

Sergej A. Gončarov, *Tvorčestvo N.V. Gogolja i tradicija učitel'noj kul'tury*. Sankt Petersburg: Obrazovanie, 1992, 155 p.p.

1.

Broadly speaking, Sergei Gončarov's study investigates the connection between Gogol's poetics and the (Russian/Ukrainian) Baroque. The advent of the Baroque in Western culture may be described as an intense revival of rhetoric. In the late Renaissance, the art of rhetorical persuasion appeared to be close to extinction. It was eroded by formal logic and, in Barilli's words, by the demands of "simplicity" and "good sense."¹ However, in the first half of the 17th century, its fortunes seem reversed. The Baroque *acumen* or *agutezza* is characterised by its maximization of rhetorical means, by a propensity for exaggeration, stark contrasts, grotesque juxtapositions, by antithesis and conceitistic imagery. The Baroque's relationship with the classical *ars bene dicendi* is idiosyncratic, as it weakens the constraint Aristotle imposed on any metaphorical linkage between heterogeneous objects (*prepon*) and thus violates the crucial principle of "suitability." The latter was designed to govern the relations between the rhetorical means, on the one hand, and the substance they address, on the other, thereby safeguarding the greatest possible similarity (*similitudo*) between the two. The result of the Baroque violation of this principle is the preponderance of the rhetorical apparatus over its referent. As Barilli points out, a split occurs between words and things, *docere* and *movere*, or between the senses and the intellect.² The receptive mode corresponding with Baroque rhetorical practise is not one of traditional contemplation but rather, one of excitement and ecstasy. The Baroque style with its maximization of rhetorical means is geared to bring about sensations of heightened awareness which grasp the object in an "ingenious" fashion (*ingegno*). The *ingegno* describes the ability to see affinities and similarities not as a result of traditional persuasion but, rather, as an effect of a sudden experience of shock and bewilderment.

The Baroque violation of the traditional rhetorical economy results in an epistemological shift whose effects were much more lasting than the Baroque itself. The latter is characterised by a fundamental inability to perceive relationships of correspondence and similarity between different entities (such as words and things). In that sense, it differs sharply from the Middle Ages and their insistence upon "magic" correspondences between names, on the one hand, and objects, on the other.³ The Baroque artist, on the contrary, compulsively views similarity as dissimilarity, harmony as disharmony, etc. This inability to perceive similarity accounts for many of the grotesque paradoxes which are so typical of Baroque texts. Any form of "combination" in a Baroque text takes the form of an oxymoronic juxtaposition of objects which by definition exclude each other (love and torment, life and death, water and fire, heat and ice, etc.). The oxymoron is perhaps the most fundamentally Baroque of all tropes (*concordia discors; discors concordia*).⁴

By representing the similar as that which is (also) dissimilar, the harmonious as that which is (also) disharmonious, and the beautiful as that which is (also) ugly, the Baroque calls into question formerly self-evident correspondences.⁵ Any link between words and referents is now merely allegorical, the property of a grandiose "as if". As A.A. Morozov remarks, the Baroque participates in the rationalist turn which occurred in European intellectual history during the 17th century, that point where the similarity between two things begins to be established on empirical rather than on traditional "magic" grounds.⁶ This explains the prominence of the motif of the "catalogue" during the Baroque. Here the comparison between different objects (rather than their magic correspondence) determines the relations between them.

The juxtaposition of a pre-modern culture of magic correspondences, on the one hand, and the Baroque *concordia discors*, on the other, is particularly illuminating with regard to the import of Polish/Jesuit Baroque culture into Northern Russia from its Southern and Western neighbours. As Uspenskij and Živov have shown, the arrival of Baroque culture in Russia marks the beginning of a new, non-traditional and markedly rhetorical textual practise. The traditional Russian attitude is non-rhetorical. (It is not a coincidence that the importation of Baroque culture into Russia coincided with that of rhetorical treatises and manuals for the composition of texts according to rules and examples formulated in Poland or in the countries of Western Europe). The traditional Northern Russian stance on the exegesis of the Bible, for example, is based upon the recognition of canonical correspondences between word and thing. According to the most ardent defenders of this view (the Old Believers), a canonical set of attributes describes both the *substantiae* (nature) and God. The Southern (Baroque) attitude, on the other hand, is a metaphorical one. It assumes that the epithets chosen to address the Godhead may vary according to the position of the observer. In Uspenskij's example, Simeon Polockij insists upon the possibility of referring to God in an apophatic way, as "Darkness", a term which directly opposes the canonical Russian understanding which "naturally" equates God with "Light."⁷

In this sense, the introduction of the Baroque into Northern Russia is tantamount to the beginning of interpretation. The dispute between Avvakum and the supporters of the Nikonian reforms must be seen as a battle between two hermeneutic practises, the one traditional and typological (Avvakum) and the other "modern" and metaphorical (Nikon). One of the consequences of the co-existence of two different semiotic theories in Northern Russia from the 17th century onward is the fact that the Baroque text can be read in either of two ways, either literally or allegorically.

