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### G. D. GREBENSHCHIKOV'S NOVEL 'THE CHURAEVS' IN THE LITERARY-PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN COSMISM: M.A. VOLOSHIN, V.V. KHLEBNIKOV

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**Sergey M. Pinaev, Svetlana S. Tsaregorodtseva, G. D. Grebenshchikov's Novel 'The Churaevs' In The Literary-Philosophical Context Of Russian Cosmism: M.A. Voloshin, V.V. Khlebnikov-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(10), 2500-2517. ISSN 1567-214x**

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#### ABSTRACT

The article presents an attempt to trace the perception of 'Russian cosmism' philosophy by outstanding representatives of Russian literature of the first half of the 20th century: G.D. Grebenshchikov (George Grebenstchikoff), Velimir Khlebnikov, and Maximilian Voloshin. The methodology of the research is based on a comprehensive literary-historical and structural-typological analysis of the writers' creativity; the leading methods are compare-contrast and cultural-historical research. As a result, the authors concluded that Grebenshchikov, in his saga 'The Churayevs', has expressed the drama of self-isolation of Old Believers while at the same time highlighting the search of the character for some 'worldwide new-ploughed field'. He was trying to connect the new vision of the world of his characters not with modernity but rather with cosmism and the forthcoming world evolution.

On the same lines, V.V. Khlebnikov, in one of his works, perceived the folklore-myth culture as the foundation of primary moral values, capable of reconciling and uniting people. In his futurological creations, Khlebnikov was crafting an image of universal and indivisible humanity living in concord with nature and the universe.

Also, M.A. Voloshin in his poem 'The Ways Of Cain' has presented a philosophical concept of the history and reevaluated material and social culture, taking it at a glance of the picture of the

space and perceiving an abstract of human existence in the scale of the history of the humanity and position in the universe.

**Keywords:** cosmos, cosmic consciousness, nature, philosophy, history, humanity, evolution, culture.

## INTRODUCTION

Russian cosmism as a literary and philosophical trend took shape in the second half of the 19th century when a new philosophical concept of cosmic consciousness began to enter Russian literature. The philosophical-mindset poet Fyodor Tyutchev may be attributed to a small number of intellectuals with a cosmic outlook. His poems reflected the thoughts on the state of nature and the universe and the connection of human, earthly life with cosmic phenomena.

The cosmism as one of the leading directions of philosophical thought shaped up in Russia in the 20th century. The traditions of Russian cosmism were laid down and developed in the works of N.F. Fedorov, K.E. Tsiolkovsky, V.I. Vernadsky, A. L. Chizhevsky, and others. Particular attention within this trend deserves religious and philosophical prospects presented in the works of V. S. Solovyov, S.N. Bulgakov, P.A. Florensky, N.A. Berdyaev, B.P. Vysheslavtsev, and the above mentioned N.F. Fedorov as well. Their philosophical constructs were based on the idea of anthropocosmism; all these thinkers shared the idea on the man and humanity being elements connected into a single whole with the cosmos and developing under certain general laws. They were also inherent to the idea that the man's mission on earth and in the universe is of cosmic nature and significance.

At the same time, a significant role was assigned to the man in his practical activities on earth. The philosophy of 'Russian cosmism' appeared (as, for example, presented in the works of N.F. Fedorov) as a kind of synthesis of Orthodox-religious metaphysics and theoretical postulates of natural science. The cosmos, in the mind of the thinker, was a 'Christian' cosmos that exists 'in the perfect world'. Thus, for humanity, being in the current state of chaos and unreasonableness, it will be possible to enter it or to come into contact with only when relations between people are illuminated by moral consciousness and united by the common cause of the Christian-governed transformation of the world on the basis of a higher, cosmic reason and faith.

The philosophy of cosmism manifested itself in different ways in the works of representatives of Russian literature (quite dissimilar to each other) of the first half of the 20th century.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Seven published volumes of 'The Churaevs' epic saga by G.D. Grebenshchikov was selected as the study material. This masterpiece is inextricably linked with the socio-cultural trends of the era and reflects the evolution of the writer's worldview from neo-populist sentiments and regionalism to cosmism. The saga was critically acclaimed by A.A. Makarov, V.A. Rosov, B.B. Mamraev, T.G. Chernyaeva, M.G. Nikitina, O. G. Levashova; of particular interest are the reviews by A.P. Kazarkin and K.V. Anisimov on Grebenshchikov's early and mature achievements. A.P. Kazarkin analyzed in detail the Siberian context of all

seven published volumes of the novel and identified the origins of Grebenshchikov's work [Kazarkin, 2004]; at the genre and style level, Kazarkin also considered the literary connections of 'The Churaevs' with the classics of Russian and Soviet literature: the novels 'The Brothers Karamazov' by F. M. Dostoevsky, 'War and Peace' by L.N. Tolstoy, 'The Artamonovs' Case' by Maxim Gorky, 'The Road to Calvary' by A.N. Tolstoy, and others [Kazarkin, 2002]. K.V. Anisimov examined the creative history of 'The Churaevs' in the context of Young Siberian prose and defined Grebenshchikov's novel as the 'summit text' of the literary group, which included A.E. Novoselov, A. Zhilyakov, S. Isakov, V. Bakhmetyev, I. Goldberg, and others [Anisimov, 2004].

The studies of A.Yu. Gorbenko on arrangements of Grebenshchikov's life turned out highly controversial; in his works, Gorbenko attempted to reveal the contextual connections of the texts of Lev Tolstoy and Grebenshchikov [Gorbenko, 2015], and also identify some evangelic reminiscences in 'The Churaevs' novel [Gorbenko, 2012].

