

A STUDY OF ZAMYATIN'S WELTANSCHAUUNG

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1972

TO MY PARENTS

MASTER OF ARTS (1972)  
(Russian)

McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: A Study of Zamyatin's Weltanschauung

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SUPERVISOR: Professor L. J. Shein

NUMBER OF PAGES: 83, vi

SCOPE AND CONTENT: A study of Zamyatin's Weltanschauung and its presentation in his works.

The thesis contains a preface, five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter I attempts to define Zamyatin's concept of man as presented in his novel MI. Chapter II deals with the two forces energy and entropy. Chapter III discusses the effect of entropy on man and as presented in Zamyatin's creative writings. Chapter IV presents Zamyatin's view of literature and its role. Chapter V portrays some of Zamyatin's literary techniques which he employed to procure reader participation. The Conclusion summarizes Zamyatin's world outlook and evaluates his philosophy.

## PREFACE

Within the Soviet Union, Yevgeny Zamyatin was labelled an offensive, bourgeois inner-emigre. His writings were considered to be both offensive to political ideology and pernicious in their intent. Through increasing pressure, all of his accesses to publishing houses were severed and he was finally silenced as a writer.

Unable to bear the death sentence inflicted upon him, Zamyatin wrote his famous letter asking Stalin for permission to leave Russia. Through Gorky's intervention, permission was granted and Zamyatin settled in France where he was able to once again pursue his literary career.

Soviet house cleaning has been so thorough that practically no trace of Zamyatin remains within Soviet Russia today. He has been condemned on purely ideological grounds. Soviet critics have not evaluated his works, objectively. They have persisted in viewing Zamyatin as a political writer.

Neither has Zamyatin achieved prominence within the West. He is still a relatively unknown writer and not widely read. Most of the criticisms that have been written about him and his works are purely descriptive in nature.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Zamyatin's Weltanschauung as found in his works. Both his creative and expository writings have been utilized in this study.

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I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Louis J. Shein for his encouragement and patient guidance. Without him this thesis would never have been begun or completed.

My thanks are also due to Miss Patricia Goodall for her excellent service as a typist and for her generous assistance.

I would also like to thank the Inter-library Loan Department and especially Mrs. Parker for her prompt service.

Acknowledgement is also due to the Ontario Government for their financial aid in the form of the Ontario Government Fellowship.

And I am most deeply grateful to my husband and parents for their constant encouragement and unebbing faith in me.

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For to stay, though the hours  
burn in the night, is to freeze  
and crystallize and be bound  
in a mould.

"The Prophet"

Kahlil Gibran

## CHAPTER I

### THE TRUE SCYTHIAN

The collective man had triumphed in post-revolutionary Russia. Politically, individualism was regarded as being inherently contrary to communist ideology. Leon Trotsky, for example, stated that "Revolution starts from the central idea that collective man must become sole master".<sup>1</sup> Naturally therefore, collective interests were espoused by the regime while those of the individual were minimized and ignored.

Within the literary field, proletarian poets and writers diligently proclaimed that there could no longer be individual heroes and they eagerly extolled the collective man as the only protagonist possible in literature. Excitement over the triumph of the collective man and a fervent belief in his innate goodness permeated the lives of these writers. "...Among the proletarian poets and novelists there developed a mystic belief in the collective as an entity in which the individual finds happiness by losing himself, like a Buddhist saint in Nirvana."<sup>2</sup> They believed that true happiness could only be achieved

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<sup>1</sup>Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, trans. by Rose Strunsky (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Edward J. Brown, Russian Literature Since the Revolution (London, 1969), p. 73.



by becoming totally absorbed in the collective "we" through the sacrificing and shedding of the undesirable individual "I". And because the collective was the source of this happiness, the well-being of the collective mass naturally takes precedence over that of the individual.

