideology. On the surface, Tolstoj does not appear to play much of a part in the novel.

Tolstoian ideas and argumentative style are however essential both to the book and to Maslennikov's "psychology." For the careful reader, the first tip-off is the strangely awkward rhetorical style affected by Maslennikov (and by all other characters arguing at any length):

Буркевиц же как раз принадлежал к числу людей, которые, в силу возвышенности исповедуемых ими идеалов, осуждают и юмор и цинизм: -- юмор, потому что они видят в нем присутствие цинизма, -- цинизм, потому что они находят в нем отсутствие юмора. ([Maslennikov], 105)

Мой муж не понимает, что разница между звериным и человеческим заключается в том, что для зверя *признать* чужое я значит признать свое поражение, как результат слабости своего тела и значит ничтожество, -- для человека же признать чужое я это значит праздновать победу, как следствие силы своего духа и значит величия. ([Sonja], 100)

Евреи перестанут быть евреями только тогда, когда быть евреем станет не невыгодно в национальном, а позорно в моральном смысле. Позорно же в моральном смысле станет быть евреем тогда, когда наши господа христиане сделаются наконец истинно-христианами, иначе говоря люди, которые, сознательно ухудшая условия своей жизни -- дабы улучшить жизнь всякого другого, будет от такого ухудшения испытывать удовольствие и радость. ([Burkevic], 36)

Burkevic belonged to that group of people who, because of the loftiness of the ideals they preach, condemn both humor and cynicism: humor, because he felt the presence of cynicism in it, and cynicism, because he felt the absence of humor in it. ([Maslennikov], 129)

My husband does not realize that a basic difference between animal mentality and human mentality lies in the fact that when an animal admits the existence of an external I it admits physical inferiority and therefore defeat, whereas when a human admits the

existence of an external I he celebrates spiritual superiority and therefore a great victory. ([Sonja], 122)

Jews will cease to be Jews only when being a Jew means not so much accepting persecution in secular affairs as accepting defeat in affairs of morality. And that defeat will come only when our Christians become true Christians at last -- in other words, men who deliberately worsen the conditions of their lives so as to better the lives of others, and who from that worsening derive pleasure and joy. ([Burkevic], 42)

This is nothing less than the didactic, polemical style of the older Tolstoj, the inveterate moralizer, preacher and pedant. Here a typical example:

Итак, отвечая на два поставленные мною вопроса, я говорю, что, во 1-х, признать прогресс ведущим к благосостоянию можно только тогда, когда весь народ, подлежащий действию прогресса, будет признавать это действие хорошим и полезным, тогда как теперь в 9/10 населения, в так называемом простом, в рабочем народе, мы постоянно видим противное; и во 2-х, тогда, когда будет доказано, что прогресс ведет к совершенствованию всех сторон человеческой жизни или что взятые вместе последствия его влияния преобладают добрыми и полезными над дурными и вредными. ("Progress i opredelenie obrazovanija" [1862], 8:3352)

[...] Thus, in reply to the two questions which I have put, I say that, first, it is possible only then to recognize a progress which leads to well-being when the whole nation, subjected to the action of progress, will recognize this action as good and useful, whereas now we constantly see the opposite in nine-tenths of the population, in the so-called common, labouring people; and secondly, when it shall be proved that progress leads to the improvement of all the sides of human life, or that all the consequences of its influence taken together by their good and useful qualities overbalance its bad and injurious results. (4:165)

Tolstoj's tracts -- and Ageev's characters -- try to convince by setting up antithetical propositions which are then developed and persuasively differentiated using logical formulas ("kogda...togda..."), periphrase, parallelisms and rhetorical figures like chiasmus and anadiplosis that respectively serve to oppose and link the various propositions. The emphasis of this style is on extreme *perspicuitas*, that is, on presenting one's case in the clearest, most convincing manner possible, even as this "clarity" is accompanied by excessive redundancy, syntactic awkwardness and intellectual oversimplification.

Ageev's debt to Tolstoj however goes well beyond such stylistic affinities, for the characters of the *Novel* are drawn neither from life nor fiction. Rather, they act, think and write according to metaphysical mechanisms lifted from the moral tracts of Tolstoj.

The most notable of these tracts is "Dlja čego ljudi odurmanyajutsja" ([1890], 27:269-285), most precisely translatable as "Why People Stupefy Themselves."³ Although not mentioning cocaine, which had not come into widespread use then, Tolstoj asks why people use "whiskey, wine, beer, hashish, opium, and tobacco" (27:269/19:339) and -- employing the typical manner of argumentation noted above -- seeks to expose the mechanism behind such habits.

Tolstoj's diagnosis is marked by the insistent dualism that guides all his moral thought:

В период сознательной жизни человек часто может заметить в себе два раздельные существа: одно - слепое, *чувственное*, а другое зрячее, *духовное*. (27:270) [The emphasis is my own.]

During the period of his conscious life a man may frequently observe two separate beings in himself: one -- a blind, sensuous being; the other -- a seeing, spiritual being. (19:341)

And:

Так точно и всякий человек, почувствовав *раздвоение* своей совести с животной деятельностью, не может продолжать эту деятельность до тех пор, пока или не проведен ее в согласие с совестью, или не скроет от себя указаний совести о неправильности животной жизни. (27:271) [The emphasis is my own].

[...] so also any man, who has come to feel the divergence of his conscience from the animal activity, cannot continue this activity, unless he brings it into harmony with his conscience or conceals from himself the indications of his conscience as to the irregularity of the animal life. (19:342)

For Tolstoj there are two (false) ways to block out the inevitable, nagging pangs of conscience. The first is to divert them through the "external distraction of attention"; the second is to shut them out through "an internal obscuration of the organ of attention itself" (27:271/19:342). The use of intoxicating substances however "lies not in distraction, not in pleasure" but "in the necessity of concealing from oneself the indications of conscience" (27:272/19:344). The sole way to heal this "divergence" or "splitting in two" ["razdvoenie"] is through "moral illumination" ["*nравственное просвещѣние*"] (27:271/19:342). In Tolstoj's dualist universe, this means one thing: to cultivate the spiritual and suppress the sensual as much as possible.⁴

Tolstoj's basic concepts are repeated to the word in Maslennikov's self-descriptive reflections:

Но из всех этих многих раздвоений -- наиболее четко очерченным и остро ощутимым -- было во мне раздвоение *духовного и чувственного* начал. (80) [Emphasis is in original.]