Of undoubted interest are publications by the Russian diaspora critics devoted to the topic (I. Savchenko, P. Balakshin, V. Maevsky, A. Zhernakova-Nikolaeva, P. Kovalevsky, M. Slonim, O. Duboklyar, N. Logunova, V. Bulina, F. Kubansky, V. Kovarskaya, and others).

P. Balakshin wrote wisely in his articles on the universal nature of 'The Churaevs' noting the author's righteousness while urging 'make way toward the truth as lions.' However, according to Balakshin, Grebenshchikov's epic 'has fundamentally disagreed with the plan' and has no future, since to say that 'Russian universality has been achieved through the world dispersion of millions of Russian emigrants is to mock over own fate' [Balakshin, 1976]. Grebenshchikov did not agree with this understanding of the main idea of his novel; in a letter to Balakshin, Grebenshchikov advised reading his 'Messenger. Letters from Pomperag', which should complement the better understanding of the idea of 'The Churaevs'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1956, the Russian diaspora in the United States solemnly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the literary activities of G.D. Grebenshchikov. Numerous publications spoke of the great importance of 'The Churaevs' novel for the development of Russian literature. According to Olga Duboklyar, it 'will serve as a valuable material for future generations of scientists and historians in the study of our era and the Russian people', because the main message that Grebenshchikov sends to his readers is that 'nothing lasts forever, Carthage fell, and so did Babylon, only the disseminator (sower) is eternal ...' [Duboklyar, 1956]. Duboklyar also develops the idea that common people used to be perceived as ignorant peasants and drunkards; a simple person in Grebenshchikov books is shown as a man of many talents, these people are capable of being wise and God-fearing, naive and affectionate, subtle and inventive, sometimes rude but crafty. According to F. Kubansky, it was precisely the interest in the common people, the realism of their image that was the reasons that Grebenshchikov was not highly appreciated abroad, where 'the first place was occupied by the literature about 'noble people' and not about people of all Russia' [Kubansky, 1956].

One of the most interesting among the anniversary publications was 'The Bard of Siberia' by A. Zhernakova-Nikolaeva, who wrote about the seventh volume of the novel 'Kissing the Serpent' noting the 'author's brilliant talent' and the genuine Russian spirit, which 'permeates and fancies the entire work' [Zhernakova-Nikolaeva, 1956].

<sup>1</sup>Letters of G.D. Grebenshchikov and P.P. Balakshin // *Sovremennik*, 1976, №№ 30-32. - P. 55.

These contradictory assessments of the Russian diaspora were voiced mostly by journalists and critics; a complete literary analysis of the multivolume novel 'The Churaevs' has not yet been done in both Russian and foreign science.

The works of Velimir Khlebnikov and Maximilian Voloshin were selected from the poetic heritage of the Silver Age of Russian Poetry as material for comparison with the philosophical context of the 'The Churaevs'. Khlebnikov in his poems ('Crane', 'Stone Woman', 'Lightland' (Ladomir), etc.) and 'super-tales' ('Children of the Otter', 'Zangezi') tried to bridge the gap between science and literature, experiment and theory, the 'new language' and the nature of poetry. It is no coincidence that the term 'Velimir studies' came into use, emphasizing the boundlessness of the artist's creative aspirations, his connections with various fields of science, culture, and philosophy; many detailed studies have been written about Khlebnikov's poetry since the 1970s. These are the works by N.I. Khardzhiev, V.P. Grigoriev, A.E. Parnis, R.V. Duganov, N. Stepanov; foreign studies are also quite numerous. Of particular interest are the foreign studies of H. Baran [Baran H, 1981] and R. Crone, comparing the aesthetic attitudes of the Futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov and the Futurist artist Kazimir Malevich [Crone R, 1978]. The work of W. Weststeijn is more of monographic nature [Weststeijn W.G., 1983]; R. Cooke also turned to the study of Khlebnikov's worldview ideas [Cooke R, 1987].

G. D. Grebenshchikov did not always accept the word-creation of the Futurists, as well as the other new aesthetic principles of modernistic trends of the Silver Age. At the same time, Grebenshchikov was well acquainted with the prominent writers of this era and also with the works by M. Voloshin; therefore, his book of poems 'The Ways of Cain' was selected for comparison with Grebenshchikov's novel. Also, 'The Ways of Cain' was made as a historiosophical and culturological study of civilization, featuring, according to the poet, all his social ideas (mostly negative). Russian researchers turned to the systematic study of Voloshin's work in the late 80s; the publications of V.P. Kupchenko (1938-2004) occupy a special place in Voloshin studies. For a long time, his works represented idiosyncratic mosaic of facts and were not so much literary or theoretical-literary as historical and biographical. The theoretical aspect of the problem of literary relationships was expressed only in a few publications, which included, in particular, the studies of O. Povarnova, D. Magomedova, and N. Kobzev.

The turning point comes in 1996 when V. Kupchenko, summarizing his many years of research experience, publishes the major work 'The Wandering of Maximilian Voloshin'. In the same year, the monograph by S.M. Pinaev 'Close to Everyone, Alien to Everything' sees the light; this academic paper represented an

attempt to comprehensively review the works of M.A. Voloshin in a historical and cultural context. An indispensable aid for any specialist in this field has become a two-volume presentation of the poet's creative biography: V. Kupchenko. Works and days of M. Voloshin: Chronicle of Life and Work (1877-1916); SPb: Aleteya; Simferopol: Sonat, 2002, 2007.

Noteworthy is an evident activity in Voloshin studies over the past 10-12 years. This includes Ph.D. viva examinations (T. Breeva, E. Nizhegorodova, E. Sazonova, M. Shitkova, L. Dzikovskaya, I. Bulgakova, V. Chagina, I. Kovtunova, L. Taymazova, I. Levichev, D. Shabashov), monographs (N. Arefieva, N. Rosenthal, E. Mendelevich, E. Buzhor, S. Pinaev), scientific conferences (including 'Anthroposophy and Spiritual Searches of Maximilian Voloshin', mainly held at the House-Museum of the Poet in Koktebel, Crimea).