Trotsky in his book, Literature and Revolution, affirms that the future man will progressively achieve greater heights. However, before man can proceed on the path to greatness, communism must be established. Communist life will be tested, corrected and consciously directed in order to finally eliminate the ever prevalent care for food and education. Once this is removed, communism will make social initiative and collective creativeness possible. This collective creativeness will extend man's capabilities. The collective man, in control of the machine, will subdue and rule nature. He will move rivers and mountains not just for the sake of expediency, but to satisfy aesthetic cravings. He won't become bored in his perfect world because of the new technical and cultural achievements reached within his world. Each new achievement will be followed by another.

Man will then master his own semi-conscious and then subconscious process of his organism, such as his breathing, his circulatory system, his digestion, and reproduction and will try, within limits, to subordinate them to reason and will. Trotsky states that man, "in his own hands, will become an object of the most complicated methods of artificial selection and psycho-physical training"<sup>3</sup> until he completely

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<sup>3</sup>Leon Trotsky, op. cit. pp. 254-255.

harmonizes himself. He will "achieve beauty by giving the movement of his own limbs the utmost precision, purposefulness and economy in his work, his walk and play."<sup>4</sup>

Man will then turn his gaze to the age-old problem of his fear of death. By exploring and controlling the laws of heredity, by careful sexual selection, and by maintaining an equilibrium in the wearing out of organs and tissues, man will eradicate the hysterical fear of death. By creating a higher sociobiologic type, man will have raised himself to a higher plane. He will become a superman. The future man will accomplish all these feats and more through eventual self-government.

Zamyatin viewed the suppression of the individual in the name of the collective good, collective happiness, or collective progress as dangerous. He pointed out his reasons in such creative writings as his novel Мы in which he explored the extreme ramifications of the collective policy.

In Мы, an anti-utopian novel which he sets in the distant future, Zamyatin portrays a technologically advanced society, a society which runs as smoothly as a well-oiled machine and each member of this society as merely a small cog performing a specific function within this gigantic machine. Not the welfare of the individual but keeping the machine operating smoothly is the primary concern of the Well-Doer, the head of the United State.<sup>5</sup> The well-being of an individual is only considered in

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>5</sup>Self-government proves to be impossible in this utopia because the totally rational man is incapable of governing his own world. This becomes more and more axiomatic as Zamyatin's ideas are explored throughout Chapter I.

conjunction with the well-being of the machine. The individual as such, inevitably loses his identity, his meaning, and comes to regard himself solely as a small cog within the complex machinery of society. D-503 (people no longer have names, only numbers) proudly asserts that he sees himself as a part of an enormous body:

Каждое утро, с шестиколесною  
точностью, в один и тот же час и  
в одну и ту же минуту, -- мы,  
миллионы, встаем, как один. В  
один и тот же час, единомиллионно,  
начинаем работу --- единомиллионно  
кончаем. И сливаясь в единое,  
миллионнорукое тело, в одну и ту  
же, назначенную Скрижалью, секунду,  
-- мы подносим ложки ко рту, --  
и в одну и ту же секунду выходим  
на прогулку и идем в аудиториум, в  
зал Тайлоровских экзерсисов,  
отходим ко сну...<sup>6</sup>

No erratic or spontaneous movements are permitted. Only utilitarian actions are allowed. All the numbers are essentially alike in their motions. Their similarity even extends to their thoughts. D-503 rejoices when I-330 realizes his thoughts before he actually verbalizes them.

"Понимаете: даже мысли. Это потому, что никто не 'один',  
но 'один из'. Мы так одинаковы..."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр., 14.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., стр.10.