Но если не измена -- то что же это. Ведь если содеянное мною не измена, то это значит, что духовное мое начало нисколько ни ответственно за мое чувственное, что чувственность моя, как бы грязна она ни была, ни может запачкать духовного, что чувственность моя открыта всем женщинам, духовность же только одной Соне, и что чувственность во мне как-то *отделена* от духовности. (84) [Emphasis is in original.]

But of all the splits in my character the most clearly drawn and keenly felt was the split between the spiritual and sensual principles. (99)

If not betrayal, then what was it? For if what I had done could not be called betrayal, then my spiritual essence had not responsibility whatsoever for the sensual in me; my sensuality, as unsavory as it might be, could not besmirch my spirituality; my sensuality was open to all women, my spirituality to Sonja alone; and sensuality and spirituality were for some reason completely separate in me. (103)

There can be no doubt: Maslennikov's personality is a negative reification of Tolstoj's dualist scheme. Maslennikov suffers from a chronic "splitting apart" of the two dualist principles inside him -- a disjunction which is intensified through the use of cocaine and which eventually leads to his death. This is recognized by Maslennikov himself:

Под кокаином до таких громадных размеров выросло мое чувствующее Я, что самонаблюдающее Я прекращало работу. Но лишь только кончался кокаин, как возникал ужас. Ужас этот заключался в том, что я начинал видеть себя, видеть таким, каков я был под кокаином. (141) [Emphasis is in the original.]

[...] если первое время кокаин способствовал четкости и остроте сознания, то теперь он причиняет спутанность мыслей при беспокойстве, доходящем до галлюцинации. (164) [The emphasis is my own].

Under cocaine my sensual I grew to such proportions that my self-observing I all but ceased operation. But the moment the cocaine was gone and the misery took over, I began to see myself for what I was; indeed, the misery consisted largely in seeing myself as I had been while under the influence of the drug.

If during the early stages of addiction cocaine promoted precision and acuity of consciousness, it now elicited incoherence, which, when coupled with a concomitant sense of anxiety, tended to produce hallucinations.

Maslennikov's use of the drug leads to the complete obscuration of his spiritual, reflective "seeing" half and consequently to his death.

This, however, is not all. *Novel with Cocaine* borrows still another Tolstoian mechanism that one might call *diachronic dualism*. This means that there is not just a synchronic split between spirituality and sensuality, but also a split between *past* time (in which the sensuous has prevailed) and the *new* time in which the spiritual will come to prevail. This is most evident in Tolstoj's conviction that material and technological progress, instead of improving things, actually makes them worse. This conviction is justified at length in the above-cited essay "Progress i opredelenie obrazovaniia" in which Tolstoj flatly states: "progress prines bol'she zla, čem pol'zy narodu" ["progress has brought more evil than use to the folk"] (8:335). The very same conviction is expressed by Burkevic (here in Maslennikov's periphrase):

[...] как прежде, -- во времена лошадиной тяги, так и теперь во времена паровозов, -- жить человеку глупому легче, чем умному, хитрому лучше, чем честному, жадному волготней, чем доброму, жестокому милее, чем слабому, властному роскошней, чем смиренному, лживому сытнее, чем праведнику, и сластолюбцу слаще, чем постнику. [...] (32)

[...] then as now -- in the time of the horse-drawn cart, just as now in the time of steamships -- life was easier for the foolish than the wise, better for the scheming than the frank, freer for the greedy than the kind, more gratifying for the cruel than the weak, more luxurious for the powerful than the meek, more comfortable for the lying than the just, more pleasurable for the sensual than the chaste. (36)

This diachronic split adds an additional twist to the dualist problematic. It means that for Tolstoj, development is only possible *internally* and *gradually* through self-willed "moral

illumination," since the massive accumulation of positive value from without, while resulting in the potential for more good, is "paid for" by increasing the potential for more evil: "progress *odnoj storony vseгда vykupaetsja regressom drugoj storony čelovečeskoj žizni*" ["progress on the one side is purchased at the expense of a retrogression on the other side of human life"] (8:334/4:164). And:

[...] Истинная жизнь не происходит там, где передвигаются, сталкиваются, дерутся, убивают друг друга люди, а она происходит только там, где совершаются чуть-чутьочные дифференциальные изменения. (27:280)

The true life does not take place where great external changes occur, where people change places, conflict, fight, kill one another, but only where barely perceptible, differential changes occur. (19:354)

In one of his last reflections, Maslennikov repeats this Tolstoian notion with a negative twist, as an inverted "noli me tangere":

Милые и добрые Пророки! Не трогайте вы нас, не распяйте вы в наших душах возвышенных человечнейших чувств, и не делайте вообще никаких попыток сделать нас *лучше*. Ибо видите вы: пока мы *плохи* -- мы ограничиваемся мелким подличанием, -- когда становимся *лучше* -- мы идем убивать. (154) [Emphasis is in original.]

Prophets! Dear, good prophets: Do not touch us. Do not try to ~~excite the~~ lofty, most humane sentiments in our souls; do not try to make us better than we are. For so long as we are bad, we limit ourselves to petty malefactions; when we grow better, we go out and kill. (189)

This mechanism is reflected precisely in Burkevic's own development: after having been publicly humiliated, he cuts himself off from the rest of the class and slowly develops within himself into an (admittedly contourless) *homo novus*. This call for a gradual development within and the dislike of any direct, massive transfer of value from without is one reason why Tolstoj expresses his didactic ideas in such a simplified, heavily periphrased rhetorical style: even the transfer of *positive* value brings with it the danger of corruption if misinterpreted or misunderstood. This, of course, is also the reason for the later Tolstoj's well-known distrust of art.⁵

Novel with Cocaine, as a *negative exemplification* of Tolstoj's didactic ideas, represents a specifically Post-Symbolist interpretation of Tolstoj's system.⁶ Whereas Tolstoj is still for the most part obligated to the positive metonymy of Realist technique (and to an evolutionist political ideology) *Novel with Cocaine's* metaphysic is clearly oriented towards defective, catachrestic metonymy⁷ (and towards legitimating the Revolution): it demonstrates the end of bourgeois culture by exemplifying it in the end of an individual's spiritual development. Ageev's book reveals the fractured, catachrestic consciousness peculiar to Post-Symbolism: the focus is not on gradual, didactically mediated transfer of value, but on the incipient breakdown of contact between the old system and the new (the contradictoriness developing between two systems over time). Maslennikov's death marks the demise of the old system and Burkevic's rise the ascendancy of the new. Although the characters and the mechanisms they embody touch in passing, they are necessarily incompatible: that is why Burkevic must repudiate Maslennikov.