The analysis of foreign publications was conducted by S. I. Kormilov in the article 'M. A. Voloshin in the literary criticism of the Russian emigration of the 1920s and 1930s' [Kormilov, 2009]; also, much has been written about Voloshin by contemporary foreign researchers. Based on Voloshin's autobiographical pieces of evidence, the French researcher of his work Marie-Aude Albert writes about the influence on the formation of the poet of the ideas of V.I. Solovyov and F. Nietzsche precisely as visionary philosophers [Albert Marie-Aude, 2002]; the researcher also compares the mystical experience transmitted by M. Voloshin in the cycle about the Rouen Cathedral with a similar 'saint Jean de la Croix ou chez Vladimir Soloviev' [Albert Marie-Aude, 2002]. More of the academic attention has been drawn nowadays to the biblical context in Voloshin's poetry; scientific papers are published in Poland [A. Wiczorek, 1998] and France [Albert Marie-Aude, 2006].

One of the last foreign literary monographs dedicated to Voloshin was published in Nevada by Barbara Walker. Her 'Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times' (2005) describes the literary life of Koktebel during the Voloshin era as an organized socio-cultural network structure reviewed through the prism of the cultural and anthropological theory of Victor Turner. According to Walker, the literary circle of Voloshin's guests and attendees played a key role in integrating the intelligentsia into the new post-revolutionary reality, and the fate of M. Voloshin himself can be used to clarify the peculiarities of Russian intellectual and cultural life at the end of tsarist times.

## RESULTS

'The Churaevs', written in the first half of the 20th century by the talented writer, professor of Lakeland College and Oxford Ph.D. Georgy Dmitrievich Grebenshchikov, reflects the high potential of ideas and artistic traditions created by pre-revolutionary Russian culture. This work continued the search for the combination of thought and artistic imagery into one structure, peculiar to the Russian philosophical novels of the 19th century.

The very first philosophical novel in Russian literature is considered to be the 'Russian Nights' by Vladimir Odoevsky. The book played an exceptionally important role in the literature of its time, becoming a kind of laboratory for finding ways for a multilateral illumination of the problem of the personality and

the processes of its self-awareness. Odoevsky in this work tried to 'create a kind of cardiogram of the whole human life. The discussion between the four seekers turns 'Russian Nights' into an ideological dispute, at the center of which is already the cardinal question of Russian life: the question of the fate of its historical development. 'The future belongs to Russia!' - these concluding words of the cycle signify the breadth of social generalizations outlined in the prose cycle' [Yanushkevich, 1971, p.13]. Grebenshchikov, in his 'Churaevs', also raised the issue of the future of Russia. Realizing the globality of the ideological and artistic task, the author designed to create a whole cycle of novels: 'Brothers' (Vol. 1), 'Descent into the Valley' (Vol. 2), 'Orders of the Earth' (Vol. 3), 'The Crack of Doom' (Vol. 4), 'One hundred tribes with single one' (Vol. 5), 'The Crimson Ocean' (Vol. 6), 'The Kiss of the Serpent' (Vol. 7), 'Dance in the flame' (Vol. 8), 'Captive of the last slave' (Vol. 9), 'The Last Judgment' (Vol. 10), 'Walk as Lions' (Vol. 11), and 'The rise of a church' (Vol. 12). The cyclical nature was supposed to provide the capacity for the content of the Siberian saga.

Recent studies on 'Russian Nights' have noted the connection between the first Russian philosophical novel and cosmism. This masterpiece 'had distilled at least three unique propositions, which were further developed in the substantiation of the Russian idea or at least one of its prospects: 1. The idea of an all-human brotherhood in which one nation complements another; 2. The idea of historical progress, the baton of which is being passed on from one nation to another for the benefit of all mankind; 3. The idea of the historical advantage of the lagging behind 'non-historical' peoples, not burdened with sins and stereotypes of thinking of the 'historical' peoples who have pulled ahead'.<sup>1</sup> This version of the Russian idea was developed by the Slavophiles, but the limitation of their position was revealed in the fact that Slavophiles, polemicizing with the Westernizers, left out of consideration the Asian East. Grebenshchikov envisaged the further development of Russia as a country of 'one hundred tribes with a single one'. At times he gave priority to the peoples of Russian Asia in the development of spiritual culture. These peoples, despite their common backwardness and facade 'barbarity' (as opposed to 'civilization'), turned out to be more capable of forming a morally healthy society.

The peculiarity of the image of the Russian idea, which found artistic justification in 'The Churaevs', is also emphasized by the special role of Siberia. Grebenshchikov was convinced that it was in Siberia that conditions for human evolution would be created and that all the peoples inhabiting it would play a certain role in the future. The Russians, claiming to be more civilized, should bear great historical responsibility for the fate of the entire region.

