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**TEARS OF SENTIMENT AND GESTURES OF DEFIANCE:
ASPECTS OF GOR'KIJ'S AND ANDREEVA'S
SELF-REPRESENTATION 1902-1905**

The main thesis of this essay is that Maksim Gor'kij psychologically and artistically failed in the symbolist-modernist art of *zhiznetvorchestvo* ("life creation")¹ when he played out his folksy-sentimental(ist) variant of it (a la Esenin) to the liberal, but non-revolutionary, intelligentsia and that, partly as a consequence of this circumstance, he changed *emploi*, performing in "theatre of provocation,"² romantic high drama and revolutionary action spectacle instead, finding a new audience and a new large-scale stage – practically the entire Western world, as well as Russia – after the enormous success of *The Lower Depths* and the revolutionary events of 1905.³ The change of *emploi* to be discussed is thus a change in the writer's performance of self, in his image projection and semiotics of behavior. In an indisputably speculative vein, it is argued here that Gor'kij's growing alienation from his main dramaturgical rival, Anton Čechov,⁴ his conjugal-comradely union with the flamboyant ingénue actress and Bol'shevik activist Marija F. Andreeva – by Lenin affectionately given the party pseudonym of "The Phenomenon"⁵ – and his enormous success as a controversial public figure and drama writer were decisive factors in this shift of self-representation. In an equally speculative vein, it is suggested that it

¹ For a discussion of this concept see Paperno; Grossmann (1994).

² Term taken from Hubner (1992).

³ Basinskij speaks of Gor'kij's fame after *The Lower Depths* as "unheard-of, phenomenal, of a kind that not only no Russian but neither any foreign writer ever knew (with the possible exception of Lev Tolstoj, whose fame however grew slowly and organically as was typical in the 19th century, whereas Gor'kij's fame literally "exploded"). See Basinskij 2005, 201.

⁴ For a detailed discussion on the relationship Čechov-Gor'kij, see my articles "Purges and Patronage: Gor'kij's Promotion of Socialist Culture," and "Little Snow Flakes and Petty Whiners: Gor'kij's The Summer People as a Parody on Čechov and His Dramaturgy," in *Telling Forms. 30 essays in honour of Peter Alberg Jensen*. For a characteristic detail of Gor'kij's actual hostility toward Čechov, while he was creating the myth of their "tender friendship", see Friedrich Fiedler's memoirs, in which he recalls going to Gor'kij's place in Kuokkala on the first anniversary of Čechov's death expecting emotional commemorations, but finding that "no one there even mentioned the writer" (Fiedler 1996, 344).

⁵ Volochova's biography of the actress is entitled *Fenomen* because of this party pseudonym, which Lenin gave Andreeva; he did so, because he was "enthused by her natural giftedness and variety of interests, her inexhaustible energy and devotion to the cause of revolution" (Volochova 1986, 4).

was wounded self-esteem (*obida*) resulting from his partly unsuccessful first choice of persona in non-revolutionary intelligentsia circles when first coming to the capitals from provincial Nižnij Novgorod that made Gor'kij opt for Lenin and his Bol'shevik program – under the guidance of Andreeva who herself nurtured the *obida* of slighted actress at the time.⁶ Lenin was a prominent intellectual and, to put it mildly, an efficient politician, who, unlike many leading *intelligently* Gor'kij had come across before and was meeting at the time, seemed to think very highly of him without demonstrating the condescension many cultural figures in liberal circles tended to show. Gor'kij would meet with Lenin personally in late November 1905 on the eve of that year's climactic revolutionary events and clearly they both saw mutual benefits in further relations. Gor'kij was finding the milieu in which he would become the object of ever-growing adulation – those revolutionary-intellectual audiences, radical student and politically fashionable artists' circles, which would make him a cult-figure.⁷ Idolization by the younger generation and radical groups, however, did not diminish Gor'kij's *obida*, and thus, initial failure on the stage of public performance and continuing “pockets of resistance,” to some extent at least, fed the fire of his political protest and possibly became a not unimportant personal factor in Gor'kij's support of the Bol'sheviks. Consciously or subconsciously, Gor'kij's major goals became the demonstration of the ethic, aesthetic and ontological superiority not so much of those found in “the lower depths,” as of the one who had shouldered the task of defending these “insulted and injured” against their “oppressors,” be these the “Romanov family” or “outdated” theatre directors, such as V. Nemirovič-Dančenko, or writers “losing touch,” such as Čechov. Becoming more popular than the “passive-pessimistic” Čechov and wooed by many in the MCHT ensemble, not least its patron Savva Morozov and his favorite actress Marija Andreeva, Gor'kij, in his turn, ceased wooing the Moscow Art Theater. Having been a representative of the “spontaneous” folk and not having won over everyone of the old guard intelligentsia in this role, he became the “conscious” political agitator who was going to shake the foundations of all status-quo institutions.⁸

Settling in Moscow at the beginning of the century and beginning to write for Konstantin Stanislavskij's and Vladimir Nemirovič-Dančenko's Moscow Art Theater, Gor'kij first opted for a folksy “*dobryj molodec* from the mighty

⁶ Andreeva met Lenin in Geneva in 1903 and it was during this visit that they began to develop plans for how “to help Gor'kij, in all ways possible (všemerno), to become more firmly integrated into the Social-Democratic environment” (Volochova 1986, 72).

⁷ To quote just one contemporary, the actress O. V. Gzovskaia: “Kto iz nas ne znal naizust' 'Pesnju o Sokole' ili 'Burevestnika'? Ved' vozduch byl napoen revoljucionnymi nastroenijami” (Quoted from Volochova 1986, 12). As this statement indicates, the younger generation of artistic-intellectual circles were usually enthusiastic admirers of Gor'kij.

⁸ Using the terms “spontaneous” and “conscious,” I am of course referring to Katerina Clark's well-known terminology in her *The Soviet Novel. History as Ritual* (Chicago 1981).

Volga" performance of self – a *dobryj molodec* with a “broad soul” that encompassed emotional sensitivity as one of its key elements. Invariably in “costume,” i.e. “dressed democratically” in a Russian/Ukrainian shirt and trousers tucked into boots,⁹ demonstratively not attempting to overcome his dialectical *okan'e* and possibly equally demonstratively mispronouncing foreign words,¹⁰ he presented himself as a man of the people, touchingly naïve and clumsy, but with a sensitive heart of gold, “seismographically” reacting to every injustice on micro- and macro-levels; this heart, attuned to all nuances of suffering, was also receptive to all manifestations of the “Lofty and the Sublime” – not least “Art and Beauty.” Thus, according to Ol'ga Knipper he, for example, (in September 1900) told the MCHT ensemble how he had read Čechov's “The Ravine” (*V ovrage*) to a crowd of peasants on the banks of the river Psol, in the forest, and how these had sobbed while listening to his recital, and how lovingly they had looked at Čechov's portrait brought to the forest by Gor'kij. During this account, Gor'kij himself had “tears in his eyes.” Her comment “pretty, isn't it,” addressed to Čechov, clearly conveys irony.¹¹ Possible literary inspirations for the projection of the aesthetically sensitive people and writer of the people could have been Ivan Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter*, in which the Russian *narod* often is presented as more receptive to art than the aristocracy and as no less, but possibly more, creative than that class. Karamzin's ironical statement in his *Bednaja Liza* that even “a peasant woman has a heart” may have come into play here as well – in the sense that Gor'kij was demonstrating the picture of a tearful *narod* weeping over the misfortunes of fellow sufferers and thus clearly in full possession of delicate emotional-aesthetic sensitivity, however much this notion still was doubted by the elite. As for his own tearful role, it was most likely Puškin's notion of the poet as an “echo” to whatever he registers and experiences that was the major source of Gor'kij's “sensitive” demeanor, since perhaps already then he was grooming himself for the role of the “Puškin of the Proletariat” (more on that below).¹² The tearfulness, for which he seems to have had a natural propensity, thus became both a spontaneous and manipulated demonstration (a “prop”) of the intense responsiveness that the *samorodok* writer laid claim to having. Like a good actor able to cry if the role demanded it, Gor'kij could produce tears when

⁹ I.A. Belousov tells how all the Sreda members would dress up for their meetings, always wearing city clothes, whereas Gor'kij would “stand out” by wearing “democratic” garb. See (Eventov, vol. 1, 157). He also remembers that many thought that “Gor'kij was advertising his image,” but the memoirist himself is convinced that Gor'kij dressed as he did simply because he found his simple clothes more “comfortable” than conventional suits. He also remembers that Gor'kij created quite a fashion, Saljapin, Andreev and Skitalec also sporting simple folk dress at the time (*ibid.*, 158).