Assuming that Ageev is a kind of modernist Tolstoian -- as the cited evidence gives us every indication to believe -- there does remain the problem of justifying the Revolution, or, more generally, justifying revolution as such in Tolstoian terms.⁸ *Novel with Cocaine* apparently tries to avoid this problem by approaching the Revolution metonymically, i.e. by setting forth a negative exemplification of the old order (Maslennikov) and providing only a sketchy exemplification of the new: Burkevic's revolutionary activity remains in the dark. In spite of this vagueness -- which would appear to be necessary to preserve the pacifist, Tolstoian point of view -- Burkevic does present one more kind of "argument" for a just revolution: his name.

At first, "Burkevic" would seem to be an anomaly: in spite of the hero's otherwise exemplary Russianness, the name does not sound Russian and invites no immediate etymological or fictional associations. The give-away here is provided by the German instructor von Volkmann, who stresses the name incorrectly but felicitously: "Burkevic" (25).⁹ Herein lies Ageev's cryptic argument: the conservative English statesman Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was both an eloquent defender of the American Revolution, which he considered to be based on legitimate grievances, and an embittered opponent of the French, which he abhorred among other reasons for its regicide.¹⁰ Here it is no accident that Burkevic's first name, Vasilij, is derived from the Greek word for "king." His full name, in other words, embodies the utopian idea of a just, monarchical, perhaps even Tolstoian revolution.¹¹

Nota bene: here as elsewhere, received, positive value can appear *only as cryptic or hidden value*. It cannot be expressed as a positive, didactic proposition.

Novel with Cocaine and the Literature of Narcomania

One of the more fascinating aspects of *Novel with Cocaine* is its intellectualized depiction of serious drug abuse. As such, it can look back on a distinguished line of literary predecessors: De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* and *Suspiria de Profundis*, Gautier's "Le Club des Hachichins," and Baudelaire's *Les Paradis artificiels*, to name the most prominent. Once more, however, the novel's chief source remains Tolstoj's tract "Dlja čego ljudi odurmanyvajutsja," which tacitly polemicizes with the French and English traditions.¹²

The two most deliberate literary treatments of narcomania are De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* ([1821], 1986) and Baudelaire's *Les Paradis Artificiels* ([1860], 1954), which among other things contains a translation of the *Confessions*. For Baudelaire, narcotics are a means of potentiating a sensitive individual subject. This potentiation is however in no way solipsistic, that is, it does not sever the individual from reality as does a "pure hallucination." The narcotic is simply an artificial means that allows the subject to interiorize and experience the order of things in unexpected, sensual ways (1954:466). De Quincey says something similar, although he emphasizes the heightening of reason rather than sensuality:

[opium] introduces amongst [the mental faculties] the most exquisite *order, legislation, and harmony*. Wine robs a man of his self-possession: *opium greatly invigorates it*. [...] With respect to the temper and moral feelings in general, it gives simply that sort of vital warmth *which is approved by the judgment* [...]. (1986:75) [The emphasis is my own.]

For Baudelaire, this same interiorization and intensification allows the user to "decree his own apotheosis," it enables him, "within a world of abominable joys," to cry out "I am the most virtuous of all men!" (1954:472). Hashish, in other words, is the artificial agent of an extreme anthropomorphization.¹³

For Baudelaire and De Quincey, the main problem of drug use is not physical or moral, but rather one of disrupted exchange between ego and world. Both opium and hashish destroy the ability of the individual to act, to redirect his artificially potentiated humanness back into the outside world:

The opium-eater loses none of his moral sensibilities, or aspirations: he wishes and longs, as earnestly as ever, to realize what he believes possible, and feels to be exacted by duty; but his intellectual apprehension of what is possible infinitely outruns his power, not of execution only, but even of power to attempt. He lies under the weight of incubus and night-mare: *he lies in sight of all that he would fain perform...* (1986:102). [The emphasis is my own.]

This emphasis on inner vision rather than on physical danger or on transgressing against social norms is also taken up by Tolstoj, but once more with a dogmatic inversion: drugs obscure inner vision rather than enhancing it. Drugs hinder the possibility of man becoming more human than he is, of becoming what Baudelaire calls "l'homme-dieu."

Following Tolstoj and inverting the tradition of literary narcomania, *Novel with Cocaine* treats cocaine primarily as an instrument of negative anthropomorphization: the drug potentiates Maslennikov's already existing "razdvoennost'" or internal rift between the sensual and the spiritual.¹⁴ Maslennikov, as did De Quincey, initially even acquires a certain benefit from the drug: it enhances his introspective or spiritual side (the most immediate result of this is Maslennikov's peculiar Tolstoian "speech" condemning athletics¹⁵). However, the continued use of the drug eventually leads to the obscuration of the seeing side, as manifested in Maslennikov's hallucinations: he becomes "l'homme-bête." This loss of humanness is made clear in the last entry in his notes:

-- Ах это вы, -- сказал [Хирге] с ленивым отвращением, -- а я-то думал и впрямь человек пришел. Ну, что же, заходите. И я зашел. (164)

"So it's you," he said with languid revulsion. "And I thought that a *person* was here to see me. Oh, well, what's the use. Come in." And I went in. (199).