At the same time, a new ideology began to form in Russian culture after the Russian Revolution; an unambiguous idea of literature was formed as a means of reflecting the life and cultivation of the people's education. Russian society became divided into two irreconcilable groups: on the one hand, supporters of the new ideology, and on the other, representatives of the Russian diaspora. Both of the groups realized the need for reforms in the country but looked at their

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<sup>1</sup> Russia between Europe and Asia: Eurasian temptations. – Moscow: Nauka, 1993. -P. 5-6.

implementation in different ways. The first stood for the eradication of national traditions and the transformation of society through decisive changes in the social and ideological sphere; they vigorously tried to fight the age-old religiosity of the Russian society. Representatives of the expatriate community were looking for a special Russian path in history, insisting on preserving Christian traditions. Generally, representatives of the new Soviet literature were in favor of revolutionary radical changes, and the émigré writers of the Russian diaspora suggested evolutionary forms of transforming society and culture. The disputes between the two sides were conducted around the main topics: pre-revolutionary and quintessentially noble cultural heritage, issues of science and culture, art, moral principles, youth education, duty to the fatherland, and the future of Russia. 'The Churaevs' novel clearly reflects this confrontation of ideas. The principal character pictured by the writer is Vasily Churaev, an ideological hero with extraordinary views and high spiritual needs. His ideas get evaluated throughout the novel; this is especially noticeable in collisions with other characters, and most importantly, with real life, faith, nature, and love. The writer poses the main problem already in the first volume ('Brothers'), where Vasily Churaev resolutely opposes himself to the faith where 'there is a place for villainy'. Touching upon the conflict of two generations, the author realizes that it exists at all times and underlies the very development of society. The contradiction between the 'patriarchal old' and the 'advanced new' marks an essential condition for progress. Thus, the purely psychological conflict between 'fathers' and 'children' in 'The Churaevs' novel grows into a deep social contradiction.

The essence of the dispute between Vasily and his father Firs boiled down to the fact that Firs Churaev saw the purpose of a person's life in strict observance of the canons of ancient piety, which sometimes reached the point of petty regulation of personal life, and over time, following the laws of faith in Churaevka became only external rules that help to cover the most serious sins: murder, theft, adultery, perjury. Vasily Churaev believed that a person should change, become better through repentance, and gaining true faith.

Thus, the author sharply contrasted the life position of the strong-willed and independent Vasily Churaev and the Old Believers, who got confused in questions of truth, blindly defending their righteousness. This conflict develops throughout the entire 'Brothers' volume but has no solution in all subsequent volumes of 'The Churaevs'. Eventually, the writer grants the future the right to resolve it.

The plot of the 'Brothers' volume of the 'Churaevs' saga is seemingly similar to 'The Brothers Karamazov' by Dostoevsky; both are united by 'the motive of family strife and a crime foreshadowing great misfortunes of the national scale' [Kazarkin, 2002, p. 67]. Comprehending the human existence, the nature of man, and his relationship to God comprise the backbone of the philosophical basis of these novels. Also, both Dostoevsky and Grebenshchikov thought hard about the fate of Russia and tried to prevent the revolutionary path of its development with their visionary warning books such as Dostoevsky's 'Demons' and Grebenshchikov's 'Messenger', 'Radonega', and 'Zlatoglav'.

The main question that Grebenshchikov raises in the multivolume novel 'The Churaevs' is the issue of the Russian future; the author states that new revolutionary changes only ruthlessly destroy the 'old', but they are not capable of creating anything lasting. The writer also does not recognize the right to the

future for the representatives of the Russian diaspora, the 'spills' of the Russian nation.

In the outline for the tenth unpublished volume of 'The Churaevs', Grebenshchikov described the meeting in the United States of the autobiographical hero Vasily Churaev (an émigré writer from Russia) with some Soviet writers, to whom Churaev addressed with words of apologetics of the Orthodox faith, realizing that his speech would not be accepted by convinced atheists.<sup>2</sup>

Only as time has gone on did it become clear that Grebenshchikov was right in anticipating inevitable Russia's return to faith. He saw in this the essence of the Russian path since only the Orthodoxy should lead the people to salvation - the acquisition of the Heavenly City, 'new heaven and a new earth'. This writer's conviction was largely based on the fact that in the era of the novel (late 19th - early 20th centuries) religious thought in Russia was experiencing some kind of renaissance. It was an era of active and conscious renewal, usually associated with the names of prominent Christian philosophers N. Fedorov, E. Trubetskoy, N. Berdyaev, P. Florensky, and others. Their writings manifested the beginning of the formation of national identity, based on the millennial history of Orthodoxy.

G. D. Grebenshchikov, believing that Orthodoxy is destined to play a decisive role in the future of the Russian nation, shared the views of the evolutionary direction of Russian cosmism. The major point - a person able to creatively transform his/her own nature, the outer world, and find happiness - is the most significant for 'The Churaevs' characters. Quite many of them are striving to actively transform the world and see this as their calling.

For representatives of the active evolutionary prospect of Russian cosmism, a man was the pinnacle of the gradual improvement of natural beings. In turn, Grebenshchikov considered a firm faith as the core foundation of human evolution. In his opinion, only a believing person can become the top step in the evolution of all living things; to achieve that he must build a temple in his soul, and then earthly life and the consciousness of a modern person will be followed by 'superlife' and 'superconsciousness'.

Also, Grebenshchikov held the need for creation and creative labor to be an important condition for human evolution. His central characters built their destinies in the light of the teachings of N.F. Fedorov's 'common cause'; the latter opened up an unprecedented horizon of possibilities for mankind and called for universal knowledge and daring for transformative reformation.

The formation of the main philosophical ideas of the novel was also influenced by the concept of the noosphere by Vladimir Vernadsky. In 1922-1923 at the Sorbonne University Vernadsky gave his famous lectures, putting forward one of the main noospheric tasks: human self-improvement. He predicted new creative discoveries and radical renewal of artistic and scientific ideas as the main peaks that a person is capable of. Vernadsky's ideas were shared by many thinkers and scientists of the Russian diaspora; they also affected the philosophical views of Georgi Grebenshchikov, along with his close friend, the famous aircraft designer Igor Sikorsky. Sikorsky's works in the field of humanities, such as applied psychology of engineering labor and philosophy, are still almost unknown to his homeland public. Sikorsky also wrote several significant articles and gave many

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<sup>2</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Outline for the 10th Volume of 'The Churaevs' saga / G.D. Grebenshchikov // The State Museum of the History of Literature, Art and Culture of Altay. – File 406/52.



lectures from the standpoint of Russian cosmism. One of them was called 'The Evolution of the Soul', within the framework of which the author, in particular, noted the factors that determine the evolution of man. Sikorsky and Grebenshchikov comprehended human evolution as a spiritual ascent while assigning a large role to the family and community.