¹⁰ F. Fiedler was dismayed by Gor'kij's incorrigible stressing of “Berlin” on the first syllable.

¹¹ See Čechov 2004, I, 81.

¹² Also, see my article “Full of Mirth on the Edge of the Abyss” (Masing-Delič 1997).

the situation required – and probably the tears were quite heartfelt, as tears of wounded self-esteem and newfound self-admiration tend to be.

In any case, writing to Anton Čechov while still living in Nižnij Novgorod, Gor'kij already in his first letter (from October/November 1898) introduces a strongly sentimentalist strain into their correspondence, giving detailed descriptions of his emotions and “soulful” reactions to Čechov’s art *s mladych nogtei* (from babies’ toes).¹³ As behooves an almost Karamzinian sentimentalist, he “wept” over them, as well as “laughed sadly” over them, obviously referring to the “laughter through tears” stance of Gogol’ (283). He does anticipate a possible ironic reaction from the addressee to his outpourings, but also credits him with the largesse that is able to see the virtue of a “silly heart” in turmoil. The letter ends with the assumption that Čechov’s “pure and clear spirit” is “sobbing” in a dull world and that this “sobbing” (*rydat’* and *rydanie*) is a “call to the heavens” on Čechov’s part, i.e. that the latter shares his correspondent’s *obida* over the social and political world order. The next letter is again using a “sentimentalist” vocabulary in which “tears” and “the heart” dominate the discourse. Added is also the notion of “trembling” – it seized him watching the scene where Dr. Astrov speaks of “Africa” and its heat (“*ja zadrozal ot voschiscenija*”).¹⁴ Although Čechov responded with sympathy to these letters, there were also admonitions to tone down an exuberant style, at least in his artistic writing. Eventually, Čechov’s refusal to share in effusive sentiment became the cause of a new and very strong *obida* on Gor’kij’s part.

For a fully appreciative audience of his sentimental-folksy performance Gor’kij had to wait for an actress with “theatrical mannerisms” (*teatral’nye alljury*) – the MCHT actress Marija Fedorovna Andreeva.¹⁵ She too apparently favored a sentimental and melodramatic style of acting in both life and art playing ingénue roles in a markedly “touching” and intense style, with the latter eventually jarring with MCHT’s more subdued performance poetics, as well as moderate political stance, which made the theater refuse her (and Gor’kij) in using its stage as a political platform. While still an actress at MCHT, however, she already admired Gor’kij’s performance of the “sensitive champion and offspring of the folk whose heart resonates to Great Art.”

The revelation occurred during a performance of *Djadja Vanja* in 1900, during the Crimean trip MCHT took to show Čechov (who could not come to

¹³ Gor’kij 1997/8, vol. 1, letter 248, 283-284.

¹⁴ Gor’kij 1997/8, vol. 1, letter 256, 292-293.

¹⁵ Aleksandr Bachrach’s expression, conveying Vera Bunina’s perception of the actress (Bachrach 1979, 130). In her *Diaries*, Bunina, recalling their shared Capri times, notes that “Mar’ia Fedorovna spoke as if in the theatre” while addressing a religious procession, “saying the same thing over and over again, in a too markedly Italian fashion” (*ibid.*, 201). Bachrach also recalls Bunin commenting – with irritation – on incidents from the same Capri time, such as Gor’kij’s demonstratively theatrical gestures, his constant sermonizing, exaggerated demonstration of his superiority, irritating and artificial Volga ‘okan’e’ (*ibid.*, 129).

Moscow for health reasons), some of his plays in performance. On this particular occasion, however, the play was but the prop for Gor'kij's own miniature play, while the crucial performance was Gor'kij playing himself as sensitive spectator of *Uncle Vanja*. The audience was encouraged to watch his monodrama in the audience rather than the play on stage. This is Andreeva's description of Gor'kij's behaviour as spectator cum actor:

Глаза его то вспыхивали, то гасли, иногда он крепко встряхивал длинными волосами, видно было как он старается пересилить себя; но слезы неудержимо заливали глаза, лились по щекам; он досадливо смахивал их, громко сморкался, смущенно оглядывался и снова неотрывно смотрел на сцену.¹⁶

His eyes would flare up, then again become extinguished; sometimes he would energetically shake his long mane of hair; it was obvious he was trying to control and overcome himself, but the tears unstoppably filled his eyes, flowing down his cheeks; irritated, he would fling them off, blowing his nose loudly; then he would look back in embarrassment, afterwards once again fixing his gaze on the stage.¹⁷

This enraptured spectator is apparently completely unaware of being watched attentively by a very beautiful and elegant woman with connections and influence,¹⁸ who was also an actress at the famous theater he himself was soon going to be part of as a playwright. He repeatedly does look "backward in embarrassment," ostensibly to check that his touchingly "silly" behavior has not been noticed by the audience of which he is a part, but apparently never in the direction where she is sitting and watching him so intently. She, in her turn, albeit a professional actress, seems to be completely "swept away" by his performance, possibly still unaware that tears and trembling had seized Gor'kij many times already during numerous previous readings and viewings of *Uncle Vanja* (see the letter to Čechov quoted above). Although it could be argued that the loud blowing of his nose and over-emphasized "pulsating" to the rhythm of the dramatic action (*glaza ego to vspykhivali, to gasli*; emphasis by IMD)

¹⁶ Andreeva 1963, 42.

¹⁷ This and all other translations from the Russian are mine.

¹⁸ Andreeva was at the time married to Andrej Alekseevič Zeljabuzskij, a civil servant who had general's rank and was trusted by the government. She herself shone on social occasions, such as the balls of the general-governator (Voločova 1986, 27). She was at that time also a close friend of MCHT's patron Savva Morozov – ever since 1899 he was openly in love with her to the detriment of his marriage (Morozova; Potkina 1998, 79). Andreeva's beauty was generally admired and both Kramskoj and Repin painted her. So did Grand Duchess Elisaveta, the last Tsarina's sister. Meierkhol'd was enchanted by Andreeva and even wrote a poem to her: "kogda pestrjat krugom bezvkusnye narjady, / Tvoja odežda – nežnoj belizny ... / Kogda glaza drugih gorjat grechovnym bleskom, / V tvoikh – lazur' morskoj volny ..." (See Morozova; Potkina 1998, 183). It was a general impression that she was an "angel" who exuded guileless innocence.

demonstrate crude acting techniques, she – herself a “theatrical” actress — may have perceived him as something like an “Aeolian harp,”¹⁹ reacting every time to the “music” played with equally strong vibrations-emotions. Alternatively, she presents the drama of “two kindred souls,” swept away by the same wave of shared exalted feelings. By the time she wrote her memoirs, she may also have been acquainted with Gor’kij’s proletarian version of the Puškinian “The Poet as Echo Myth” – with his vision of himself as the writer who “echoes the life of the universe” with senses refined beyond the ordinary (as in Puškin’s “The Prophet”), a condition that presupposes easily stimulated senses of extraordinary power.²⁰ She would later emphatically claim that Gor’kij’s sensitivity was extraordinary. Stating that, as a writer, he was a “splendid actor,” i.e. that he “enacted” the characters he created both when creating them and later when presenting them in the readings of his texts, she would also point to his total identification with any given role, to the point of receiving what may be termed “stigmata.”²¹ Thus, writing about a murder, he developed the same knife wound as that inflicted on his heroine and had it “for several days.”²² In fact, a doctor was called in, who explained to her that such reactions were possible with “exceptionally sensitive and impressionable” people. She also gave a different version of the same incident, stating that the writer deliberately inflicted a wound to himself with a knife in order to feel the pain his heroine had to suffer and that the “spot” was visible “for several days.”²³ According to Andreeva, Gor’kij even “died” with his heroine, i.e. he fainted, falling to the floor in his study with a heavy thud which she heard from her room below, causing her to rush upstairs and to find him in this condition.