2.

Early attempts to link Gogol's writings to the Baroque have tended to concentrate on the author's ornate, "loaded" style (Bely, Gippius, Rozanov, Sinjavskij) without connecting it to Baroque thinking. In Gogol's rhetoric, the traces of the "crisis of similarity" are indeed obvious enough. An "acute" heightening of rhetoric effect may be found, for example, in Gogol's use of hyperbole, antithesis, and oxymoron. As Tschizhevskij has shown, it is a characteristic of the author's use of these figures that they have no verifiable referents in empirical reali-

ty (the wine "at the same time burgundy and champagne"). A similar effect is evident in Gogol's use of hyperoche, i.e., the description of a given object as something which has no equivalent anywhere ("a moustache incapable of depiction by pen or brush").⁸ In both cases, Gogol' thematises an incompatibility of words and referents which corresponds with the Baroque crisis of similarity. In his *Tvorčestvo N.V. Gogolja i tradicija učitel'noj kul'tury*, Sergej Gončarov sets out to prove that the roots of the crisis of similarity in Gogol's texts lie in Ukrainian/Russian Baroque culture. The author connects Gogol's indebtedness to Baroque rhetoric to a correspondingly Baroque worldview. He concentrates on texts published after 1835 (part I: *Revizor*, *Petersburg Tales*, *Mertvyje duši I*; part II: *Mertvyje duši II*, *Vybrannye mesta* [...]; *Avtorskaja ispoved'*).

Gončarov's book belongs within a paradigm of Gogol' scholarship which, while never quite extinct, has for the longest time been overshadowed by the dominant Formalist view of the author's writings, a view which denied any relevance of Gogol's ideological positions for the scholarly appraisal of his fiction. Gončarov, on the contrary, assumes as axiomatic that Gogol's poetics cannot be understood without reference to his ideology. That ideology is first and foremost, but by no means exclusively, religious in outlook. Gončarov's approach repudiates the common view that Gogol's subsumption of aesthetics under his ideological agenda took its course late in the writer's life, from an assumed "religious crisis" onward. Generally speaking, academic appraisals of Gogol's religious views have taken the form of an apology. That apology sees the later Gogol' (especially in his letters during the 1840s and in *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski z druž'jami*) engaged in a desperate attempt to reinterpret and sacralise his own writings *ex post facto*. In this way, Western criticism has sought to defend the aesthetic autonomy of the author's fiction against any attempt to see in it the manifestation of an ideological agenda. This view constitutes the basis of the most common denominator of Gogol' criticism in the West, i.e., the view of his texts as "absurd" in the sense that they rehearse meaninglessness as the only form of positive meaning.

The counterpart of this viewpoint is a type of criticism which reduces Gogol's ideology to the irrational (Merežkovskij, Setchikarev, Nabokov) or which sees in him the hypostasis of a Slavophile mystagogue, a view championed, for example, in Močul'skij's influential *Duchovnyj put' Gogolja* (1933). Here, the reductionism of the Formalist approach goes to the opposite extreme. Gogol's fictional texts now appear as mere afterthoughts to his sermonising expository texts and letters of the 1840s. It is a characteristic of both approaches that they are unwilling to accept any reflection of Gogol's ideological agenda as a direct part of the formal and semantic structure of his fiction.