The concept of 'endless improvement and ascent of the human spirit and mind'<sup>3</sup> gave further prospects to the thoughts of N.F. Fedorov on the world labor transformation and S.N. Bulgakov, who argued that 'economic labor is already a kind of new force of nature, a new world-forming, cosmogonic factor, which is fundamentally different from all other forces of nature' [Bulgakov, 1912, p.107]. According to Bulgakov, humanity should strive to achieve 'Edenic husbandry' in the new cosmic era. The present, however, was featured by an economic activity typical for the crisis state of society: a man is still a slave of the material world, mutual struggle and oppression reigns everywhere, etc.

Grebenshchikov, analyzing the state of his coeval society, concluded that the latter has lost its understanding of the law of 'Enhancement of the human spirit as positive and creative energy'<sup>4</sup> and is experiencing a deep spiritual crisis. Reconsidering the role and quality of modern labor will assist in overcoming the crisis and returning humanity to harmony with the world.

The most consistent views of G.D. Grebenshchikov on the human-creative function of labor found its artistic refraction in the third volume of the novel. Throughout the 'Orders of the Earth', Vasily Churaev is returning to the plains of his native land and tries to atone for his sins: the renunciation of the faith of the fathers and the betrayal of his brother. The protagonist arrived at the decision to become a simple servant of God and overcome pride. Thus, Basil, the God's follower, began to voluntarily wear 'iron chains of action', since only the simplest peasant labor can overcome sins and unbelief; he also entered into battle 'against the rotten sluggish lack of will that kept Russia in poverty, drunkenness, and mutual malice'.<sup>5</sup>

According to Grebenshchikov, the modern rural economy cannot be properly managed without the use of machinery and relevant hardware. Living in America for quite a long time, Grebenshchikov became acquainted with the farmers' way of life. Here is a sample of advice he gave his family in his letters: 'You need to have just a few horses, but good ones, so that a pair can replace a weak six. Out of the cows you got, keep only the good milkers, get rid of the rest. And, of course, you need to have the proper machinery and reliable equipment <...> You have to hold on to your farm - this is the most reliable investment at all times and in all countries'.<sup>6</sup>

Grebenshchikov realized that 'Edenic husbandry' for the 1920 - 1930s Russia was a dream of the distant future. The novel tells how difficult it was for Vasily and Nadya to enter the rhythm of everyday rural life. Vasily touchingly took care of his wife, for whom a new life was even more burdensome and non-natural. Gradually, Vasily Churaev set their small out-settlement going, and his family strengthened in everyday worries. He also realized that the people he lived around

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<sup>3</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Messenger. Letters from Pomperag. – International Centre of the Roerichs, Moscow, 1996; P.107.

<sup>4</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Messenger. Letters from Pomperag. – International Centre of the Roerichs, Moscow, 1996; P.116.

<sup>5</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Orders of the Earth. - Churaevka, Southbury, Conn. U.S.A., 1926; P.12.

<sup>6</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Op. cit., P. 52

were quite diverse: 'so, there were all kinds of them: simple and not easy to trick, naive and crafty and even gentle, often drunk, often sensitive, subtle and inventive, domiciled and nomadic, God-fearing and criminal', and the peasant labor – 'the greatest of the greatest deeds, which has kept the world intact for many millennia<sup>7</sup>. This truth was revealed to him at the moment when Vasily observed teenagers performing their routine assignment of plowing and sowing with full knowledge of the matter. The boys appeared serious and unhurried as they were guided by the 'immutable eternally living force', which is ineradicable among the people. The elder boy 'performed sowing weightily, in a portentous manner, and almost dignified', as if carrying out a higher mission. 'The plowman-sower will permanently rule the earth, and the life of the people will forever be like this, primitive and the most beautiful in its simplicity of everything that even thousands of new cultures can ever create. No soil upheavals, no air conquests, or scientific discoveries will change this basic simple culture of sowing and growing cereals, a true miracle of God. And this was, pertains and will be everywhere on earth, in all large and small countries, and if there are living beings on other planets, then there this plowman's law is the same, just as simple and eternal. To be a plowman means to be in a continuous and united link of the universal world people, it means to stand firmly on the ground; it means to live a really blessed life.<sup>8</sup>

This reasoning gives grounds to consider the philosophical novel 'The Churaevs' as a profoundly optimistic work. To clarify more about Grebenshchikov's inherent joyous attitude: the writer generally accepted life as it is not because he did not see the contradictions and troubles of the world around, but because he knew how to find ways to overcome. Grebenshchikov devoted several heartfelt pages to the bright and honorable sower's labor in the third volume of the epic. At the same time, he raises the question of why 'the labor among the people, the earth job, is not always a blessing, but more often a humiliation and a curse - especially where Vasily lived, and generally in Russia. And this curse is giving birth to all that terrible and wolfish that violates and disfigures the whole picture of life'.<sup>9</sup> Vasily Churaev desperately tried to comprehend the reason for this to happen and realized that only in love can human evil be dissolved, and this is a man's duty because love is given as a wonderful gift from God. One must learn to make good out of evil if there is nothing else to make of it. Then, in the future, a man will be able to transform labor 'into a common advantage and joy, the joy of a plowman of all the earth'.<sup>10</sup>

## DISCUSSION

This message of the novel once again intersects with the theories of the polymath thinker N.F. Fedorov, the inventor 'Philosophy of the Common Cause'. According to Fedorov, the 'non-brotherly' state of the world, fraught with wars and violence, is due to the fact that a man, having created technology, has become

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<sup>7</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Op. cit., P. 52

<sup>8</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Op. cit., P. 53

<sup>9</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Op. cit., P. 59

<sup>10</sup> Grebenshchikov, G.D. Op. cit., P. 59

its slave; technological progress doesn't do any good for humanity. The city, as opposed to the country-side, is to blame for this, since it represents 'the totality of non-brotherly states' and the source of unrighteous progress, devoid of spiritual fulfillment. It is necessary to unite humanity with a 'common cause', the task of fighting death by 'restoring common kinship'.