With his loss of individuality, man has conspicuously narrowed the gap between himself and an inanimate machine. By losing his individuality, man has in the process lost some of his humanity and become more machine-like in nature. D-503, while watching the workers and machines labouring on the spaceship "Integral", becomes enraptured with the harmony of their movements. He sees similarities between the men and machines. The arms of the men resemble levers and the machines perform the same tasks as the men. Moved by this scene, D-503 ecstatically proclaims that the mechanized humans and humanized machines are one.<sup>8</sup>

If the general well-being of society transcends in importance the welfare of the individual, then man becomes expendable and replaceable just like the machine which he has come to resemble by adhering to such a value. D-503 describes an explosion that accidentally killed about ten Numbers who were idly standing by the "Integral". He states that all that remained of these men were a few crumbs and some soot. However, no one even noticed. "С гордостью записываю здесь, что ритм нашей работы не споткнулся от этого ни на секунду, никто не вздрогнул."<sup>9</sup> And why should anyone become perturbed, continues D-503, "Десять нумеров -- это едва ли одна стомиллионная часть массы Единого Государства, при практических расчетах -- это бесконечно малая третьего порядка."<sup>10</sup> To presume that the life

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., стр., 73.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., стр., 93.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., стр., 93.

of an individual, who barely represents one hundred millionth part of the whole society, is sacred, seems not only presumptuous on the part of that individual but even ludicrous, when considered from the collective point of view.<sup>11</sup>

This utter disregard for the value of individual human life is a natural result of a policy which stresses collectivism. D-503, caring only that the building of the "Integral" remain on schedule, is not disturbed by senseless death. History also bears this out. Leaders such as Peter the Great, who in order to modernize Russia, and Stalin, who in his attempts to modernize and industrialize the Soviet Union, sacrificed millions of lives. But a truly deplorable result of such a policy, and Zamyatin anxiously points this out, is the mechanization and dehumanization of each person living in a society which is dominated by total collectivism. Man then is transformed from a vital human being into an unfeeling, callous Number who condones and rationalizes senseless death on the basis of percentages, advantages, and disadvantages.

Man, however, is not completely dehumanized until the scientists of the United State discover a method for removing permanently the irrational element in man -- imagination. Imagination, fancy, or soul prevents man from becoming a complete automaton. Imagination can cause sleepless nights, dreams and doubts. Imagination can disrupt and destroy. Imagination separates one man from another; imagination individualizes.

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<sup>11</sup>This does not imply that the fear of death has been eradicated. The penalty for transgressing norms is death. Therefore the fear of death is used by the Well-Doer as a means of subduing and controlling the populace.

Therefore for the good of society, imagination must be eliminated. The scientists discovered that by X-raying three times a certain nerve located in the lower region of the frontal lobe of the brain, imagination could be removed successfully. The result of this operation is a loyal, obedient, unswerving, and unthinking robot which poses no threat whatsoever to society as a whole, only to individuality and humanity. The finished "product" of the operation perturbs even D-503, a zealous advocate of the rational and collective. When he sees the people who have been operated on, he himself becomes frightened:

Впрочем 'человек' -- это не то: не ноги -- а какие-то тяжелые, скованные, ворочающиеся от невидимого привода колеса; не люди -- а какие-то человекообразные тракторы. ...

Они медленно, неудержимо пропахали сквозь толпу -- и ясно, будь вместо нас на пути у них стена, дерево, дом -- они все же, не останавливаясь, пропахали бы сквозь стену, дерево, дом.<sup>12</sup>

These are no longer human men and women but tractors and bulldozers, which have no further use for the personal hours allocated for them by the Tables. Their dehumanization is now complete. This, warns Zamyatin, is the end result of collectivism.

For Zamyatin, the irrational side of man not only aids in defining his individuality and contributes to his humanity, but also causes

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., стр., 161-162.

him to progress. Robert Louis Jackson in his study of the influence of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* in Russian literature correctly asserts that Zamyatin was anti-utopian. Irrationality is an integral part of man and human nature and therefore Zamyatin could not believe in a final utopia. Nineteenth century rationalists believed that once man becomes enlightened and realizes his real interests and that his own advantage lies only in the good, he will then act accordingly. He will become noble and act only to his advantage. The *Underground Man*, however, disagrees. He states that this is an erroneous assumption because there exist millions of examples that bear witness to the fact that man knowingly acts to his disadvantage.<sup>13</sup> Man's nature is such that he longs for the quest and not for the desired goal. Man expands and progresses while he searches. Once he achieves the object of his struggles, once he obtains  $2 + 2 = 4$ , he begins to stagnate, to die.<sup>14</sup> Therefore the whole concept of a utopia is paradoxical for it is not beneficial but, on the contrary, detrimental to man. It would only stifle man. However, Jackson's assertion that "man is essentially an irrational being"<sup>15</sup> cannot be applied to Zamyatin's concept of man.