Such a reflection came into view, for the first time, in research by Gippius and Zen'kovskij. In their wake, Dmitrij Tschiz'evskij challenged the view that Gogol's (religious) ideology represents nothing but an erroneous appendix to his canonical writings and that, on the contrary, that agenda must be considered one of the principal factors in the *Bedeutungsaufbau* of his fiction. Tschiz'evskij as well as, more recently, Schreier, Amberg, and Weiskopf, subscribe to what one might (in contradiction to the "autonomous" paradigm outlined above) refer to as a "heteronomous" view of Gogol's poetics, a view which assumes that the author's writings are to be seen less as self-referential aesthetic objects than as

signs which have their ultimate referent in a transcendent reality beyond the immanent here and now. The approach suggested by Tschizhevskij necessitates, on the one hand, the reevaluation of Gogol's fictional texts as ideologically informed and, on the other hand, a rereading of his expository "ideological" writings of the 1840s as (also) fictional ones.⁹

Like Tschizhevskij and Turbin, Gončarov perceives Gogol's texts, first and foremost, as parabolic. It is one of the defining traits of the parable that its own plot, characters, motifs, etc., and the meaning to which they allude, do not coincide. It is evident that the overwhelming majority of Gogol's fictional writings forego any direct representation of the sort of positive ideal of which Gogol speaks so frequently in his letters. Gogol's fictional world is characterised, on the contrary, by ugliness, senseless stupor (*pošlost'*) and the impossibility of "making sense". In assuming that the absence of any direct representation of the ideal in Gogol's fiction is not tantamount to an endorsement of its non-existence, Gončarov argues that Gogol operates from an apophatic basis. In other words, any understanding, for Gogol, is based not upon the similarity of sign and referent (a pre-Baroque position) but, on the contrary, on an act of transfer which transcends the order of the sign in search for a higher level of meaning which *per definitionem* has no material equivalent, "sfera sodržanija, ne imejuščaja vyraženiia" (10).

It could be shown that Gogol's thinking on the subject of aesthetic perception is indeed close to the Baroque *acumen* and *ingegno*, an aspect which Gončarov does not elaborate. Especially in the essays published in *Arabeski* (which remain unconsidered by Gončarov), the author thematises the act of understanding not as a visual perception of similarity but rather as a sudden transport, a feeling of shock which "lifts" the soul towards the *unio mystica* with the Godhead. In this context, one might mention the fact that this position directly opposes the Romantic assumption that the antithesis between the material world and its hidden referent (the transcendent), may be dissolved. For the Romantic, the aesthetic principle (art, beauty) allows for a transcending of reality within the immanence of the here and now. For Gogol, on the other hand, any such "aestheticism" is anathema. Thus, his characters remain essentially clueless when they attempt to decipher the hermetic world-text which surrounds them. In this context, one might cite the famous example of the townspeople in *Mertvye duši* who struggle in vain to understand the meaning of the parable (*pritiča*) of "dead souls": "Čto za pritiča eti mertvye duši?" *Mertvye duši* and other texts may be read as meta-texts on the epistemological crisis which defines the Baroque. Thus, on the one hand, the author's heroes compulsively seek to read the world as a symbolic text. On the other hand, however, they have lost any sense of the pre-modern (magic) order of similarity pointing to the correspondence between the sign and its referent.

In connection with his assumption that Gogol's texts represent first and foremost parabolic structures, Gončarov argues that their *sujets*, central motifs and characters fulfill a symbolic function. Gončarov's symbolic approach to Gogol corresponds with the assumption that the writer's ideology centres upon a dualism between this world and the other world, between immanence and transcendence, etc. In the same way, the manifest text of Gogol's fiction is assumed to find its referent outside of itself. The Greek *symbolon* originally signifies two

halves of an object which directly correspond with each other. In Gogol's fictional texts, these two halves are understood to be the material immanent world of *pošlost'*, on the one hand, and its symbolic referent, the transcendent, on the other. The reader transcends the debased fictional world by reading its constituent parts as symbols. As a result, s/he ascends to an ideal meaning of which the fictional text is but the "deformed" outer shell.

Gončarov's tirelessly repeated suggestion that Gogol's texts are to be conceived as signs pointing to a hidden, metaphysical referent is perilously general. For such symbolic reading is, in fact, the blueprint for any type of hermeneutic understanding which views a given narrative as the manifestation of a meaning conceived as "hidden" or absent. One might thus ask if Gončarov's inference that Gogol's fiction can only be understood if read against the background of its metaphysical subconscious is mere speculation. Much will depend upon the author's ability to identify Gogol's ideology as part of the formal structure of his texts. In Gončarov's book, such identification proceeds, first and foremost, on intertextual grounds. The pretexts considered by Gončarov point to European mysticism and the "Platonising" church fathers as the primary roots of Gogol's symbolic practise. Apart from these patristic sources, Gončarov investigates the traces, in Gogol's writings, of the (late) Ukrainian/Russian Baroque. Throughout his book, the author employs the term *učitel' naja kul'tura* in a broader sense than is customary, defining the term as any kind of discourse which seeks to re-organise the world by means of the word or by means of an instructional text (6). Such a discourse opposes a negative pole (the thesis) to a non-existent, ideal positive one (the antithesis) (6).