In Baudelaire and De Quincey the drugged consciousness is not solipsistic, since the user's "I" never becomes the sole source of reality: the narcotic experience simply internalizes reality and raises it to a higher power. The explicit denial of solipsism also can be observed in Maslennikov's theory of "otražаемost'" ["reflectivity"], a thinly disguised version of Freud's *Lustprinzip* or pleasure principle.¹⁶

This theory, expounded at some length by Maslennikov in the chapter "Mysli," states that man's entire striving is directed not at performing acts for their own sake, but at performing acts designed to produce effects which will be "reflected" within consciousness as sensual pleasure:

Вся жизнь человека, вся его работа[...] напрягается и тратится без счета и без меры только на то, чтобы свершить во внешнем мире некое событие, но не

ради этого события как такового, а единственно для того, чтобы ощутить отражение этого события в своем сознании. (138) [Emphasis is in original.]

All of a man's life [...] is harnessed and spent on countless and immeasurable ways of bringing about one or another event in the external world, though not so much to experience the event in itself as to experience the reflection of the event on his consciousness. (174)

As Maslennikov himself notes, the cocaine abbreviates this mechanism: it produces the happy sensation in his consciousness directly without his having to act or participate in the external world (140). In other words, it eliminates transactions with the world rather than the world itself. This is how Maslennikov describes his first experience with cocaine:

Вокруг меня люди. Много, очень много людей. Но это не галлюцинация. Я вижу этих людей не вне, а внутри себя. [...] (130) [The emphasis is my own.]

There are people all around me. Many, many people. It is no hallucination: I see them not outside, but inside myself. (159-160)

This is the potentiated internalization of the world familiar to De Quincey and Baudelaire.¹⁷

Within the literature of narcomania, *Novel with Cocaine* is not quite the innovation it might first seem, in spite of its graphic attention to the social and physiological details of abuse.¹⁸ The book is in fact not so much about cocaine use itself as about the defective mechanism of value exchange that causes it -- a mechanism that will be examined more closely in the following pages.

The Circulation of Value

In his book *The Gift* (1967; orig. *Essai sur le don*, 1925) the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss describes how in many archaic cultures, individuals ritualistically give up value with the assurance that it will return to them sometime in the future. In this system of obligatory exchange, the person giving up value relinquishes it entirely, usually in a single, ritual act. (The objects of value are sometimes physically destroyed, as in the potlatch). However, a binding social etiquette of exchange guarantees that all lost value will be returned to that individual, and it ensures that he must accept it once it has returned to him. This circulation of value implies a total binding of the individual to the community and, conversely, the total guarantee on the part of the community that the object will return to the individual. This is possible not because of any formal, legal agreements, but because the objects themselves are believed to have an animated or personified character: removed from everyday trade and barter (activities which also exist in such societies), they have a magical value of their own that ensures the obligation of recipient to giver. This circulation of sacral value thus involves both a kind of positive altruism and a punitive, obligatory moment: to acquire a gift can also be dangerous, since it magically binds the receiver to the giver (Mauss for example notes the etymological relation between the German word *Gift* ["poison"] and its English homonym).

Mauss' observations have an appeal extending well beyond the limits of their anthropological purview. The "archaic system of exchange" may be seen as a kind of utopian mechanism in which the relations between subject and object, giver and recipient, synchrony and diachrony, event and sign harmonically overlap and complement one another in a constantly

moving circular totality. This can be instantly grasped as soon as one tries to track the path taken by an object of value through such a system: the object -- itself animate and personified -- will never have a fixed place, will always be potentially enroute from a giver to a receiver, who is himself also a giver; all participants in the exchange are linked by the magical guarantee inherent in the object itself: there is no distinction between self-interest and altruism. This is enhanced by the excessive, promiscuous flourish with which transactions takes place and the reassuring, total gesture that accompanies them:

[...] In *The Gift*, Mauss rebuilt an instance of social being which was significant in that it seemed to be total and, in spite of its aberrant display of excess and waste, practical. He saw the act of gift-exchange, or total prestation, as that juncture in time and space where structure and event intercept each other. [...] (Gonzalez 1982:347-348)

It is admittedly difficult to imagine such a mechanism functioning as a whole in a modern social system,¹⁹ if only because the assumption at the center of the system -- a "motivated," magical object-sign -- is no longer retrievable from the archaic past. Fictional art is however hardly restricted by such considerations, and may deliberately present such a utopian exchange mechanism under the cover of representational verisimilitude. This would appear to be the case with Ageev's *Novel with Cocaine*, which -- perhaps with a direct knowledge of Mauss, perhaps without -- develops a utopian, socially critical metaphysic based on the circulation of value.

Let us start with Maslennikov, the negative exemplification of this exchange mechanism. Maslennikov is wholly incapable of engaging in positive value-producing transactions with the outside world, and when he does complete such transactions, they are perverse or perverted. Thus his relations with his mother -- with a natural, "flesh and blood" member of his family -- are purely economic. He treats her not as a family member, but literally as a complete stranger (he says "vy" to her on the street) and a source of money (needed for his social ascent). That his mother returns his abuse with economic sacrifice and loving, maternal patience makes things worse: Maslennikov eventually destroys even this unequal relationship by stealing from her (whereupon she finally rejects him). In other words, he cannot tolerate even the minimal obligations implied by her giving him money out of maternal, altruistic love.

Maslennikov's sexual relations are no better. Sex does not serve procreation (the source of new life) but death: he spreads venereal disease. When Maslennikov does engage in sex with the like-minded females he picks up on the street, he does so narcissistically and libidinally, purely to *potentiate his own sensual half*. This is why he does not frequent prostitutes:

Я не ходил к проституткам по причине того, что мне хотелось не столько узаконенного словесной сделкой прелюбодеяния, сколько тайной и порочной борьбы, [...] где победителем, как мне казалось, было мое я, мое тело, глаза, которые были моими и могли быть только у меня одного, -- а не те несколько рублей, которые могли быть у многих. (81)

I did not frequent prostitutes because I did not wish for intercourse legitimized by verbal agreement; what I was after was the depraved and secret struggle [...] which I saw as a victory of my self, my body, something mine and mine alone, not like a handful of rubles that might belong to many. (101)

Giving money to prostitutes also implies an obligation on their part to sleep with him ("выполняя при этом некое obligation," ["fulfilling in the process a kind of obligation"]) [81] -- thus consummating a binding transaction and resulting in something that -- at least from Maslennikov's point of view -- is dangerous. From the very beginning, Maslennikov sets up and maintains a negative, narcissistic utopia in which no true transactions are possible.