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<sup>13</sup>Ф. М. Достоевский, "Записки из подполья" в Собрании Сочинений том четвертый (Москва 1956), стр. 148.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., стр., 160.

<sup>15</sup>R. L. Jackson, Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature (The Hague, 1958), p. 151.

Alex M. Shane, in his comprehensive study of Zamyatin entitled The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin, refutes and conclusively proves, so this writer feels, that Jackson's statement dealing with Zamyatin's concept of man is inaccurate. Instead Shane agrees with Edward J. Brown who maintains that there must be a union of the rational and irrational before man can become a complete human being and develop.<sup>16</sup> I-330 understands this. D-503 and his fellow citizens within the glass city represent the rational. Separated from nature by the Green Wall, indoctrinated and weaned on the rational laws of mathematics, these urban dwellers have lost much of their instinct and emotion. The inhabitants beyond the Green Wall represent irrationalism. Separated from the sterile, rational of the city, these beings have reverted back to a more primitive existence. They have developed their instincts and have also become more emotional. Neither man on either side of the Green Wall is whole. I-330 explains this to D-503 when he demands to know who these strange creatures from beyond the Wall are:

Кто они? Половина, какую мы  
потеряли, H<sub>2</sub> и O -- а чтобы  
получилось H<sub>2</sub>O -- ручьи, моря,  
водопады, волны, бури, --  
нужно, чтобы половины  
соединились...<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Edward J. Brown, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>17</sup>Евгений Замятин, op. cit., стр. 140-141.



Zamyatin himself bears this out in a letter to Annenkov:

В человеке есть два драгоценных начала: мозг и секс. От первого -- вся наука, от второго -- все искусство. И отрезать от себя все искусство или вогнать его в мозг -- это значит отрезать... ну да, и остаться с одним только прыщичком.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore man cannot be essentially rational or irrational.<sup>19</sup>

In his story "Наводнение" Zamyatin had no intention of lampooning the Soviet era or the noble proletariat as Brovman insisted.<sup>20</sup> Instead, he attempted to give a sympathetic portrayal of an individual who actually did something about her life. Even though the solution to Sofya's problem was extreme, it still illustrated that man needs both the rational and irrational. Total irrationality can lead to murder.

Gan'ka, Sofya's adopted daughter, has been sleeping with Sofya's husband. When Sofya realizes this, she stumbles around in a daze, numb from shock. But one day, her emotions come alive within her and she murders Gan'ka with an axe. Within a few months of the murder, Sofya conceives a child.

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<sup>18</sup>Юрий Анненков, "Евгений Замятин" в Гранях № 51 (Франкфурт 1962), стр., 70.

<sup>19</sup>Shane also utilizes Zamyatin's mathematical imagery. The underground Man rejects the equation  $2+2=4$  and thus the whole number system by supporting the equation  $2+2=5$ , which symbolizes the supremacy of man's irrationality. However, Zamyatin uses the square root of minus one (his symbol for the unknown), which is an integral part of the imaginary number system and includes the real number system and  $2+2=4$ . This excellent argument not only displays Zamyatin's ingenuity but Shane's perspicacity.

<sup>20</sup>Г. Бровман, "Реакционная литература и ее творческий метод" в Молодой Гвардии № 15/16 (1931) стр. 115.