More specifically, Gončarov invites the reader to view Gogol's fiction through the prism of the late Baroque Ukrainian philosopher and mystic Grigorij S. Skovoroda (1722–1794). Gončarov is by no means the first to trace Gogol's philosophy to Skovoroda. Taking up earlier suggestions by Tschizhevskij, Michail Vajskopf has on several occasions made a compelling case for the link between Gogol and the Ukrainian philosopher.¹⁰ The latter's philosophy is indeed entirely "symbolic". Skovoroda's worldview is based upon the assumption of a quasi-dualistic opposition between outer and inner world, material existence and spiritual being, immanence and transcendence. The material outside, for Skovoroda, represents a sinful, unredeemed immanence contrasting sharply with its counterpart, the transcendent, and God. Skovoroda insists upon the impossibility of cognising the Godhead or the "inner world" except in the unredeemed phenomena of the outer world.

Skovoroda's antithetical worldview has its correlative in a rhetoric whose principal figure of speech is the *coincidentia oppositorum*. For example, the philosopher defines God as that which is both x and y (day and night, winter and summer, cold and warmth, etc.) at the same time. Skovoroda's philosophy conceives of the world as a symbolic book where visible phenomena correspond with an invisible reality which will reveal itself only through symbolic understanding. In this context, Gončarov points to the relationship between the whole and the part, or between syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations as one of the striking parallels between Gogol and the Ukrainian philosopher. Skovoroda conceives of the "outer world" as an assembly of disconnected objects. As Gončarov points out, such metonymical displacements are also characteristic of Go-

gol's fictional world. Indeed, a number of those symbolic objects which map out the "outside" world for Skovoroda (boots, overcoats, noses, boxes, wheels, etc.) recur as central motifs in Gogol's fiction (38).

Symbolic understanding in Skovoroda's sense dissociates the objects and phenomena of the visible world from their habitual context. Thus, a "coat" becomes dissociated from the syntagma in which it belongs (the person who owns and wears it; the plot in which it becomes the object of the hero's desire, etc.). Such dissociation, however, is accompanied by the object's integration into a higher syntagmatic level (that of symbolic meaning) where the coat appears, for example, as the coat of Christ. In that sense, metonymies, for Skovoroda, have metaphorical significance. It is Gončarov's idea that the same may be the case for Gogol' and that, consequently, the application of Skovoroda's hermeneutics to the author's fiction will offer a key to its understanding.

Gončarov's problems in reading Gogol's fiction against the background of Skovoroda's philosophy are obvious enough. Skovoroda's symbolic philosophy belongs in a whole tradition of similar (but not identical) philosophies stretching from Plato to the Areopagitic writings as well as to Baroque mysticism and German Romanticism. Gončarov's task hence consists in substantiating his claim that Gogol' adopts his hermeneutic model precisely from the writings of Skovoroda.¹¹ The critic's efforts in this regard focus upon Skovoroda's anthropology, which has at its centre the mystical doctrine of the "inner man" (*vnutrennij čelovek*), an essential being surrounded by an outer material shell (*vnešnij čelovek*). Both categories recall the body/soul dichotomy familiar from the Bible. The "outer man", for Skovoroda, is associated with the absence of faith and with an exclusively material existence. He refers to this part of the human being as mere "dirt", as a "corpse", or in terms of various animals. The "inner man", on the other hand, is directly linked with the mystical "inner word", a symbolic signifier pointing to a hidden transcendence.

According to Gončarov, Gogol's characters from the 1830s onward appear as fictional unfoldings of Skovoroda's descriptions of outer man (39). Gončarov quotes the example of Sobakevič who is described as a body whose soul may be found "gde-to za gorami" (37). The motif of a lost unity between body and soul indeed recurs in a number of Gogol's texts, particularly in "Šinel". Gogol's characters appear as metonymical displacements, as specimen of Baroque catalogues which have lost any unity. The zoomorphic quality of Gogol's characters (especially in *Mertvyje duši*) is also a commonplace. Furthermore, Gončarov sees a parallel to Skovoroda in Gogol's frequent representation of human beings as lifeless objects (cf. the objects in Sobakevič's house claiming that they, too, are Sobakevič). The reverse of this procedure is Gogol's anthropomorphic depiction of objects and animals (37).