The problem of a modernist, Tolstian sexuality is no less delicate than the problem of a modernist Tolstian revolution. Just what this sexuality could be like is adumbrated in Maslennikov's relation with Sonja, which at first seems to indicate a break with his usual debauchery. It quickly becomes clear however that Maslennikov's affair with Sonja is based solely on the spiritual, sexless half of his personality:

Я склонился и прикоснулся к ее губам. И может-быть именно так, с такой же нечеловеческой чистотой, с такой же, причиняющей драгоценную боль, радостной готовностью все отдать, и сердце и душу и жизнь, -- когда-то, очень давно, сухие и страшные и безполезные мученики прикасались к иконам. (75) [The emphasis is my own.]

I bowed and brushed my lips against hers. And perhaps I did so with the same superhuman chastity, with the same precious pain, with the same beatific readiness to give up everything -- the heart, the soul, indeed life itself -- with which the desiccated, terrible, sexless martyrs of long ago would brush their lips against the icons. (92)

Here we find one of the few instances where Maslennikov is at least in theory willing to give, to engage in a positive transaction with another person. Unfortunately, he lacks the ability to experience unified love: "[vol'sebnyx slov ljubvi] vo mne ne bylo" ["I could not find (the magic words of love) within me"] (75/93). It is only the Tolstian "magic" of love that can ensure a whole, equal transaction.

Maslennikov's incipient, sexless love for Sonja does essentially the same thing to him that his "affair" with cocaine will do later on: in a see-saw like motion it potentiates first the positive, then the negative side of his personality. The turning point is Maslennikov's physical inability -- because of his temporarily enhanced, one-sided spirituality -- to consummate the sexual act with Sonja. This mechanism is described at some length both by Maslennikov in his reflections and by Sonja in her farewell letter (she of course being no less a Tolstian creature than he): "ja [...] заметила [...] что твоя чувственность разогреться в соотвествии с остыванием твоей любви" ["I noticed that your sensuality grew more inflamed the more your love cooled"] (101/123). Even worse for Sonja is her "realization" that Maslennikov's impotence (and the crude sexual treatment of her that follows) is based not on willful meanness but on the peculiar, see-sawing struggle between the two sides of his dualist personality:

Думая об этом [Maslennikov's enhanced spirituality and diminished sexuality] испытывала то самое, что должен испытывать прокаженный, которого христианский брат целует в уста, и который видит, как христианского брата после этого поцелуя вытошнило. (98)

Thinking about that [Maslennikov's enhanced spirituality and diminished sexuality] I felt the same thing that must be felt by a leper who is kissed by a Christian brother on the lips and who then sees how after that kiss the Christian brother suddenly becomes nauseous. (120)

Having thus been repulsed by Maslennikov, Sonja returns to her husband, an egotistical but happily one-sided brute: "erotika moego muža -- eto rezul'tat ego duxovnogo niščinstva: ono u nego professional'no i potomu ne oskorbitel'no" [My husband's eroticism is the result of his spiritual poverty: because it is so to speak his profession it isn't offensive"] (102/124). Justifying her newly discovered "grateful tenderness" towards her loutish husband, she continues the leper parable:

[...] Сердцу прокаженной женщины милее чувственный поцелуй негра, чем христианский поцелуй миссионера, преодолевающего отвращение. (99)

[...] the sensual kiss of a native is dearer to the heart of a female leper than the Christian kiss of a missionary trying to overcome his revulsion. (121)

The bitter paradox facing all true dualists is that the very transaction needed to sustain life is also the most polluting to the individual's spirituality. The most practical way out is not to eliminate sexuality entirely, but to keep the two realms as separate as possible. Tolstoj's own solution (apparently born after years of struggling with an insatiable libido) was to regard sex as a dangerous but necessary evil that should firstly be confined to marital relations and secondly be kept to a minimum.²⁰ Sonja's own "solution" would at first not seem to have much in common with Tolstoj's restrictive moralizing. Upon closer inspection it reveals itself as the negative exemplification of Tolstoian ideas that we are already familiar with: because her husband's sexuality is restricted to its animalistic domain it does not get mixed up with the spiritual.²¹ This is a typical Tolstoian device: keeping the transaction as simple as possible ensures that its danger will be minimized. And, Sonja's grotesque parable of the leper and the "Christian brother" does not fail to touch on Tolstoian obsessions: spirituality is associated with religious chastity and sexuality with a deforming, ugly, contagious disease -- carried of course by a woman.

One of the key elements in Sonja's relations with Maslennikov is her ability to engage in ideal, equal transactions with him. In a crucial, utopian transaction at the beginning of their relationship, Maslennikov, having met and been captivated by Sonja, decides to buy her flowers. Once in the flower shop, however, he observes, apparently unrecognized, that she herself is buying flowers -- presumably for someone else. Convinced that all is lost, he returns home, only to find that the flowers have been sent by Sonja to *him*. Sonja's uncanny ability to anticipate his exchange mechanism turns out to be the true basis of their relationship. Once more, however, Maslennikov gains from this transaction without literally putting anything into it; he does not carry out his end of it (which would have made the transaction whole). Sonja appears as someone who is able to share completely -- if only temporarily -- in Maslennikov's narcissism, and at least for the time being, its true nature remains concealed.

Maslennikov's narcissism also has a distinct homoerotic quality -- motivated, one tends to think, more by Ageev's familiarity with Freudian theory than by spontaneous psychological "insight."