'You need to live not for yourself ... and not for others, but with everyone and for everyone' - this idea can be traced in the futuristic creations of Velimir Khlebnikov, who preached the creative work of unalienated humanity, 'creators of the future' ('These are the high priests of LIGHTLAND, and 'Workers of the World' is their banner's device', Poem 'Lightland' (Ladimir), 1920,1921: T 281).

Fedorov's perception of the Earth as a celestial body, in isolation from which lies the cause of human ill-being also impressed the poet, who treated the 'Graylegs, pulling Planet Earth' as a family pet: I fed you so we could catch hold of our sail, though of course you like oats and a full water pail. ('Ok, Graylegs...', 1922).

Khlebnikov constantly experienced the influence of the living elements of space and the spirits of the environment. While in Persia, he wrote to his sister about how in the sea he 'fought and floundered with the water brothers, until chattering his teeth with cold reminded that it was time to dress and put on a man's shell - this dungeon where man is locked from the sun, wind, and sea'. [Emelyanov, 1990, p.20].

There is hardly a poet in Russian literature that could so seamlessly and, most importantly, on such a scale, combine science, lyrics, and philosophy in a single aesthetic mainstream. Also, Khlebnikov could hardly be considered a pure poet or a cosmist philosopher. However, as it was aptly noted by V.P. Grigoriev, to complete the 'conversation' Khlebnikov required more than just task meetings with the mathematician V.I. Bessmertnyi in Kharkiv or N. Lobachevsky in Kazan. 'Khlebnikov needed 'companions' of a completely different scale: the Universe, Fate, stars, Russia, East and West, Time, Word and Number, Plato, Shankara, Spinoza ... Einstein, the traditions of Kepler and Newton. However, convinced of the 'reverse greatness of the little', the poet could, say, at night in Persia consider even a beetle to be a full-fledged and important companion since he was looking for worthy like-minded interlocutor, speaking 'the language understandable to both, wherever possible ...' [Grigoriev, 1992, p.8].

One of Khlebnikov's typical aphorisms stated that 'the flight of a bug speaks more about time for me than a fat book of a scientist'. With any particle - whether of nature or the Universe - the poet was ready to 'exchange bread and immortality', which, in essence, is expressed in the iconic lines from the poem 'The Stone Woman' (1919):

He approached and sat down.  
His hand paged  
the glowing book of his face.  
And the moon gave her crying child  
a loaf of evening stars.  
"Do I need a lot?"

A crust of bread,  
a cup of milk,  
the sky above,  
these clouds!

Reveling in life and being convinced of the 'reverse greatness of the little', the poet delved into its trace elements, examining them as if under a microscope, not forgetting, however, about the universal scale of life. He could easily write:

The night is full of constellations.

What advent, what intelligence of freedom or restraint shines in your wide pages, book above me, what fate must I make out in the wide midnight sky? (1912), thuswise matching the 'book' of his creativity with cosmic destinies and supermundane time – or could praise a little natural wonder - a grasshopper ('Winganging with golden writing', 1908-1909).

If most of the avant-garde poets of the early 20th century were guided in their work by the urban concept of the city, then Khlebnikov relied on the Proto-Slavic folk culture. The 'energetic force' of Khlebnikov's creations lies in the recreation of the most primordially Russian, pagan spirit. According to the poet, the modern civilization, breaking away from deep-Russian, Slavic-mythological roots, is doomed to decay. 'The trumpets proclaim the death to mankind', he feverishly exclaims in the poem 'The Crane' (1909), as if refuting the slogans of the future futurists in advance. He sees a 'rebellion of things' against man, distinct in its horror. The inanimate attributes of civilization are in revolt: an iron hook 'is galloping along the road in a whirlwind'; 'pipes that have stood for centuries' fly 'imitating the movements of a worm'; 'railroad tracks are torn off the roads / by the movement of autumn-ripe pods'. The rebellious objects and equipment are joined by the 'dead from the cemeteries', dressing their flesh in the 'iron skeleton'; some kind of huge bird walks 'across the sky with the feet of a burial mound' and shielding the light by 'halves of its beak', 'half-giant-half-crane' - the terrible god of modern civilization, requiring human sacrifice.

Where does this phantasmagoria come from? Why did the 'life cede power to the union of corpse and thing'? The poet believes that man has 'spilled the mind madly', 'pouring' into things the 'spirit of life', that is, the poison of the modern era. This is in many ways reminiscent of the position of M. A. Voloshin, who believed that having produced machines their creator filled them with his own inner content, conveying egoism, greed, and anger. That is why, as Khlebnikov sees it, the 'shining palaces' of love are replaced by the 'battlefield moan'. The epic serpent turns into a 'train snake', a symbol of modern civilization, in which there is no one to defeat ('Snake train', 1910). So, 'the universal strings have sounded / and they prophesy: / beneath the smiling Slavic sky / they will worship other gods / their own gods will abandon them / while other gods laugh' - the Old Man from the play 'Snow White/A Christmas Story' (1908) utters a prophetic phrase in a very Khlebnikov's way.