In either version, there is an interesting intimation that Gor’kij was a kind of Christ-like figure. Gor’kij was of course not the traditional Christ of pity in either his own or her presentation of the Christ image. Thus Andreeva emphasized that it was true that Gor’kij had a “weakness,” namely to weep a great deal but that his propensity for tears was not founded on pity, or self-pity, but that it was an invariable reaction on his part to the “beauty of art.”²⁴ In her

¹⁹ Andreeva recalls that having read Leonid Andreev’s story “V tumane,” he was so excited that he “trembled all over, vibrating like a taut string” (Andreeva 1963, 48). In a letter to K. Stanislavskij (from April 1902), she writes about the “strings” (struny) connecting them and that it is painful even to touch them (ibid., 60). Thus “strings” seem to have been an image she liked to use.

²⁰ The phrase is taken from a letter Gor’kij wrote to Nina Berberova. Although it is from a later period than the one discussed here, Gor’kij’s echo-myth apparently was being formed already then (see Berberova 1979, 174). Already Gor’kij’s “Danko” with his flaming heart torn out of his chest (by himself) testifies to Gor’kij’s interest in this classical and famous poem that would also powerfully inspire Dostoevskij.

²¹ See Andreeva 1963, 337.

²² Andreeva 1963, 338.

²³ Volochova 1986, 195.

²⁴ Andreeva 1963, 337.

memoirs of the time she and V. Chodasevič spent in the Gor'kij household in Sorrento, Nina Berberova asks the question why Gor'kij cried so much; she was astounded by the capacity of his "lachrymal glands to exude liquid for any reason," since in "the deterministic world in which he lived, there would, it seemed, be no place for tears."²⁵ The answer to the riddle may possibly be found in Gor'kij's determination to be the inevitable end product of the Russian genius that Gogol' predicted would come as a reincarnation of Puškin and his "prophet" from the eponymous poem only on a mass scale that would make the Russian nation one of sheer geniuses of subtle sentiment. Gor'kij, being one of "the people," could then view himself and be presented as that threshold figure that heralded the birth of the Russian folk as one consisting entirely of Puškinian "echoes" marked by extraordinary perceptiveness and sensitivity – the guarantee of its historical task to be the reconciler of all national conflicts in the world as Dostoevskij had envisioned this notion in his "Puškin speech". Thus, a natural propensity for weeping would be cultivated and perfected to be demonstrated to the world – and himself too perhaps – that he was the universal echo of Puškin's poem the Russian "omni-man" (*vse-čelovek*) that Dostoevskij had depicted in his speech, and the "socialist overman" he himself had presented in his works.²⁶

Andreeva may genuinely have seen Gor'kij as a proletarian Prince Myškin who, through his sensitivity to beauty (in his case leading to positive action though),²⁷ would save the world; or she may have been his "promoter," manager and image maker from the outset of their union. Thus, she was possibly already assessing his "performance" for political purposes,²⁸ manipulating her soon-to-be lover as much as her current admirer, the millionaire Savva Morozov, whose protection at MCHT she enjoyed and from whom she would soon, shortly before his suicide (murder?) in the summer of 1905, receive a life policy of one hundred thousand roubles.²⁹ Interesting in any case is the "watching-the-spectator-who-in-his-turn-is-watching-the-watcher-out-of-the-corner-of-his-eye"

²⁵ Berberova 1979, 189.

²⁶ *The Socialist Overman* is the title of Günther's very perceptive book on Gor'kij (Günther 1993).

²⁷ Gor'kij's famous antipathy to Dostoevskij does not preclude a shared utopian vision of Russia's role in world history with Gor'kij offering a secularized and crude version of Dostoevskij's religiously founded expectations.

²⁸ Although she had not yet met Lenin, she was apparently already interested in anti-government political ideas.

²⁹ For discussions of whether Morozov's death was suicide or murder, see Boris Nosik (2003), Arutiunov (2002) and Morozova's and Potkina's *Savva Morozov* (1998). All three works, including the least speculative by Morozova and Potkina, agree that the Bol'sheviks had vested interest in killing Morozov to get at this life policy money that Andreeva had promised the party. There was no hope for getting more money out of Morozov in other ways, since he was clearly cooling toward their cause and had refused the Party (represented by L. Krasin) further subsidies. Any hopes he may have had about a union with Andreeva had also been dashed by this time through her choice of Gor'kij, so that this powerful emotional lever was also no longer operative.

situation (as Gor'kij undoubtedly was watching Andreeva in spite of never looking directly at his fair admirer) in the monodrama or perhaps rather duodrama discussed above. It is one that appears to have been staged for courting the writer's newfound muse in an attempt to convince her of the spontaneity of his pure and sensitive heart, knowing that she would observe his show of sensitivity and draw her appropriate conclusions from it. Possibly the "show" also "signalled" that their combined performances – hers being that of the great actress moved by genius – could have considerable impact on future spectacles on a large scale, spectacles that would have political impact. As for the spontaneity, who could suspect an absorbed spectator – one who could not even control his physiological reactions – to be thinking of the impression he was making on an observer? Possibly only an actress who herself liked to perform in life as much as on the stage would be able to appreciate such a *show* of sincerity.

Whatever the case, the "physiological" aspect, i.e. above all profuse tears but also trembling, was invariably part of Gor'kij's performance. Andreeva reports elsewhere that reading authors he "loved" he would invariably "vibrate like a taut string" and cry profusely and that many, if not most, of the younger members of the MCHT troupe were deeply moved by this spectacle.³⁰ The "trembling" and "vibrating" were very effective – Gor'kij was obviously in the most literal sense a "vibrant" personality.³¹ Even Stanislavskij was moved by Gor'kij's display of sensitivity when – confronted with crowds of admirers – he would "regularly be startled, extending his nostrils" (*vzdragival, raskryval nozdri*), while also "constantly smoothing out his straight long hair with the masculine fingers of his strong hand."³² Why did such "physiological" and "motor" details in Gor'kij's performance impress his audience which included quite a few skilled actors – one would think that such a crude variant of sentimentalist sensibility was by any standards passé at the time, especially since the performance apparently was quite repetitive? The reason could be that such sentimentalist behaviour would not be deemed appropriate in the educated intelligentsia but seen as normal and positive for the folk intelligentsia, the representative of which Gor'kij was perceived to be. Or was Gor'kij perhaps already mythologized as a new type of human being, endowed with senses and sensibilities that exceeded the norm of average human beings and that pointed to the development of the "Man" (*Čelovek*) of the future who would feel and think more intensely than any contemporary person? At least his supporters might

³⁰ Andreeva 1963, 48.