Maslennikov is homoerotically drawn to "losers," i.e. male figures who like himself can seemingly only lose or destroy value rather than generate it. Both such instances occur in consolatory situations where the character involved has "lost" an argument -- and hence value. The first such instance is with Štejn, who has just cynically slighted his Jewish heritage and has been morally dressed down for it by Burkevic. This in turn causes Maslennikov to think of how Burkevic would have dressed *him* down had he known about Maslennikov's

repudiation of his own mother. Thus he empathizes with Štejn: "I dvizimyj etoj obščnost'ju čuvstv ja podošel k Štejnu i, krepkio i tesno obnjav ego za taliju, pošel s nim v obnimku po korridoru" ["And moved by that commonality of our feelings, I went up to Štejn and, embracing him tightly around the waist, started off down the corridor with him"] (38/44). Even more explicit is Maslennikov's consolation of Burkevic, who has just seemingly "lost" his verbal encounter with the priest (characteristically, as soon as Maslennikov finds out that Burkevic has "won," he is no longer attracted to him):

Тихонько подойдя к нему сзади, все так, чтобы он меня не видел, я положил руку на его плечо. [...] Все глядя на его спину я осторожно перенес руку с его плеча на его волосы. На толку я прикоснулся к его тепловатым волосам, как почувствовал, что во мне тронулось что-то такое, от чего, если бы кто увидел, мне стало бы совестно. Оглянувшись так, чтобы это даже не было похоже на оглядывание, [...] я ласково провел рукой по жестким шоколадным вихрам. (49) [The emphasis is my own.]

Silently going up to him from behind, in such a way that he could not see me, I laid a hand on his shoulder. [...] Still staring at his back, I shifted by hand from his shoulder to his hair. The moment I touched his warm hair, I felt something move in me, something that would have filled me with shame had it been seen. Glancing back in a way that did not appear to be a glance [...] I ran my hand gently over his wiry, chocolate temples. (58-59)

Maslennikov's empathy is hopelessly contaminated by homosexual stirrings. Also characteristic is his narcissistic scopophobia, which appears to be an inversion of Freudian scopophilia (*Schaulust*): he dislikes being observed, especially in erotic situations. This is another reason why he does not like prostitutes: "so mnoj v posteli ležal ne raspalennyj soúčastnik, a skučajuščij sozercatel'" ["next to me in bed would lie less an aroused partner than a bored observer"] (82/101). This is the ultimate narcissism: the only one allowed to observe Maslennikov is Maslennikov himself.

Sonja herself has distinctly masculine (but positive) traits, expressed primarily in her dress and forthright social behavior. She is in fact first introduced as a kind of female phallus: "v komnatu s skandal'noj rešitel'nost'ju šagnula mužskaja pižama s podnjatym vokrug prelestnoj ženskoj golovki vorotnikom" ["with scandalous resoluteness there stepped into the room a man's pyjama with a collar turned up around a small, attractive female head"] (67/82). Most important about Sonja -- also a "masculine" trait -- is her ability to reason; it is her "reason" (*razum*) that eventually causes her to view Maslennikov as something alien and reject him (97/ 120).²² Sonja is a figure of androgynous, utopian sexuality: a female core disposing over active (masculine) traits and abilities.

This is one instance where Ageev's negative inversion of a negative figure in Tolstoj has a positive result. In this case, *Novel with Cocaine* reverses the outcome of *Anna Karenina*: whereas both Anna and Sonja return to conventional, unpleasant husbands after an affair, in *Novel with Cocaine* it is the female adulteress who survives as a whole and the split-apart male lover who commits suicide. Sonja, like Burkevic, is an inversion and not a direct extension of Tolstojan ideas.

Viewed in terms of genre, *Novel with Cocaine* is an anti-Bildungsroman, perhaps the ultimate one. The novel describes the complete non-development of a character, the complete

non-transfer of value between society and a developing individual, and this non-transfer is in turn connected in an unspecified but unmistakable way with the collapse of society itself.

It is no surprise that the implicit justification of this *Anti-Bildung* is once more Tolstolian. Tolstoj believes that education in the conventional sense of the word is harmful or useless, since it entails the quantitative rather than qualitative transfer of value: "Dejatel'nost' obrazovaniya prodolzhaetsja tol'ko do tex por, poka učenik ne uravnjaetsja s knigoj, ili s avtorom knigi." ["The activity of education lasts only so long as the pupil has not reached the level of the book, or of the author of the book"] (8:350-351/4:185-186). As long as education involves only the mechanical acquisition of exterior knowledge and not the promotion of interior growth, it cannot help but fail. Unable to acquire, develop or circulate positive value, Maslennikov is from the start condemned to an unhappy end.

Of special interest is also Maslennikov's complete lack of a father,²³ who is in fact only mentioned once (78-79/97). Maslennikov wants to pawn the brooch that is the only keepsake his mother has from his father -- and that on the anniversary of his father's death! She refuses, and he eventually steals and pawns the brooch, causing his mother to disown him. In Freudian terms this complete lack of a father is closely linked to Maslennikov's lack of a superego that would regulate his oscillating psychological halves, and it explains as well Maslennikov's exaggerated contempt for his mother, which would be caused by the need to repress the sexual element of the oedipal drive. At the end of the book, Maslennikov does finally acknowledge the sexuality of his mother (in a dream!), but by then it is too late.

If Maslennikov's manner of conducting transactions represents a negative utopia, Burkevic, his counterpart, is the embodiment of a positive utopia-to-be, the metonymic part of a future whole. Crucial to this is his ability to engage in total exchange: his ability to acquire "alien" value by completely relinquishing his own. In other words, Burkevic is able to achieve total participation in alien value. This mechanism of total risk and total exchange is summed up by Burkevic himself as he describes his own inner transformation. This transformation takes place after Burkevic sneezes in an unfortunate way during a presentation in front of the class: a long strand of mucous plunges "nearly to his waist and, [...] suspended there, [begins] to swing back and forth" (26/29). Burkevic, who is literally laughed out of the room, thereupon begins his temporary withdrawal into himself and, consequently, his inner development into an ethical individual. Burkevic's own view of this nicely summarizes his entire approach to exchange: "esli by soplja menja ne sdelala čelovekom, to zamesto čeloveka ja sdelalsja by soplej" ["if that snot had not made a person out of me, I would have become a piece of snot instead"] (35/41). Once more, we have before us a programmatic maxim of Ageev's modernist Tolstolianism: the catalytic action of the bad forces us to react, to enter into either a transaction or an inner transformation out of which results good. This transaction must however take place as total exchange -- that is, as an exchange in which the bad is completely exchanged for the good.