The poet perceives folklore and mythological culture as the basis of the original moral values in their 'elementary' form. It contains the origins of the universal principle, capable of reconciling and uniting people; hence the breadth and variety

of his interests in this area. Unusually eclectic in his views and sympathies, Khlebnikov did not seek to give preference to any particular mythology or religious denomination. He could state that 'Muslims are the same as Russians, / And Islam can be Russian too'. It is also quite metaphorical that in one of his later poems ('The Poet', 1919, 1921), the Mermaid (rusalka) and the Mother of God easily come together like two sisters and exiles, bringing love and beauty to the world.

Yet, Khlebnikov's turn to folklore sources denoted the return of Russian culture to its original mainstream when it was imbued with a truly national spirit and alien to Western influences ('The Burial Mound of Svyatogor', 1908). The poet believed that modern literature can be likened to Ilya Muromets, who acquires mighty force, 'the East of the living spirit' through 'the crack of a temporary coffin'. It is hardly advisable to label Khlebnikov a Slavophile ('the brain of the Earth cannot be only Great Russian'), but, objectively speaking, to call him anti-Western would not be a mistake ('The East challenges the haughty West'). Certainly, such views were completely alien to G. D. Grebenshchikov, whose creative activity has developed not only in Siberia and the Crimea but also in Europe and America.

In this respect, the position of Maximilian Voloshin was also strikingly different from Khlebnikov's. East and West seamlessly merged in his work. As recalled by E.K. Gertsyk, in the last years of his life, the poet 'found and elaborated his true understanding of Russia, grasped the very balance point in the gigantic scales of the East and West. Why East and West, maybe, to verify the position of Russia and its essence, he would have to draw celestial coordinates' [Gertsyk, 1990, p. 161]. Comprehending the history of Russia in its Eurasian totality, the poet suggested the formation of Slavia, 'the southern Slavic empire, into which both the Balkan states and the regions of southern Russia will probably be drawn'. This imaginary state will, according to Voloshin, 'tend towards Constantinople and the straits and strive to take the place of the Byzantine Empire' [Voloshin, 1992, p. 85], that is, to become the Third Rome.

Forecasting the future, Voloshin relied on knowledge of history, supported by philosophical and esoteric insights. Khlebnikov, on the other hand, most often appealed to mathematics. Perhaps, nothing attracted him so close as numbers and numerical laws that rule over history and the fate of people. Khlebnikov once said: 'I have forgotten the world of consonances; I sacrificed them like brushwood to the fire of numbers.' According to the writer's mathematical theories, it turned out that the birth of opposite people (generations that understand the same truth in different ways) is separated by 28 years, similar - by 365. The most important events in history (such as battles at sea) are separated by a number of years divisible by 317. Khlebnikov also argued that world countries in their historical existence, like waves, have something like wave tops.

Surely, Khlebnikov could not just 'take the handle of the numbers of history and turn them around like a coffee machine' (Aleksei Kruchenykh). However, it would be inappropriate to entirely omit such experiments. After all, the poet managed to predict the wreck of RMS Lusitania, the war with Germany, and finally, the Russian revolution. Moreover, Khlebnikov was not the only researcher

of the mathematical laws of being. In recent decades, mention has been made in this regard of the great piece 'On the periodicity of the world-historical process', created by A. Chizhevsky at about the same time as the 'Board of Fate' by budetlyanin (men of the future - Khlebnikov coined this neologism in 1912). The same is true of the theory of D. Svyatsky, who directly compared the dates of revolutionary events with the years of the greatest solar activity. These works, like Khlebnikov's poetical and mathematical research, were important components of the philosophy of Russian cosmism.

The poet himself saw in the revolution such a state of the world when 'universal human truths are distorted by the breath of fate' when the laws of World Necessity are being fulfilled. 'The wild gallop ahead of the mare of freedom' ('Zangezi') was associated with the 'cool-headed calculation' and inevitability of fatal changes. Khlebnikov was expecting these changes in all spheres of life around and was overflowing with utopian projects (essay 'Swanland in the Future', 1918-1919). The poet's socio-ethical ideal in an expanded form is presented in the poem 'Lightland' (Ladomir, 1920). Its pathos is set from the very first lines, including the hymn to the 'creatures' when 'Lobachevsky's curves descend as ornaments over all the city', decorating the cities 'like strongbows on the sweating shoulders of Universal.

Labor' and 'clinking' with the Virgo constellation; along with the overthrow of the 'sale of kings', creation of a world mind-bending language, and an appeal to the kings whose song has been sung. The artist paints a picture of single and indivisible humanity in unity with nature: 'The language of love is hovering over the world', and even the great rivers are ready to rebuff the imaginary intrigues of the 'iron kaiser' by adding sacramental syllables: 'liu' 'blue' (syllables for the 'love' in Russian), 'all' 'world' 'me'. Evidently, the pathos and basic philosophical postulates of such different artists of the word as G. Grebenshchikov and V. Khlebnikov coincide in many respects.

However, the most significant monument of scientific and philosophical poetry in the context of Russian cosmism is represented by Maximillian Voloshin's poem 'The Ways of Cain', created mainly in 1922-1926. The poet tries to answer the most 'painful' questions related to the development of civilization and material culture. In his historiosophical concept, Voloshin largely proceeded from the theory of Oswald Spengler ('The Decline of Europe'), whose main idea is the hopeless circulation of history and the inevitable death of culture under the guise of a mechanistic-consumer civilization. The mischief of modern man is that having picked up the keys to the 'forbidden secrets' of nature, the man 'transformed the whole world, but not himself.' Any machine created by him based on human greed turns into a demon and enslaves its creator ('A Machine', 1922). Moreover, no one comes out clean - regardless of whether he is a proletarian or a bourgeois - 'Who cheapened his spirit / For joys of mediocrity and comforts.' It is essential to realize: 'In each field of knowledge, the stages / Correspond to the same degree of self-denial / The will of the substance / Must balance love ...' (Magic, 1923). However, this is still a utopia. After all, the laws of mankind 'are written not in books, / but forged in muzzles and blades, / the instruments of destruction and machines.'