³¹ Jurij Zeljabuzskij remembers that Gor'kij was "vsem svoim gorjačim serdcom protestujuščij i kak-to vibrirujuščij" (with all his burning heart protesting and somehow vibrating) after his futile visit to Count Witte, trying to avert the events of Bloody Sunday. See Volochova 1986, 97.

³² Eventov, vol. 1, 159.

well have envisioned him as the "Puškin of the proletariat" and as a "Protean personality" who could encompass a broad range of emotions, possessing that "sixth sense" that Gumilev would clamour for in his poem "Sixth Sense" (of 1921) and that already the symbolists believed was developing in select contemporary personalities such as their own. Such a man was bound to be "larger than life" in all respects including the range and depth of his emotions. He would not be perceived as a "weepee" sentimentalist but as a man exceptionally endowed for registering the essence of phenomena and if his reactions were strong, that would be natural in a man of the people.

Perhaps this is the reason why also Gor'kij's many admirers and followers appear to have felt obliged to follow suit and to develop a heightened "epistemological emotionality" demonstrated in gestures and postures testifying to their "being shaken to the roots of their being" whenever confronted by him and/or his art. They too were marching forward with Gor'kij's *Čelovek* (1904) toward a New Mankind and World where "bourgeois" lukewarm emotionality was replaced by constantly vibrant feelings, merging with the lofty, thought of a superior intellect. This emulative trend can be seen in the Repin-Stasov circle, for example, for one because Il'ja Repin left a drawing of such an "audience performance". In his 1905 sketch of an event that may be termed "The Author Reads his Work to the Elect", we see N. Garin-Michajlovskij covering his forehead with one hand and directing his ecstatic glance into a transcendental distance-future, while listening like a "taut string" to Gor'kij's reading from his work *Deti solnca*. His facial expression is that of a man who cannot believe that he is hearing what he is hearing – it is too miraculous to be true. The art and music critic Vladimir Stasov, a venerable old man with a white beard and an ecstatic admirer of Gor'kij, sits on the same drawing with his hands folded and his head bent; he seems to be praying, or is in a mood, which replicates that of the biblical Simeon, who felt he could "go in peace,"³³ knowing that the saviour of Israel had been born. Stasov seems to be saying in his whole posture that he too can go in peace now that Russia's saviour was sitting there right next to him, reading *The Children of the Sun*.³⁴ Gor'kij himself, for once seems rather collected in comparison to his audience. The drawing of course renders Repin's personal perception of the event.

Soon Gor'kij would add a "neo-romantic" element to this kind of performance, adding the figure of the beautiful and spellbound young woman, his newfound muse, to the scene. Marija Fedorovna was the given candidate for this

³³ Luke, 2, 25-32.

³⁴ Also in his written reactions, Stasov was invariably exuberant whenever Gor'kij was involved; he wrote to Repin's wife Nordstrom that since the meeting with Gor'kij three months ago he was still "swimming in ecstasy" (*vostorg*), that Gor'kij's was a "divine nature" and his intellect "miraculous" (*čudnaja golova*); he saw in him "poetry," "strength of spirit and artistry," "simplicity and truthfulness of form" (Voločova 1986, 91).

role of beauty and actress of "God's grace" riveted to genius.³⁵ We are at the premiere of *Na dne* again, in which Andreeva performed Nataša:

В третьем акте ему понравилось, как я играла. Пришел весь в слезах, жал руки, благодарил. В первый раз тогда я крепко обняла и поцеловала его, тут же на сцене, при всех.³⁶

He liked the way I played in the third act. He came to me all in tears. Squeezed my hands and thanked me. Then for the first time, I strongly embraced him and kissed him, right there, on stage, in the presence of all.

Apparently Gor'kij had not wanted her to perform the role of Nataša or even participate in the play *The Lower Depths* at all since she was considered to be of such beauty and elegance that she might not be able to cope with representing a simple girl in modest clothes mired in the milieu of the "lower depths." She insisted on getting the role however and convinced Gor'kij of her ability to transform herself into a new stage identity.³⁷ The scene above thus also marks Andreeva's joining forces with the cause and breaking with her old life (and *emploi* of the upper-class ingénue), dedicating herself to incarnating the writer's socialist word, as opposed to the less social problem-fraught roles of her past. Gor'kij himself was exchanging the intimate performance spaces of the theater parquet, theater studio and intelligentsia drawing room to the stage itself. While his space expanded, he however continued to perform the touchingly modest "Volga molodec" for the time being. After the premiere of *Na dne*, for example, and after the scene of bonding with his muse on stage he physically resisted being brought before the theater audience and becoming the center of attention even though he could not be unaware of the fact that he was bound to be called out. He literally had to be brought onto the stage by force and in the process of being forced into the limelight was made very visible indeed. Andreeva remembers:

[...] его буквально вытолкнули на сцену. [Surprised while smoking a cigarette,] он прятал ее в кулак. По обыкновению он был в черной косоворотке [...] в высоких сапогах.³⁸

[...] he was literally pushed onto the stage by force. [Surprised while smoking a cigarette], he hid it in his fist. As usual, he was dressed in his black Russian shirt [...] and in high boots.

³⁵ Andreeva was actually not that young any more when she met Gor'kij – she was born in the same year as he was (1868) – but her *emploi* was still the ingénue and she was still remarkably beautiful and young looking, judging by photographs and memoirs.

³⁶ Andreeva 1963, 49.

³⁷ Volochova (1986, 59) writes: "[...] она [...] сыграла Наташу искренне, правдиво".

³⁸ Andreeva 1963, 49.

True, Gor'kij would soon after the premiere of this immensely successful play also perform his role as object of adulation according to the principles of the "theatre of provocation" and in the tradition of "the great author despises the vulgar crowd" scenario; thus, Ol'ga Knipper wrote to Čechov that after one performance of *Na dne*, when he was called out by a wildly enthusiastic audience as usual, Gor'kij came out "angry, unwillingly, picking his nose and not bowing" to the applause.³⁹

Soon afterwards (in 1904) this union of a "great writer" and a "great actress," who was a comrade as well,⁴⁰ would be verbally fixed by the (private) dedication of Gor'kij's prose poem *Čelovek* to his inspirer and comrade-in-arms Andreeva; this prose poem celebrates the lofty ideals of a mankind dedicated to progressive ideas but also its tried and tested leader the great writer and thinker. The dedication is to her who has understod:

Вот вам моя песня [...] В ней – моя вера [...] мною было много испытано. Часто Смерть смотрела в очи мне и дышала в лицо [...] но и Смерть не убила мечты моей. [...] И не раз слышал я злой смех Дьявола над убитыми грезами юности, но и острая сила сомнения не разрушила эту мечту мою, ибо с ней родилось мое сердце. Я кладу его к Вашим ногам. Оно крепкое. Вы можете сделать из него каблучок для своих туфель.⁴¹

Here is my song [...] In it is – my faith. I have experienced much. Death often looked me straight in the eyes and breathed in my face [...] but even Death could not kill my dream [...] And more than once have I heard the evil laugh of the devil, ridiculing the crushed dreams of my youth, but even the all-penetrating power of doubt did not destroy my dream, since, together with doubt, my [staunch] heart too was born. I put it at your feet. It is tough. You can make little heels for your shoes out of it.

It could have been this kind of stylistic – and emotional – grotesque that formed the bond between the theatrical writer and the theatrical actress, particularly since both at times evoked bemused reactions on the part of the "sophisticated."⁴² Čechov too was not uncritical of her talents and had already annoyed Gor'kij by having reservations about this. While in the process of learning the role of Irina in *Three Sisters*, Marija Andreeva wrote a letter to him complaining that he had made no comment whatsoever on her interpretation of the role when he had attended a rehearsal. In conclusion she wished the ailing

³⁹ Čechov 2004, vol. 2, 129.

⁴⁰ She was not his *prekrasnaja dama*, but his "prekrasnij drug-ženščina" (Volochova 1986, 79).