This all-or-nothing mechanism can be seen more clearly in Burkevic's exchange with Stejn. Upon hearing Stejn make a self-deprecatory anti-Semitic remark (a typical diminution of value on his part), Burkevic launches into an impassioned defense of the Jews: they should be proud of being Jews -- i.e. non-Christians -- as long as the "Izexristiane" [false Christians] have not themselves become true ones (36/42). Here, Burkevic completely assumes the alien position; he becomes *more Jewish* than Stejn himself while at the same time preserving or increasing his own Russianness.²⁴

[...] я уже почувствовал в словах [Буркевича] какое-то особенное рыцарство, рыцарство личного самоуничижения ради защиты слабого и обездоленного инородца, рыцарство столь свойственное русскому человеку в национальных вопросах. (37)

I could sense in [Burkevic's] words a special kind of chivalry, a chivalry of self-humiliation in defense of a poor, hapless alien, a chivalry towards non-Russian nationalities that was so characteristically Russian. (43)

A similar exchange occurs with the priest, although there more is at stake: the priest does not turn in Burkevic, in spite of Burkevic's public rebuke of the Church, because his own son had fallen in the war (something Burkevic was unaware of). Burkevic, by daring to sacrifice himself entirely, *takes the place of the fallen son*: his "gift" is accepted by the priest entirely, and in the end -- as in all of Burkevic's transactions -- both parties gain. This is also the reason for Burkevic's rather unhumanitarian refusal at the end of the book to help Maslennikov -- a refusal which leads to the latter's suicide. Burkevic engages not just in total exchange that increase positive value, but also in the total rejection of negative value, which Maslennikov by now exemplifies totally. This is reflected even in the grammar of Burkevic's utterance: the phrase "Burkevic otkazal" seals off its subject from any contact with a (grammatical) object of negative value. The way is being paved for a utopian system of mutually just social relations, perhaps along the lines described by Tolstoj in "Konec veka":

[...] учение христианское показывало, что свободен может быть только человек, целью своей ставящий высшего, общего всему человечеству закона взаимного служения. (36:243)

Christian teaching has shown that only he can be free who makes his goal the fulfillment of a higher law of mutual service that would be common to all mankind. [The translation is my own.]

Novel with Cocaine as a Value Transaction

Up to now I have hesitated to use the concept of intertextuality, even though we have seen many individual cases in which Ageev's text cites another. This is because the focus of analysis has been on the *value* transactions between the two texts, rather than on the *semantic* ones, which continue to be the main interest of intertextual theory. In semantic intertextuality,²⁵ texts are thought to be constantly constituting themselves and dissipating again within the flux of a textualized world. Neither value considerations nor the relations between subjects are thought to hinder these interactions, which are in turn fueled by the inexhaustible associative power of individual signifiers, i.e. the smallest material elements of language. The incremental, unstable nature of this exchange helps prevent the accumulation of fixed meaning and, consequently, of external, restrictive value.

The interest in value transactions, on the other hand, implies that texts relate to one another not so much as semantic entities but as pragmatic ones. This means that within the literary or aesthetic system, texts have a utilitarian, commodity-like quality in addition to their semanticity or textuality: they have a normative value determined by their status in the literary system and they can engender normative and ideological obligations towards the literary subject who composed them. Or, to put this another way, the value of a text depends on the relation of the text to norms lying for the most part outside of it and independent of it -- norms that

may be arbitrary from a semantic point of view but that may nonetheless exert a powerful, often negative influence on a person borrowing textual signs. It is no accident here that the main proponent of "influence" theory, Harold Bloom (1975), pursues a double strategy describing the interplay between literary norms ("tradition") on the one hand and psychoanalytically interpreted relations between author-subjects on the other. However, whereas Bloom assumes that the relations between the borrowing author and his source author are unavoidably Oedipal and agonistic, Ageev's text manages to avoid these potential conflicts in an especially elegant way.

Novel with Cocaine achieves this by shifting the exchange of positive value to the level of the unconscious. Positive value (Tolstoian dogma) is sublimated, covered up by superficial negative value (Maslennikov's exemplified depravity). In the process, Ageev conducts a utopian exchange with (and within) the dogma of Freudian psychoanalytic theory: the "true," positive value appears as hidden value in the textual "unconscious" of the novel -- that realm in which, according to Freud, there is no "No" (1959:185). Ageev, in other words, structures the text and the reception process analogous to the way that Freud conceives the human psyche. As the reader accepts -- and then presumably rejects -- the cheap, promiscuous, negative, superficial side of the novel, he is unconsciously made to accept its subliminal, positive, spiritual side. In other words, we are faced with a paradoxical situation in which the reception of positive value is only possible when the recipient is not aware that he is receiving it. This is why Maslennikov's (and Ageev's) aesthetics programmatically emphasize the negative:

Достаточно показать нам в театрах такие пьесы, в которых злодеи не только не наказываются, не только не гибнут, а напротив -- торжествуют [...]. (152)
[The emphasis is my own.]

For all we should do is fill our theaters with plays in which villains not only survive, not only escape punishment, but *triumph*... (187)

The promiscuous exemplification of the negative and the ritual destruction of this negative value by the reader *is what makes the transaction work*. The restitution of destroyed value then takes place involuntarily, "magically," in the intertextually determined unconscious. This process can however also be made explicit by the intertextual analyst, who -- analogous to the psychoanalyst -- reveals and articulates the peculiar workings of this unconscious exchange.

It goes almost without saying that in this exchange process that overcomes diachronic dualism there can be no middleman, no superego, no school, no father, *no author*. Seen from this perspective, Ageev's pseudonymity appears not just as a twist of fate, but also as a necessary consequence of his peculiar metaphysic of exchange.

Notes

- 1 Russian quotes follow Ageev 1983; English quotes Ageev 1984. I have made extensive changes in the translation.
- 2 Russian quotes follow *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij* (1928-1936); English quotes *Complete Works* (1905).