This reviewer does not doubt the relevance of negative anthropology for Gogol's fiction. One may, however, be hesitant with regard to the dominance of Skovoroda's input in this respect. As Gončarov himself points out, the idea of the inner man has its roots in classical thought and the Bible. It may be traced throughout the middle ages, culminating in the Baroque mysticism of Böhme, Arndt, Thomas à Kempis, etc. As a result of the complex genesis of the term "inner man", Gončarov's inferences about Skovoroda as the source of Gogol's anthropology retain a modicum of speculation.

Gogol's heroes, according to Gončarov, do not merely echo Skovoroda's *vnešnij čelovek*, they also make it their heretic business to live the material outer world as if it were the inner world. Instead of transcending the material world they interpret its internal relations as transcendent ones. Gončarov points out that Gogol's plots are frequently based upon his protagonists' acceptance of that which does not belong to them (money, rank, souls, etc.) as their own. The "other" (*čuzoe*) is accepted as a substitute of the inner world (46). The substitution of *čuzoe* for *svoe* and the attempt to live the transcendent within the immanence of the here and now ends in catastrophe (cf. Akakij's end in "Šinel"). In this way, one might add, Gogol's characters open a whole paradigm of characters in Russian 19th century prose whose principal transgression consists in leading a predominantly "aesthetic" existence.

In the section which follows, Gončarov discusses the traces of Skovorodian thinking in some of Gogol's Petersburg tales ("Nos", "Portet", "Šinel"). The aesthetic/aisthetic element is already implicit in the title of the story "Nos". Gončarov interprets the story's hero, Kovalev, as a quintessentially "outer man" who pursues immanent, non-ideal, non-transcendent aims as if they were ideal and transcendent ones. Gončarov might have found evidence of this substitution in many other stories (such as "Starosvetskie pomeščiki", "Povest' o tom, kak possorilsja Ivan Ivanovič s Ivanom Nikiforovičem", "Nevskij prospekt", etc.). Following Turbin, the author likens the story's sujet to the parable of the Prodigal son and notes its striking triplex structure (51). Gončarov also traces certain motifs in Gogol's story to religious/liturgic predecessors (the nose in the loaf of bread as an allusion to the liturgy, etc.). Furthermore, he notes that Skovoroda refers to *vnešnij čelovek* as one who has lost his nose or as *kurnosyj* (53). By means of these and other intertextual references, the loss of the nose, Gončarov suggests, acquires the status of a sign with a symbolic content (loss of nose = loss of self) (52). In this context, it is once again evident that for Kovalev, the parable of the nose remains as much an unsolved riddle as Čičikov's acquisition of dead souls for the townsfolk in *Mertvyje duši*.

If "Nos" focuses upon "outer man", "Šinel", according to Gončarov, marks the beginning of Gogol's concentration on its counterpart, the "inner" man of God (55). "Šinel" has been connected to Gogol's religious ideology by a number of scholars (Driessen, van der Eng, Tschizhevskij, Amberg, Keil, Seemann, Vajskopf). The metaphysical approach to the story assumes that Akakij's acquisition of the overcoat does not amount to an attempt to liberate himself from his puppet-like existence as a copyclerk (the focal point of all broadly humanist or sociologically inspired interpretations of the story). Instead, it charges that the hero's infatuation with his coat represents a temptation by the "devil" Petrovič,¹² an interpretation followed by Gončarov (65). Like Seemann before him, the author connects Akakij to the biblical topos of the "poor in spirit". Similar to Driessen and Seemann, Gončarov interprets Akakij's name in hagiographic terms, viewing it as a reference to the legend of the 40 martyrs of Sevast, which include Saint Akakij (62; 65).