⁴¹ Volochova (1986) discretely breaks off the quote after "k Vašim nogam," (63) sparing us the image of the heels made out of a staunch and tried heart.

⁴² Apparently Andreeva shocked the "refined" Petersburg audience by her piercing and loud screams in *Na dne*, even causing one pregnant lady to faint (Čechov 2004, II, 211).

writer to be *zdoroven'ki* (a healthy boy), apparently using this infantile word to convey the “warmth” of her “sincere” nature. He replied that he “had held himself back from any comment whatsoever to the extent possible (*eliko vozmozno*) so as not to disturb her in her work.” He also concluded by wishing her to be *zdoroven'ki* (a healthy girl), adding that he hoped that the “angels of heaven keep watch over her and keep her safe.”⁴³ The irony – although apparently not noticed by Andreeva – is unmistakable; it is conveyed for example by the exaggerated statement that he was refraining “to the extent at all possible” from making comments and in the use of the church slavonicism *eliko* (incidentally Gor'kij also often used Slavonicisms to convey irony); it is also evident in his quote of her infantile *byvajte zdoroven'ki* as well as the last pious and sugary wish for her protection by angels – all clearly a parody on her effusive style.⁴⁴ It could be argued that Čechov's irony was not the kindest but one explanation for his irony could be that he picked up on Andreeva's weakness for erotic innuendo in her letters to male addressees, camouflaged as warm “sisterly” concern, deep “comradely” affection, sensitive soul-searching, the outpourings of an “artistic soul” and other guises. Certainly some of Andreeva's letters to the good-looking N.E. Burenin who accompanied her and Gor'kij to the US and spent some time with them on Capri display an overflow of apparently guileless emotion that ostensibly pursues no goals except the demonstration of sympathy for a “comrade” battling the same battles as she. Her effusive letters could also be read as epistolary flirtations, at least by a reader less prone to exalted feelings than she lays claim to.

In any case, the role of – not *femme fatale*, but – “*ingénue fatale*” innocently unaware of her devastating power over men seems to have been enacted by her quite often. Particularly interesting in this regard is Andreeva's already mentioned relation with Savva Morozov, the wealthy patron of MCHT who wrote out a life policy for one hundred thousand roubles for her (which she cashed one year after his suicide/ murder and paid into the party coffers).⁴⁵ In 1904 she

⁴³ The letter from Čechov to Andreeva is quite unkind. Thus Čechov tells Andreeva that her letter gave him “such joy that he could not even express it,” begs her to consider him, her “debtor who can never repay her,” and tells her he might venture some very minor critical remarks on her acting, if he only had the opportunity to be at rehearsals and then only after watching her for at least the tenth time, or so. Andreeva does not seem to have picked up on the irony. For her letter to him and his letter to her, see Andreeva (1963, 52-54).

⁴⁴ Like Andreeva herself, her biographer Volochova apparently takes this letter at face value and as a proof of the great appreciation Čechov had for her acting (Volochova 1986, 54). In his rare retorts to Knipper's gossip about MCHT events, Čechov never was complimentary about Andreeva, for example, calling her a “*dama ne kul'turnaja*” (Čechov 2004, II, 157). He deemed her an “ordinary” (*obyknovennaja*) actress (Čechov 2004, II, 323). To be fair, some highly cultured people did admire her; the painter Isaak Levitan, for example, was deeply impressed by Andreeva in her role as Irina (Volochova 1986, 34), writing to Čechov about it. The actress V.P. Verigina paid a glowing tribute to Andreeva's acting talents (Andreeva 1963, 381-389).

⁴⁵ On the life policy issue, see reference 29.

wrote to her lover Gor'kij that she had been "taken aback" by Morozov's remark that Gor'kij was a lucky man since he was entitled to "defend her" against a harsh reality while he, Morozov, was not.⁴⁶ At the same time as Andreeva coyly formulated her complete surprise with regard to Morozov harbouring tender feelings for her,⁴⁷ Knipper's MCHT gossip in her letters to Čechov conveys that it had been long known to everyone at the theater that Morozov was infatuated with Andreeva. In Knipper's opinion Andreeva, as a result of Morozov's total devotion to her, had considerable power at the theater and "meddled" in everything by playing on her protector's feelings for her (acting *čerez vľjublennogo v nee mecenata*).⁴⁸ Even though she did not reciprocate his love, she did constantly ask for financial support for the party, for political prisoners, for Gor'kij's bail (when he was arrested in February 1905), invariably receiving whatever she asked for. Perhaps, while relying on her talent to convey guileless innocence, she created a "scenario" for Morozov with herself as a virtuous wife, first Željabuszkij's, then Gor'kij's, who could not respond to his passion for reasons of integrity, but who was not so cruel as to sever all relations with her (married) admirer and exalted friend. Morozov seems to have seen Andreeva as an angelic personality often corrected in this regard by her MCHT colleagues. Certainly he regarded her as a person unconcerned for her personal financial security (*nelepoj bessrebnicej*),⁴⁹ which is why he wrote out the life policy for her. Andreeva did in fact always put the party's needs before her own and she took none of the life policy money for herself.

Whatever scenario it was that was enacted with regard to Morozov, drawing upon her dual roles of actress and party comrade, Andreeva liked to intimate that her rich and impulsive nature – even though entirely guileless and honest – could not be confined by the "boundaries of convention." This form of life creation allowed her to combine the roles of devastatingly beautiful ingénue who unwittingly destroyed men with the role of "honest comrade" since it allowed her to display her beauty while innocently assuming that "comrades" did not register her feminine charms. They would not even notice that their female comrade appeared in an enticing negligee when discussing party finances or the publication of politically relevant literature. At least, judging by the account of V. Bonč-Bruevič of a business meeting with Andreeva, she was seductive woman and honest party comrade merged into one.

Bonč-Bruevič knocked on the door of a "large suite" in a "first-class hotel" in Moscow at eleven o'clock in the morning (in 1913) and was encouraged to come in even though Andreeva was still with a masseuse. Her "melodious

⁴⁶ Andreeva (1963, 67), in a letter of March 1904.

⁴⁷ Arutiunov (2002, 36) speaks of her romance with Gor'kij as "očerednoj roman".

⁴⁸ Čechov (2004, II, 152), in a letter of February 1903. Morozova and Potkina speak of Morozov's inability to "deny his beloved [Andreeva] anything at all (174).

⁴⁹ Morozova; Potkina 1998, 195.

voice" (*pevučij golos*) from the adjoining room conveyed warmest greetings from Gor'kij through the apparently not firmly shut door and he could also hear the "slaps" that the masseuse administered to Andreeva's flesh. She then entered, slightly "flushed" and wrapping herself in a "fluffy, light-blue peignoir," while extending her hand to him in a "comradely" fashion (*družeski*) and looking straight at him with her "wide-open, unblinking beautiful eyes, endowed with that enchanting glaze (*povolokoj*) that only Russian women have, especially those who have been richly endowed by nature with creative-spiritual beauty." Over "beautifully served coffee," there then ensued a friendly (*družeskij*) chat, focusing on the publication of propaganda materials, party finances and Gor'kij, who at that time was still on Capri. Andreeva revealed that the relationship between Bogdanov and Gor'kij was not of the type that would last, but that the one between Gor'kij and Lenin was of that type, since it was based not only on "love" but "enamoredness" as well, i.e. the two men loved and were enamored by each other. Bogdanov apparently lacked the fire that would spark such spiritual enamoredness. It is very likely that no enamored encounter between Andreeva and Bonč-Bruevič ensued here and then, but the acting techniques of feigned unawareness (of her charm), projection of innocent natural warmth (characteristic of a generous heart), and enthusiasm (for the mutual "enamoredness" of Gor'kij and Lenin) seems based on seduction strategies (while the status of wife is fully maintained).⁵⁰ With the already mentioned Burenin, Andreeva was more openly coquettish than she seems to have been with Bonč-Bruevič, stating for example, that he should "guard his heart" during her next visit, since everyone agreed that "she had become more beautiful and looked younger than ever." Her statement that "no mortal" and not even an "immortal" could see her beauty "and not suffer punishment," is presented as self-irony, but perhaps also as an announcement to some "mortals" (or was he in the immortal category?) that they might be graced by the visit of a goddess and the divine happiness only these could bestow.⁵¹ The rest of the letter conveys her wifely concerns about Gor'kij's health that, of course, were the concerns of the party as well.