- ³ Translated in *Complete Works* as "Why People Become Intoxicated" (19:339-359).
- ⁴ For a thorough explication of Tolstoj's concept of intoxication and his approach to intoxication in literature see Gustafson 1986, especially the chapter "Intoxicated Consciousness," pp. 338-402.
- ⁵ For more on this quandary, which of course also applies to Tolstoj's own literary technique, see Gustafson (1986:372 and 389).
- ⁶ This negativity -- something quite alien to Tolstoj the didact -- is of course the reason why critics associate *Novel with Cocaine* with Dostoevsky. By demonstrating the demise of someone who is monstrously bad, Ageev is achieving a didactic (Tolstoian) goal with modernist means.
- ⁷ For more on the distinctions used here see Döring-Smirnov/Smirnov 1982, in particular the sections "Realizm kak sistema transitivnyx otnošenij" (32-54) and "Katakreza i metonimija" (86-115) as well as Smirnov 1986.
- ⁸ It should be pointed out that in spite of his pacifism, Tolstoj greeted the events of 1905 in his article "Konec veka" ([1905], 36:233):

Разрушение же русского государства есть, по моему мнению, признак начала разрушения всей лжехристианской цивилизации. Это конец старого и начало нового века. [...] [The emphasis is my own.]

The destruction of the Russian government signals in my opinion the beginning of the destruction of all false Christian civilization. *It is the end of the old and the beginning of a new age.* [Emphasis and translation are my own.]

This is the absolute break necessary to Tolstoj's diachronic dualism. On the other hand, Tolstoj explicitly warns against imitating Western models of revolution, which he categorically rejects as bringing no freedom or progress to the people they are supposed to be liberating. See in particular "O značenii russkoj revoljucii" ([1906], 36:315-362).

- ⁹ Given Tolstoj's obsessive belief that the "narod" (German: *Volks*) is the last arbiter of everything, the name "von Volkmann" can itself hardly be regarded as accidental.
- ¹⁰ As recorded in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).
- ¹¹ Vasilij Burkevic, like *Count* Tolstoj, is an aristocratic revolutionary.
- ¹² Tolstoj knew Baudelaire's work quite well (cf. "Čto takoe isskustvo," 1897-98) and disliked it, for obvious reasons.
- ¹³ Baudelaire is very explicit about this: Le haschisch ne révèle à l'individu rien que l'individu lui-même. [...] Cet individu est pour ainsi dire cubé et poussé à la extrême[...] (1954:476) ["Hashish reveals nothing in the individual except the individual himself. (...) That individual is so to speak cubed and raised to an extreme (...)"].
- ¹⁴ It should be pointed out that cocaine does not "corrupt" him in the conventional sense of the word, as his vilest acts are committed before he even uses the drug.
- ¹⁵ Tolstoj also thought gymnastics, dancing, music and ritual part of the "sin of intoxication." Cf. "Xristianskoe učenie," (39:171); English: "The Christian Teaching" (22:391).

- ¹⁶ See Freud's definition in "Negation" ("Die Verneinung," 1925], cited according to *Collected Papers* 5:181-185). Like Ageev, Freud postulates two separate realities, an external and internal one; the pleasure-ego

tries to introject into itself everything that is good and to reject from itself everything that is bad. From its point of view what is bad, what is alien to the ego, and what is external are, to begin with, identical. (5:183)

Maslennikov, of course, is stuck at the narcissistic stage of development and lacks Freud's reality principle, which is able to mediate between internal and external. Because for Freud and Ageev "originally the mere existence of the image serves as a guarantee of the reality of what is imagined" (5:184), Maslennikov is able -- at least for a time -- to nourish himself from the images stored in his memory.

- ¹⁷ Here we encounter an additional irony: the Freudian concept of neurosis is structurally almost identical to the drug-induced disruption of exchange relations between ego and world described by De Quincey and Baudelaire. Although the young Freud was an enthusiastic promoter of cocaine use for clinical purposes -- his early medical articles from 1884 and 1885 were instrumental in popularizing the drug -- in his psychoanalytic work he never seems to have developed the parallels exploited here by Ageev. By doing so, it would seem, Ageev also touches on Freud's own role in spreading the pernicious drug and reestablishes the (repressed?) genetic links between the literature of narcomania and psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious.
- ¹⁸ Maslennikov's description of the drug's effects are clinically accurate, even down to details that the author could hardly have "experienced" personally (in particular Maslennikov's death by asphyxiation, which conforms to the clinical picture of cocaine overdose). For a contemporary medical depiction of cocaine's effects see Maier 1926:199.
- ¹⁹ The limited applicability of Mauss' system to modern contexts has been pointed out by Ora Avni (1985:228), who notes among other things his disinterest in describing intermediary events within such systems: because of this, "il devient impossible d'isoler des mini-séries d'échanges et d'en déterminer le don premier." It is of course precisely this kind of utopian simplicity, this lack of mediation, that makes Mauss useful to us here.
- ²⁰ See his review article "Ob otnošenijax meždu polami" ([1890], 27:288-289), where Tolstoj approvingly cites this formula: the less sex in marriage the more spirituality -- and hence the more contentedness.
- ²¹ The reasoning behind this is arcane but nonetheless interesting. Maslennikov, evidently following Tolstoj, believes that the masculine personality is "naturally" split into a sensual and spiritual part (thus directing its energies in separate directions) whereas the female fuses them into a whole. This is why Maslennikov and Tolstoj dread unbridled female sexuality: if the sexual side were to become dominant in women, "ves' mir prevratitsja v publičnyj dom" ["the whole world would turn into one huge brothel"] (86/106). Tolstoj mentions a similar idea of female wholeness in his article "Posleslovie k rasskazu Čexova 'Duščeka'" (41:374-377), but does not develop it in as detailed a way as Maslennikov.
- ²² In "Xristianskoe učenie" (39:171) Tolstoj describes at length the direct, inverse relation between reason and intoxication.
- ²³ Among other things Maslennikov is never addressed by his patronymic. On a mythical level Maslennikov is analogous to the Anti-Christ, who also has no father: the Anti-Christ initiates the end of the world, Maslennikov the end of bourgeois society.

- ²⁴ This total dialogicity would of course have been anathema to Bakhtin, whose metaphysics of the dialogue depends on the mutual contamination, not the mutual exchange of value positions.
- ²⁵ For example as formulated by Kristeva (1969).

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