Zamyatin does not condone violence or bloodshed. He does not advocate murder as a solution to problems. But he does empathize with Sofya and rejoices in the fact that she breaks out of her unbearably lifeless situation and existence. She is no longer the hollow shell of a woman before and during Gan'ka's escapades. She is now a complete and fulfilled woman. She has come alive.

Gan'ka's murder is not a premeditated act. At no time does Sofya actually consider killing Gan'ka. Instead, she instinctively raises the axe and kills her when she smells Gan'ka's scent and realizes that this is precisely how she must smell at night when Trofim Ivanich comes to her.

At the time of the murder, there are actually two Sofyas present -- the one that performs the killing and the one that watches. The one that murders is the atavistic Sofya, the animal-like Sofya who kills in hate, in revulsion. The more humane Sofya screams in terror:

'Господи, Господи, что ж это я?'  
 -- отчаянно крикнула внутри одна  
 Софья, а другая в ту же секунду  
 обухом топора ударила Ганьку в  
 висок, в чёлку.<sup>21</sup>

When the irrational, primitive Sofya sees Gan'ka's blood flowing freely, she identifies it as her own blood rushing out unimpeded from a boil which has finally burst. Relieved, this Sofya then relaxes while the rational Sofya emerges and takes command.

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<sup>21</sup>Евгений Замятин, Повести и Рассказы (Мюнхен 1963), стр., 228.

It seemed to Sofya that her hands had a mind of their own. They very adequately performed the task of cleaning up and disposing of the body:

Чужие, Софьины руки легко, спокойно  
разрубили тело пополам -- иначе его  
было никак не унести. Софья в это  
время думала, что в кухне на лавке  
лежит еще недочищенная Ганькой 22  
картошка; нужно ее сварить к обеду.

Someone knocks on the door and fear floods Sofya's whole body. She stands, just like Raskol'nikov, breathlessly watching the flimsy lock rattling and bouncing in response to the vibrations of the knocks. When the knocking finally ceases and all is quiet again, her rational hands take over once more and lead her on.

No one suspects that Gan'ka has been murdered. Both Trofim Ivanich, Sofya's husband, and the police conclude that Gan'ka has run away. Sofya does not need to worry. She is safe. Her husband has become loving and faithful once more and she has finally become pregnant. She has every reason to remain silent and be happy. However, the irrational element in man manifests itself again only this time in a more humanized form, in the form of Sofya's conscience. Finally, at the birth of her child, Sofya feverishly confesses her crime. Then satisfied, she falls back on her bed.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., стр., 228.

"Теперь было все хорошо, блаженно,  
она была закончена, она вылезлась  
вся,"<sup>23</sup>

Sofya was essentially irrational when she murdered Gan'ka and essentially rational when she disposed of the evidence. Perhaps if Sofya had maintained a balance between these two at all times, she could have found a more appropriate solution to her problem. Nevertheless, the presence of these two qualities made it possible for her to burst out of her unbearably weary existence into a new life. She began to really feel, to really experience for herself. She began to experience the whole range of human passions, good or bad, which Zamyatin felt was essential. In this sense, Sofya had progressed.

Zamyatin did believe that man needs both the rational and irrational in order to develop, to progress. If man is completely irrational, as Sofya was at the time of the murder, instead of progressing, he regresses. He reverts back to an animal-like existence as the inhabitants beyond the Green Wall have done. Although biased, D-503 gives his impression of a man from beyond the Wall:

Сквозь стекло на меня -- туманно,  
тускло -- тупая морда какого-то  
зверя, желтые глаза, упорно  
повторяющие одну и ту же непонятную  
мне мысль.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., стр., 240.

<sup>24</sup> Евгений Замытин, Мы, op.cit., стр. 81.