Returning to the issue of Gor'kij's growing resentment over the fact that not all applauded his performance as sensitive folk-hero, he may have picked up on the irony in Čechov's letter to Andreeva, and other implied ironies aimed at both her and him. If so, he knew how to avenge the *obida* of irony, and this in a completely unsentimental vein.⁵² Thus, during the January 1904 celebrations of Chekhov's twenty-five years in literature and of the premiere of *The Cherry Orchard*, Gor'kij demonstratively "fussed" about Čechov, already clearly

⁵⁰ Bonč-Bruevič 1968, 120.

⁵¹ See Andreeva 1963, 225.

⁵² E.A. Gutina is one of the few scholars who have discussed (in a short article) the complex role of *obida* in Gor'kij's interactions with his surroundings (Gutina 1996).

marked by his near death. As the actor V.I. Kačalov remembers, one of Gor'kij's supporters at MCHT, he "was in constant turmoil and full of indignation" (*volnovalsja i vozmuščalsja*) about the "insensitivity" of these celebrations.⁵³ He repeatedly and loudly stated that these festivities would "kill" Čechov and he also entreated his writer-colleague "to lie down and stretch out his legs," apparently unaware that the colloquial expression he used (*protjanut' nogi* means "to die.") Čechov, who did not "buy" Gor'kij's feigned linguistic innocence about the double entendre, assured him he was not yet ready to leave this world. Boisterous and fussy Gor'kij then left Čechov and Kačalov but was heard to "shout in a loud voice" to a fellow Marxist editor in the corridor about some recent issue debated in the press, demonstrating what could be characterized as "the indignation of an honest man, pouring out his heart." This, however, could also be seen as a show of "artificial sincerity" – a show of being in the midst of life while others were "croaking their last" – as his entire behaviour that evening intimated, beginning with the "concerned" fussing that made Čechov's illness all too plain, to the inappropriate pun, and ending with a demonstration of the "vitality" of the vigorous man in the "midst of life," so "overflowing" with energy that it was unmistakably clear who was to change the world and who would depart from it. The performance of naïve sincerity is above all conveyed by the performer apparently completely unaware of how his booming voice carried, and how his "concern" demonstrated his superiority. An "overflowing heart" just cannot "help itself." One more detail of Gor'kij's performance at that time could be mentioned in this context, since it would seem to show a consistent technique: during the premiere of Čechov's *Cherry Orchard*, Gor'kij was observed by the literary memoir writer Fiedler, keen to register his reactions to the play. Gor'kij did not applaud a single time, even though he hardly could have believed himself to be unobserved by curious fellow spectators eager to know his reaction to the new play by Čechov, since it never was the case that he would not be closely scrutinized by everyone present. He could, however, pretend to believe that no one was paying attention to him, who was but a modest *samorodok* writer, and therefore mark his "sincere" lack of enthusiasm, while ensuring that many would see he did not much care for it.

By the time Andreeva and Bonč-Bruevič met in the Moscow Hotel, her acting career was in decline, however attractive she still was in her appearance. She had long ago broken with MCHT (in 1904), her reason being that she felt disappointed with its lack of political commitment. In her resignation letter to Stanislavskij she wrote:

⁵³ Gor'kij 1997/8, vol. 4, 229.

Мне больно оставаться там, где я так свято и горячо верила, что служу идее, а вышло – ну, не будем говорить об этом.⁵⁴

It is painful for me to stay in a place where I believed so piously and fervently that I was serving an idea, but where it turned out that – well, let's not go into that.

Explaining her departure from MCHT in political-ideological terms, Andreeva, passed over the issue of her acting, which she however touched upon in another letter to Stanislavskij:

Мне чувствуется, у Вас есть убеждение, что я о себе вообразила, что я преувеличиваю свой талант, и вот надо меня с этой неверной позиции сбивать.⁵⁵

I get the feeling that you are convinced that I have a high opinion of myself and that I exaggerate the scope of my talent, wherefore it is necessary to knock me down so as to take me out of my delusion.

In the same letter to Stanislavskij, she is also self-critical, stating that although she often felt so strongly for a given role that “all her inside trembled with tears and her head was spinning from excitement,” she would produce an unconvincing interpretation (*fal's*) and that she knew this herself.⁵⁶ It is of course very difficult to judge an acting talent a century after a performance, but, if talented, Andreeva seems to have belonged to those actors who can only play themselves. At any rate, Gor'kij believed she could not play the title role of Ostrovskij's *Bespridannica* (*The Bride Without Dowry*) entirely convincingly because she lacked that heroine's “slavish psyche,” wherefore her own “proud essence” would inevitably shine through.⁵⁷ Talented or not, Andreeva was, at least by a group within MCHT, not considered to be a very satisfactory actress (including Čechov) and this was reflected in her getting ever fewer significant roles, as well as in Morozov's growing irritation with MCHT, and especially with Nemirovič-Dančenko, who clearly did not think much of her acting talents. At the same time as critique of her acting appears to have been increasingly voiced (as well as of her political commitment that led to frequent police raids of the theater), Gor'kij's play *Summer Folk* (*Dačniki*) met with critique as well (especially by Nemirovič-Dančenko).⁵⁸ Gor'kij assumed it was because of

⁵⁴ Andreeva 1963, 65.

⁵⁵ Andreeva 1963, 89.

⁵⁶ Andreeva 1963, 90. She did also pick up on a general reaction that her acting was “banal” (see Andreeva 1963, 58-59).

⁵⁷ Volochova 1986, 86.

⁵⁸ Knipper too reacted negatively to the play; see Čechov 2004, II, 379. Although she thought that Gor'kij usually was good when he attacked the intelligentsia, she found he did so somehow “naively” this time.

political differences between him and the theater administration and, like Andreeva, he apparently was disappointed with a theater that no longer was serving the "idea," he himself embraced and believed others should embrace as well. He therefore gave the play to the Kommissarževskaja Theater which was politically engaged at the time. It was premiered there on November, 10th, 1904, and caused a scandal, pleasing the revolutionary audience and angering the liberal intelligentsia. In fact, instead of an audience hall and a stage, an audience and a play, there were two stages and two plays with the peak of the entire performance coming in the entr'acte. This is when the author stepped forward to silence the protest of the liberals and force their submission, which he successfully accomplished. At that moment, Gor'kij seems to have experienced a sense of total triumph and victory over all his intelligentsia enemies, judging from the letter he wrote to his former wife E.M. Peškova:

Первый спектакль – лучший день моей жизни ... Никогда я не испытывал и едва ли испытаю когда-нибудь в такой мере и с такой глубиной свою силу, свое значение в жизни, как в тот момент, когда после третьего акта стоял у самой рампы, весь охваченный буйной радостью, не наклоняя головы пред «публикой», готовый на все безумия – если б только кто-нибудь шикнул мне. Поняли и – не шикнули.⁵⁹

The premiere was the best day of my life ... I have never felt and most likely never again will feel, to the same extent and with the same intensity, what power and what significance I have in life as at the moment, when after the third act, I stood at the very edge of the ramp, all seized by wild joy, not bending my head before the "public," ready to commit any crazy deed at all – if anyone would even dare so much as shush me. They got what I meant – and did not shush me.