The central point in Gončarov's interpretation of "Šinel" develops an idea put forward by Tschizhevskij, namely that the story should be discussed in terms of Gogol's "philosophy of place". In the Petersburg tales, a character's downfall is frequently the result of leaving his assigned place. Gončarov traces Gogol's

philosophy of place to patristic literature and, in particular, to Skovoroda. The latter refers to inner man as the one who knows his place (*mesto, popriščje*) and duty (*dolžnost', zvanie*) (58). The motifs of *popriščje*, *čin*, and *dolžnost'* have a central place in Gogol's fiction, motifs which, according to Gončarov, the author links to the theme of personal salvation (55). In Gogol's pre-"Šinel'" prose, his heroes are for the most part unable or unwilling to accept their rank and place (Popriščin). In "Šinel'", however, the author presents, for the first time, a hero who is literarily "at one" with his work and duty (57), an identification of professional role and person which, as Gončarov points out, is unusual in the Romantic context and hence semiotised (58). Like Tschizhevskij, Gončarov interprets Akakij's subsequent pursuit of the overcoat as a deviation from the inner man's assigned place, a temptation which (in line with an assumed Biblical invariant) meets with punishment (Akakij's death) (64). His sudden passion for the overcoat does indeed trigger Akakij to leave his place and neglect his duty. His love for the overcoat replaces the love for the work, the copying of documents. In this context, Gončarov points to the interesting semantics of writing in Gogol's story, charging that behind the letters he copies Akakij perceives the invisible and transcendent (59). The earthly Akakij (a pathetic copyclerk and titular councillor) is then doubled by a second Akakij, a spiritual inner man and martyr who communicates with the invisible other world (65).

The last chapter of part I is devoted, for the most part, to the poetics of the title of *Mertvye duši*. Gončarov begins with a rhetorical analysis (the expression "dead souls" as oxymoronic; the weakening of the boundary between the categories of "alive" and "dead", etc.). In the ensuing discussion, the author investigates the intertextual parameters of the expression "*mertvye duši*", concentrating, firstly, on the context of contemporary Russian literature and, secondly, upon the wider frame of Christian doctrine and *učitel' naja kul' tura*. In the 1840s, the expression "dead souls" was widely perceived as strange and alien to the Russian language. Nevertheless, the topos may be found in a number of Romantic texts. In this context, Gončarov's discussion of Žukovskij's ballad *Pokajanie* (1831) where the term has religious/ethical significance is illuminating (80). The significance of the formula "dead souls" in Christian doctrine is summed up in St. Paul's epistles where the death of the body is not equivalent with the death of the soul. *Učitel' naja kul' tura* frequently approaches this dogma of the immortality of the soul from the reverse point of view, representing live bodies with dead souls. Such is the case, for example, in some of the sermons from which Gogol's makes excerpts during the 1840's. Gončarov considers at some length Matvej Desnickij's *Besedy o voskresenii mertvych* (1798) which combines the phrase *mertvye duši* with the issue of sin and the absence of virtue. Apart from Desnickij, Gogol' was well acquainted with *propovedničeskaja literatura* in general (St. Paul, St. Augustine, Joann Zlatoust, Vasilij Velikij, Grigorij Palama, Makarij Ėgipetskij) (84).

Gončarov associates the literal understanding of the phrase *mertvye duši* as *revizskie* (Korobočka) with the level of the novel's fabula, and its figural interpretation (Sobakevič) with the sujet (the "empirical level"). This metaphorical level, in its turn, corresponds with an archetypical transcendent world whose manifestation of the level of the sujet are the narrator's asides, on the one hand, and the intertextual references to patristic sources, on the other. Gončarov notes

an interesting competition between the rationalising (Baroque) style of *učitel' naja kul' tura*, on the one hand, and certain mythopoetic motifs, on the other. *Učitel' naja kul' tura*, in this context, appears as a pedagogic discourse devoted to persuasion and moral betterment. This discourse, according to Gončarov, seeks to "subjugate and overcome" ("podčinit' i preodolet'", 94) the mythopoetic plane where the human being is not susceptible to rationalisation and example, and where it appears to be associated, first and foremost, with a pre-rationalist chthonic element (95). It must be said that Gončarov's theoretical excursions are occasionally marred by lack of clarity. This cryptic quality may result from the author's difficulties in integrating his semiotic/structuralist terminology with its metaphysical subject matter.

In conjunction with his findings in the previous chapters and with Gogol's own plans for his novel, Gončarov sees part I of *Mertvyje duši* as focussing upon the "outer man" who has lost the connection with the transcendent while part II represents its other half, spiritual inner man. The novel is interpreted on the basis of an invariant patristic sujet ("fall/death of the soul – crisis – rebirth"). Gončarov interprets the gallery of landowners in part I as embodiments of *plotskij čelovek* in the patristic sense. Thus, he reads the description of Pljuškin through the prism of Ioann Zlatoust's (as well as more generally Biblical) invectives against the piling up of material goods (86). Furthermore, the author sees Čičikov's vanity prefigured in descriptions of *plotskij čelovek* by the metropolitan Daniil as well as in Vasilij Velikij's writings. The absence of any psychological motivation in *Mertvyje duši* (part I) is also interpreted by Gončarov as a token of Gogol's concentration on "outer man" (90).