Following Maurice Maeterlinck and Paul de Saint-Victor, Voloshin points out that human morality has always reckoned only with force. First, its expression was a fist, then a sword and, finally, the gunpowder, with the invention of which mankind rushed to the abyss. Thus, it is doomed to become 'gastric juice' in the digestion of the 'several octopuses' of the industry, if it does not take the path of self-limitation of its selfish interests. In the meantime, the poet concludes, mechanized humanity has imprisoned itself in a dungeon, reminiscent of Tanob in ancient Thebaid, a place for repentant monks and sinners who have lost their souls. It practically eradicated the 'infection of the spirit' and 'aired' the heavens from God: '

As we became  
Enshrouded by the night;  
The images of monstrous nameless shadows  
Were eager to take care of our life  
And now we are on the threshold  
of the Swirling incredible night  
And we see the images of monstrous shadows,  
Not named, not imaginable, to whom  
The future of the earth is entrusted  
(*'Gunpowder'*, 1923).

'Monstrous shadows' are, in modern terms, a harbinger of environmental (a man has 'soiled the sky with coal soot' and 'crumpled fields brown-green') and nuclear disasters:

You have perceived the plaits of inert masses,  
You measured their weight  
And broke apart their atoms,  
And in the depth of evil you were planted  
Till present days like land mine  
Lying charged in depths of substance  
(*'The Rioter'*, 1923).

It is no coincidence that Voloshin's poem is compared with the scientific theories of V.I. Vernadsky. The scientist believed that mankind will survive only if the biological world, the biosphere, is replaced by the sapiens world, the noosphere; if a man, inseparable from nature, but constantly raping it, unites with it on the basis of the Higher Reason. The latter, having reconciled man with the environment, must unite man with itself, bringing the cherished freedom and harmony to mankind. At the same time, following the dictates of the Higher Reason does not contradict the desire to find God. In this case, Voloshin does not focus on the narrowly confessional aspect of this aspiration. Adherence to the system of dogmas and canonical commandments is not a universal remedy.

All 'do not kill', 'don't do', and 'do not steal', —  
To be replaced by one commandment: 'BURN!'  
Your God is in yourself,  
And don't go look for other  
(*'The Rioter'*).

The poet sees himself in the image of the biblical Job; Voloshin compares the state pursuing its own selfish interests with the hostile monster Leviathan, the personification of primitive chaos, devoid of consciousness, and feeling only hunger. It depends on him whether to become a man of 'living slime' of this and similar creatures or to overcome the monster. The latter will happen only 'when love melts the earthly world,' says the Lord to Job. So, the poet believes that only 'personal moral awareness' of everything that happens can resist war and decay. After all, everyone took upon himself his life voluntarily and will give his personal report at the Last Judgment, 'which itself will have a cosmic meaning.'

### Conclusion

Summarizing what has been said before: G. D. Grebenshchikov expressed in his epic the drama of self-isolation of the Old Believers and at the same time illuminated the hero's search for some 'worldwide new-ploughed field.' Developing the ideas of regionalism, the writer gave them a cosmic scale, assigning a person the role of doer and creator. Creating a multi-stage narrative structure, Grebenshchikov included the heroes of the novel in a global historical context. He strove to connect the new vision of his heroes' world not so much with modernity as with space and with the coming world evolution. As a result of this artistic determination of man and his being, the historical-literary background goes back to the ontological one. The aesthesis of the end of the world and the 'old' history led the writer from sociological consciousness to the cosmic one. 'Eternal' spiritual values and striving for human harmony with the world turned out to be a balancing factor in the perception of the destruction of the old being, in which the real practice of social transformations 'did not keep pace' with the flight of dreams of a new equitable society.

Seeing a mighty force in the Proto-Slavic culture, 'the East of the living spirit', V.V. Khlebnikov urged to return to its origins, not necessarily stepping back, but rather rushing forward - through skornenie (word-creation), since it is 'the enemy of the book's petrification of the language.' In his activities, he tried to recreate his ideal: a picture of a single and indivisible humanity speaking the 'language of love', in kinship with nature and the universe. However, creating a hymn to the 'creatures' and flying away 'like a winged stream' to the 'blue Tikhoslavl' of the future, the 'terrestrial tributary' Velimir Khlebnikov did not overcome 'the present day'. The 'tired wings of a dreamer' did not keep him in the airless space of experiments and 'sieges.' 'He is lying divinely ... - shouted the audience around Zangezi, the favorite hero of the poet. - Something earthly! Throw Kamarinskaya!' Khlebnikov foreboded his fate, the fate of a man who was like 'a lone doctor / in a madhouse / sang his songs-healers', and realized that his creations, most likely, would have to 'lie in the oven / as firewood / for non-arrived generations!'

Working on the poem 'The Ways of Cain', M.A. Voloshin set himself a task to carry out a 'reevaluation of material culture' and consider it in a tragic-ironic light. He managed to 'seize the unseizable' within the framework of one work: to give a philosophical concept of history and satire on modern society, look around the picture of the cosmos, and think about the soul and Spirit. The poet was convinced that one of the main crimes of man is that he imagines himself 'the only lord of nature', that man upset the balance between the 'spirits of nature' and himself, and, by 'computing', made the nature ungodly and then, having subordinated it to the machine, released destructive passions of 'undines



and salamanders', that is, the same spirits of nature. With a special, 'cosmic' vision, Voloshin traced the course of history pouring into 'the present day'. Following philosopher B.P. Vysheslavtsev, he perceived a segment of our earthly life woven 'into the entire history of mankind, as well as into the entire spatial universe' by the higher, 'cosmic' consciousness [Vysheslavtsev, p. 118].

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