This performance marked an important turning point in Gor'kij's image projection. Implied appeals to laud the sensitive heart of a man of the people were exchanged by a display of "righteous" anger, at least in regard to all those who did not join the march of "Man" moving "forward and higher." forever. The transition from sobbing in the stalls, stealthily observed by individual admirers and from being forcibly pushed onto the stage by loving colleagues amused by the timidity of genius, to the defiant rebel and Nietzschean overman coming forward to the very edge of the ramp, ready to "tame the beast" of an ideologically mixed audience, had been successfully made. The emotionality of the performance remained, but its emotional dominanta had changed from sentimentality to indignation and anger.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Gor'kij 1997/8, vol. 4, 173

⁶⁰ Other testimonies from the premiere confirm that Gor'kij had made a very succesful "debut"

This "one-man-against-the-whole-(old)-world" act marked Gor'kij's transition to the "theatre of provocation," as well as to the "stage of world history." During the events in November-December of 1905, Gor'kij "converted his Moscow apartment into the headquarters of the insurrection and, dressed in black leather tunic and knee-high military boots, supervised the operations like a Bolshevik commissar."⁶¹ There was a military unit of revolutionaries from Georgia guarding him throughout this time and staying with him in his Moscow apartment,⁶² which also served as a weapons depot and school on how to explode bombs. In addition, there was a kind of "field kitchen," in the sense that Andreeva kept hot food ready for the combatants all day and night.⁶³

It was at this time that one of the best-known portraits of Gor'kij was painted – V.A. Serov's "A.M. Gor'kij". According to G.S. Arbuzov, Serov in this portrait emulated the old Italian masters, such as Michelangelo, cultivating the heroic and monumental, for his vision of his model. He thus created an image of Gor'kij that conveyed his "strength and courage", and captured his "severe glance, full of determination and will". The painter shows Gor'kij's right hand pointing to his heart and he seems to be addressing a crowd outside the picture frame. Arbuzov believes this posture was created by Serov to "show Gor'kij as he was in life, to characterize his ties with reality".⁶⁴ One could interpret this as meaning that the writer's hand is pointing to his heart, but that this heart is no longer full of timid sentiment, rather filled with "public" emotion. The heart that is being pointed to is not that of someone trying to persuade a hesitant elite, but that of a hero who – while still having a "heart" – reserves its emotions for the deserving. He is possibly even a "Napoleonic" type of hero, such as Puškin depicted him in his famous poem *Hero (Geroj)*, 1830 – i.e. as a hero of action and courage whose heart leads him to the "camp of the doomed" (Nekrasov) in order to make them victorious.⁶⁵ Napoleon would offer a suitable frame of

as the premier of political spectacle: "Takogo spektaklja, kak 'Dačniki', ja nikogda bol'še ne videl: spektakl' – demonstracija, spektakl' – schvatka dvuch političeskich partij. S odnoj storony – kadety, simvolisty, novovremency, ves' pravjy lager' literatury, s drugoj storony – Gor'kij." (letter to A.N. Tikhonov), and Gor'kij (1997/8, vol. 4, 366): "Such a performance as that of *Summer Folk* I have never seen since – it was a demonstration-performance, a fight of two political parties. On one side were the constitutional democrats, the symbolists, the New Times supporters, the entire conservative camp of literature, in the other camp – Gor'kij."

⁶¹ Figs 1996, 200.

⁶² For details, see V.O. Arabidze's account in Bonč-Bruevič 1968, 221-225.

⁶³ For details, see F. I. Drabkina's account in Bonč-Bruevič 1968, 216-220.

⁶⁴ Arbuzov 1964, 227.

⁶⁵ In Puškin's poem, the "poet" envisions how the "hero" (Napoleon) visited his soldier felled by the plague in spite of the risks that entailed for him; when told by his "friend" that this is a legend, disputed by historians, he makes the famous statement that "the elevating lie" is superior to a "host of base truths" and that the hero should be left his "heart." Gor'kij, as has often been stated, made these romantic notions the cornerstone of his own ideology where inspiring illusions lead to a reality in which "base truths" no longer exist, because heroes, temporarily, above good and evil, but retaining their "hearts" for the Just Cause, have re-

reference; after all, he too rose from the "lower depths" to a glory no one could have predicted for a Corsican corporal, just as Gor'kij "from the lower depths" was in the process of doing, taking on all of Europe on the battlefield of warring ideologies. Napoleon too had marked his democratic origins by wearing a simple grey coat amidst his amply decked out generals, just as Gor'kij had been wearing his simple Russian shirt among the well-tailored *intelligenty*. Above all, both were fearless of an old world of convention and fearless of bringing about its destruction in the name of revolutionary ideals.

Gor'kij's heroic heart still knew sympathy then, but it was now reserved for those, who like him, had known *obida* and decided to take their revenge for it. The writer, it would seem, demonstrated this shift in his behaviour and *emploi* in a small performance at the Fifth Party Congress in London in 1907. N.N. Nakorjakov, one of a group of young social-democrats, recalls that during speeches that evoked the heroic events of 1905 and called for new confrontations and that his group of young Bolsheviks were deeply moved as they heard behind them the following words uttered in a "half-whisper": "People like these are able to hold the future in their hands." Turning around, they saw Gor'kij's "pale face" full of "concentration," his eyes focused on Lenin and his immediate cohorts. It became clear to them that "Gor'kij had thought aloud."⁶⁶ That he possibly was also performing his favourite role of the totally absorbed observer, watched with admiration by other observers, did apparently not occur to his young fans. It is possible that the "performance" described above was invented by Nakorjakov for the sake of writing "inspiring" memoirs.

In any case, two disenchanting artists – Gor'kij and Andreeva – whose talents and ideals had been questioned, turned from a non-comprehending bourgeois-liberal world (Stanislavskij, Nemirovič-Dančenko, Čechov, Knipper and others at MCHT) and a "sell-out" theater audience (the *Dačniki* attacked in *Dačniki*) to the proletarian intelligentsia and to the larger stage of revolutionary action. Here gestures could be flamboyant, excessive and melodramatic without being regarded as outré, here no one demanded "good taste" and measure and no one recommended not using mixed metaphor. What followed after the break with MCHT (partly mended later) were theatrical events on an ever-grander scale, where Gor'kij was ready to show that he was capable of taking on the whole world single-handedly. Going back somewhat in time, to his arrest in early 1905, for example, Gor'kij perceived it as an opportunity to challenge the autocracy from the courtroom – a very effective stage of the political arena. He wrote to his (then) friend Pjatnitskij:

moved them all.

⁶⁶ Bonč-Bruevič 1968, 249.

[...] об уклонении от суда не может быть речи, напротив – необходимо, чтоб меня судили. Если же они решат кончить эту неумную историю административным порядком – я немедленно возобновлю ее, но уже в более широком масштабе, – более ярком свете и – добьюсь суда для себя – позора для семейства Романовых и иже с ними. Если же будет суд и я буду осужден – это даст мне превосходное основание объяснить Европе, почему именно я «революционер» [...] А будучи оправдан – я публично спрошу почтенное семейство [Романовых] за что именно меня держали месяц в крепости? Вот мой маленький план.⁶⁷

[...] there can be no question of not going to court; on the contrary, – it is necessary that I be brought to court. If they should decide to close this stupid incident by resorting to administrative measures, I will immediately revoke court procedures – only on a grander scale and with brighter illumination – and I will get my verdict and heap shame on the Romanov clan and their likes.

Should I be pronounced guilty, this would give me an excellent opportunity to explain to all of Europe why exactly I am a revolutionary [...] but should I be acquitted, I would publicly ask the worthy [Romanovs], why exactly they kept me in prison for a month. Well, here you see my little project.