Of particular interest is Gončarov's interpretation of Gogol's *poema* from an eschatological perspective. Čičikov's biography and appearance are here linked to various accounts of the Antichrist (his nose sounds like a trumpet [*truba*]; the town fears his arrival like that of the antichrist, etc.) (100–101). At the same time, Čičikov (similar, in this regard, to Akakij Akakievič) appears, in a dualistic perspective, also as a redeemer. A comparatively small role in Gončarov's discussion is played by the comic and by Gogol's theory of laughter (99) even though, as recent accounts have shown (Schreier), both are intricately connected with Gogol's eschatological thinking.

Part II of Gončarov's study is devoted to a triad of texts which he interprets as Gogol's "answer" to *učitel' naja kul' tura* (*Mertvyje duši*, esp. part II; *Vybranye mesta iz perepiski s druž'jami; Avtorskaja ispoved'*). Gogol's designs for the second part of *Mertvyje duši* are interpreted as an effort of aesthetic *žiznetvorčestvo*. As is well known, the author intended the three planned parts of his novel to coincide with the reader's/the nation's spiritual renewal. Gončarov's use of a term frequently used by the Formalists in conjunction with theory of *ostranenie* ("strangeness", 125) points to the fact that instances of "making it strange/new," with Gogol, are firmly embedded in a metaphysical system of thought.

In part II of *Mertvyje duši*, the subtextual motifs from patristic sources, late Baroque mysticism, etc. are directly represented on the level of the sujet (cf. Gončarov's assertion that Čičikov uses motifs and expressions from sermon literature, esp. Ioann Zlatoust and Vasilij Velikij, 128). Gončarov notes the striking Baroque "rhetorization" of part II, in particular with regard Čičikov's language which is oriented towards high style (128). Unfortunately, Gončarov's remarks

in this context remain sketchy. In a compelling analysis, he identifies the landscape representation which opens the text as a symbolic rendering of paradise. Consequently, if Čičikov's wanderings through Russia in the first part relate to the hagiographic topos of *choždenie po adu*, the second part may be seen as its inversion, a kind of "*choždenie po raju*" (116). In connection with this topos, Gončarov points to the utopian elements in Gogol's description of the landowners (Tentetnikov, Kostanžoglo, Vasilij Platonov, in parodic form also in Petuch and Koškarev). The utopian subtext in part II focuses upon the metaphysical implications of (physical) labour and its connection with the "philosophy of place". The notion of the soul's salvation through good deeds (*delami*) has indeed a central place in the Slavic Baroque (Simeon Polockij; St. Javorskij ("blagie dela – put' k spaseniju") (122). It is particularly prevalent in the so-called *podražanija* (Thomas à Kempis, etc.) which played a central part in Gogol's metaphysics. In *Mertvye duši*, it is in particular Kostanžoglo's speech to Čičikov which feeds on this doctrine of work as salvation. Gogol's "good" characters in the second part are for the most part wealthy. However, in the context of *učitel'naja kul'tura* (particularly in ascetic literature), wealth is generally treated as an obstacle to the soul's salvation (123). Still, Gončarov points to the existence of a different tradition which does not object to wealth if it is exercised in a prudent and responsible way (Kliment Aleksandrijskij).

The last chapter of the study is devoted to the ideological "blueprint" for the second part of *Mertvye duši*, *Vybrannye mesta* [...]. Gončarov's reflections upon the compositional, stylistic, and thematic characteristics of *Vybrannye mesta* [...] assume that this text has a specific formal structure, thus refuting the common belief that we are dealing with non-aesthetic "expository" texts. Gončarov refers the genre and composition of *Vybrannye mesta* [...] to collections of conversations (*učitel'nye sborniki*) which were prevalent in Russia during the Baroque (139). The poetics of these *sborniki* is syncretic and, like *Vybrannye mesta* [...] itself, included a number of different genres (poučenie, propoved', "slovo", "beseda", "poslanie", "duchovnoe zaveščanie").