As this letter demonstrates, Gor'kij had taken the next step on his ever-widening stage of self-representation: he was ready to provoke not just the audience of the Kommissarževskaja Theater as in 1904, but the entire Russian establishment while claiming all of Europe as a stage and sympathetic audience. In this situation he could also combine the roles of playwright (*vot moi malen'kij plan*), actor (as defendant explaining his revolutionary ideas to Europe) and casting director (the Romanovs as villains) with that of prose writer – the court scenes could have served as raw material for new works (such as the novel *Mother* that he would soon write on Capri). As it turned out there was no court and Gor'kij joined Andreeva in Latvia instead, establishing new contacts with their social-democratic party and soon leaving Russia for the US, after the failure of the first revolution and then for Capri (until 1913).

It was during the Capri years that Gor'kij developed a new aspect to his public role-playing, extending his performance of self to his prose writing. Thus in his short novel *The Life of a Useless Man* (*Žizn' nenužnogo čeloveka*, 1907), for example, he introduces himself into the text as the revolutionary writer Mironov who is pursued by the tsarist secret police, but who is not afraid of this fact and demonstrates it in “performances” of contempt for them, as well as in demonstrations of his own humaneness contrasted with their lack of it. There can be no doubt that in this novel told from the perspective of the negative hero

⁶⁷ Gor'kij 1997/8, vol. 5, 26.

Klimkov (an anticipation of the narrative technique in *Klim Samgin*, as well as its negative hero Klim), the very positive writer Mironov is to be equated with the "actual" living writer Gor'kij. Mironov's looks present a detailed self-portrait.⁶⁸ Mironov is tall, red-haired, blue-eyed, has high cheekbones, a broad flat nose and a ginger-coloured mustachio. He is clad in the black coat that Gor'kij was to have as a constant of his wardrobe for the rest of his life. Gor'kij-Mironov is such a noble figure that even the secret agent Maklakov cannot but recall how humanely the writer treated him during a search of his home that he took part in:

Нездоровилось мне, лихорадило, едва на ногах стою. Миронов принял нас вежливо, немножко будто сконфузился, посмеивается. Большой такой, руки длинные, усы точно у кота. Ходит с нами из комнаты в комнату, всем говорит – вы [...] Неловко всем около него – и полковнику, и прокурору и нам мелким птицам. Все этого человека знают, в гажетах портреты его печатаются, даже за границей известен – а мы пришли к нему ночью [...] совестно как-то! Вижу я – смотрит он на меня – потом подошел близко и говорит: Вы бы сели, а? Вам нездоровится [...]⁶⁹

I wasn't feeling well that day, I was feverish, could barely keep on my feet. Mironov received us politely; he even seemed a bit shy, but he kept smiling ironically. Big fellow he was, with long arms – kind of cat-like mustachios. He went with us from room to room and used the polite form of address with everyone [...] We all felt uncomfortable – the colonel, the prosecutor and us small fish. Everyone knows this man, his picture is in all the papers, he is even famous abroad and here we were conducting a search at night – we felt real bad about it, And then I see that he is looking at me and then he comes up to me and says: Why don't you sit down; I can see you aren't feeling well [...]

The writer then gives the secret agent some medicine and afterwards accepts his own arrest with the utmost calm.

If this episode shows the writer's humaneness and sensitivity, another episode in the novel demonstrates his frightening anger. The "unnecessary man" of the title, the spy Klimkov, has been set to observe him outside the house where he resides. Suddenly an enraged Mironov emerges, coming out with his coat flung over his shoulder, without galoshes and his cap awry:

«В морду даст!» подумал Евсей [Климков], глядя на суровое лицо и нахмуренные рыжие брови. Он попробовал встать, уйти, и не мог, окованный страхом. (104)

⁶⁸ It was also around this time that Gor'kij, then living on Capri, encouraged a broad range of Russian portraitists studying in Italy to paint him.

⁶⁹ Gor'kij 1961, 102.

“He’ll hit me in the mug!” Evsej [Klimkov] thought to himself, looking at the severe face and the knitted ginger-coloured eyebrows. He tried to get up, but couldn’t move, caught in the grip of terror.

Naturally Mironov-Gor’kij does not hit the little miscreant before him, but just tells him to “shove off”. Thus, we have a literary performance of “Gor’kij” in the act of demonstrating to the (old) world he is out to demolish the full extent of his contempt for it, while also showing a humaneness his adversaries are not capable of. A dash of tragic fatigue in the cameo role he presents here completes the performance of a role in the heroic *emploi* of the “martyred liberator of mankind,” the hero with a heart. In his last incomplete novel *Klim Samgin*, Gor’kij would likewise insert “himself” in several similar cameo-roles.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that Gor’kij and Andreeva were artists of a new type whose talent was not so much to be found in writing for and acting on stage, as in their ability to project “new modal types of personalities.” Together with other celebrities of their time, like the operetta singer Anastasija Vjal’ceva, for example, and perhaps also the actress Vera Komissarževskaja, they belong to those who are “famous for being famous”.⁷⁰ In other words, as “modal personalities,” they presented new forms of behaviour and projected new models of life performance that were meant to go beyond pure aesthetics as an emerging new media-oriented sensibility was demanding. In their case, there was a transition to the realm of enacted and dramatized propaganda that relied on direct interaction with mass audiences and utilitarian aesthetics in which art, like everything else, was a means to but one end.⁷¹ It was their talent for blurring the borderline between stage and audience hall, actor/writer and the “real-life person” of circulating rumour-myths, between performing in politics and politicising performance in a budding media world that enabled them to create their own political version of life creation, where all aspects of their show served but one goal: to stage the total work of art of the world revolution. This version did not spurn scandal (nor had previous life creation) but, in addition, also exploited “tragic” events, such as arrest and exile, political demonstrations and death on the barricades to lend convincingness to their ideological performances on the stage of the world – events that as a result of their scenario function lost their tragic aspect, at least to them.⁷² It is said that the champion

⁷⁰ For a discussion of “modal personalities” and Vjal’ceva’s remarkable career as a café chantant singer and operetta star, see McReynolds (1996, 273-294).

⁷¹ Thus Andreeva would engage her MCHT audience in her personal “tragedy” of having to part from her beloved, but disappointing, theater in various ways, for instance, by falling, deprived of all her last strength, into a chair just a few seconds before the curtain fell – a sight that aroused her audience’s violent demonstration of sympathy.

⁷² Gor’kij wrote to Peškova at the time of the 1905 revolution that she should not be perturbed by bloody events – “history is repainted in new colors with the help of blood alone.” Quoted in Basinskij 2005, 181.

wrestler Ivan Poddubnyi paid Vjal'ceva the compliment to consider her, "along with Maksim Gor'kij, a star of his [own] magnitude".⁷³ Indeed, Gor'kij – who became something of a socialist Jesus Christ Superstar during his years on Capri, together with his muse of this period, the "phenomenon" Andreeva — in many ways heralded a new media-pop-star culture even if their version of it, not entirely typical of pop-culture, was imbued with the ideological pathos of a revolution that was destined to become "the greatest show on earth." Vjal'ceva and Poddubnyi were presumably made into stars by circumstances and their talents, whereas Gor'kij and Andreeva maintained their control over the birth of their stardom. Yet something united them, too, that could be termed the spirit of a new culture that favoured striking effect over imperceptible nuance.

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⁷³ McReynolds (1996) states that Vjal'ceva sometimes "had to pay theater owners a deposit in anticipation of rambunctious enthusiasts" and characterizes this type of audience as one that differs from "stage-door Johnnies" in that they were "more interested in taking part in the performance themselves" than in seducing the star (for the quotes see 284-285).

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