Gončarov's interpretations of *Mertvye duši* II and *Vybrannye mesta* [...] occasionally suffer from their one-sidedness. For in both texts, Gogol's "philosophy of place" (apart from the dominant religious ones) has also important social and politico-philosophical implications. By ignoring these implications, the author foregoes the opportunity to show the process whereby Gogol's aesthetic concerns (while being far from non-existent) are increasingly being absorbed by his religious agenda. For example, the author's apologies of wealth, serfdom, and absolutism in *Vybrannye mesta* [...] (which sadly are not discussed by Gončarov) are motivated by a conservative political and social philosophy whose strong anti-utopian element stands in stark contrast to the kind of religious utopianism which Gončarov rightly attributes to Gogol'. Gončarov's one-sided view of Gogol's ideology as being determined by religion to the total exclusion of aesthetics and non-religious philosophical considerations somewhat mars his otherwise impressive study.

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Notes

- ¹ R. Barilli, *Rhetoric*, Minneapolis, 1989, 70.
- ² R. Barilli, *Rhetoric*, Minneapolis, 1989, 70.
- ³ See Michel Foucault's analysis of pre-Baroque epistemology where "[t]he relation of languages to the world is one of analogy rather than of signification" (M. Foucault, "The Order of Things", *An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, New York, 1970, 37). See also R. Lachmann, "Die problematische Ähnlichkeit". Sarbiewskis *Traktat De acuto et arguto* im Kontext concettistischer Theorien des 17. Jahrhunderts, *Slavische Barockliteratur*, vol. II, ed. R. Lachmann, Munich, 1983, 87–114.
- ⁴ R. Lachmann, "Zur Poetik des Oxymorons am Beispiel von Daniel Nabrowskis 'Krótkosc żywota'", *Tgoł chole Męstro. Gedenkschrift für Reinhold Olesch*, ed. R. Lachmann, A. Lauhus, T. Lewandowski, B. Zelinsky, Köln, 1990, 467–480.
- ⁵ Foucault describes the Baroque as that age where similarities between two objects could be conceived only as an error of judgement. In the Baroque, similarity appears as a mere illusion, metaphor, and allegory. See M. Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, New York, 1970, 51.
- ⁶ A.A. Morozov, "Izvečnaja konstanta ili istoričeskij stil'", *Russkaja literatura*, 3, 1979, 81–89.
- ⁷ B. Uspenskij / V. Živov, "Zur Spezifik des Barock in Rußland. Das Verfahren der Äquivokation in der russischen Poesie des 18. Jahrhunderts", *Slavische Barockliteratur II*, Munich, 1983, 57–86.
- ⁸ D. Tschizewskij, "Gogol: Artist and Thinker", *Gogol' . Turgenjev. Dostoevskij. Tolstoj. Zur russischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1966, 88–100.
- ⁹ It was Vladimir Turbin who suggested the term "Baroque" as an appropriate designation for Gogol's heterogeneous view of art. Turbin uses the term "Baroque" (like Wölfflin or Jacob Burckhardt) as the designation of a recurrent style rather than a specific period in the history of culture. See V. Turbin, *Puškin. Gogol' . Lermontov. Ob izučenii literaturnych žanrov*, Moscow, 1978.
- ¹⁰ See esp. M. Vajskopf, "Gogol' i Skovoroda: problema 'vnešnego čeloveka'", *Sovetskoe slavjanovedenie* 4, 1990, 36–45; M. Vajskopf, *Sžužet Gogolja. Morfologija. Ideologija. Kontekst*, Moscow, 1993.
- ¹¹ The question of whether or not Gogol' read Skovoroda cannot be decided, but it may safely be assumed that he knew of the philosopher and his teachings.

In Russia, Skovoroda gained in prominence considerably during the 1820's and 30's. Through a number of publications devoted to the philosopher during that time, or perhaps through such acquaintances as Maksimovič and Sreznevskij, Gogol may well also have been acquainted with Skovoroda's work.

- ¹² The interpretation of Petrovič as a devilish figure is suggested, for example, by D. Tschizëvskij, "Zur Komposition von Gogol's Mantel", *Gogol. Turgenëv. Dostoevskij. Tolstoj. Zur russischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 1966, 100–126. See also V. Setchkarev, *N.V. Gogol. Leben und Schaffen*, Berlin/Wiesbaden, 1953, 160–169. Against the literal understanding of Petrovič's association with the devil, see H. Wissemann, "Zum Ideengehalt von Gogol's 'Mantel'", *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, 26, 1958, 391–415.