This could very well have been Sofya, except for one important factor -- her rational element. Because she possesses both, she has developed. A totally rational man, like D-503, is just as incapable of progressing as the man from beyond the Wall. The Wall itself also serves to illustrate that Zamyatin believed in man possessing both the rational and irrational elements. The Wall in the United State has separated the rational from the irrational. D. J. Richards explains, "The destruction of the wall would mean...the reunion of man with nature and the re-integration of the personality."<sup>25</sup>

D-503, living a strictly regimented life according to the logical laws of mathematics and reason, is completely mesmerized by the square root of minus one, his symbol for the unknown. He loathes nature with its unbridled verdure sprouting wildly in every direction. He cannot understand nature. Because nature is beyond reason, like the square root of minus one, he fears it. Nature, to D-503, is the square root of minus one. Since the Green Wall guards him from the menace of the unknown, D-503 blesses and adores the Wall. He very gratefully acknowledges that the Wall not only protects him but has also made him into what he is today. He writes:

Но, к счастью, между мной и диким  
зеленым океаном -- стекло Стены.  
О великая, божественно-  
ограничивающая мудрость стен,  
преград! Это, может быть,  
величайшее из всех изобретений.

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<sup>25</sup>D. J. Richards, Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic, p. 61.

Человек перестал быть диким животным только тогда, когда он построил первую стену, Человек перестал быть диким человеком только тогда, когда мы построили Зеленую Стену, когда мы этой Стеной изолировали свой машинный, совершенный мир -- от неразумного, безобразного мира деревьев, птиц, животных...<sup>26</sup>

Not only has D-503 become more civilized because of the Wall, but he has also become more complacent. He feels safe in the enclosed city, his cocoon. He understands all within this city. Everything is clear, just like the transparent walls of the glass buildings. There is nothing here to fear. The Wall has accomplished this and therefore has "become a symbol of absolute -- and therefore infantile -- security."<sup>27</sup> The Wall represents "infantile security" because D-503 fears to look beyond it. He is thankful that there are such things as boundaries and limits. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to bear it.

D-503 is a coward and yet he does not realize this. The paradox lies in the fact that he feels he is serving knowledge, when in reality he is hiding behind "walls". R-13, the poet, informs D-503 of this:

Ну что там: знание! Знание ваше это самое -- трусость. Да уж чего там: верно. Просто вы хотите стенкой обгородить бесконечное, а за стенку-то и боитесь заглянуть.

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<sup>26</sup>

Евгений Замятин, Мы, op.cit., стр.81.

<sup>27</sup>

R. L. Jackson, op. cit., p. 152.

Да! Выгляните <sup>28</sup> и глаза  
зажмурите. Да!

D-503 fails to understand R-13's implications. Since the Wall has separated him from the primitive and made him civilized, D-503 then reasons that walls are the foundation of everything human, and therefore necessary. He is incapable of realizing that the "Wall", keeping him safe and happy within his own little world, prevents him from truly learning and developing. Instead, D-503, like most of the citizens of the United State with the exception of a handful of revolutionaries, has become too contented, too comfortable.

The erection of walls, of limits, brings into focus the question of freedom of choice. D-503, safe and happy in his cocoon, does not want freedom. Freedom is irrational and concomitant with pain and torture. He speaks of the absurdity of the early Christian freedom given to man by God. " ... их Бог не дал им ничего, кроме вечных, мучительных исканий." <sup>29</sup> D-503's rational god has rid him of this endless seeking, of doubt, and has instead given him happiness.

Zamyatin was quite obviously influenced by Dostoevsky's " Великий инквизитор". The Inquisitor's plans for his people have been

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<sup>28</sup> Евгений Замятин, Мы op.cit., стр. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., стр. 42.

realized within the United State. The Inquisitor tells Christ:

Мы будем позволять или запрещать  
им жить с их женами и любовницами,  
иметь или не иметь детей -- все  
судя по их послушанию -- и они  
будут нам покоряться с весельем  
и радостью.<sup>30</sup>

Within the United State there are no such things as wives, only mistresses. The doctors and scientists of this United State have tabulated the sexual drive of each Number and have accordingly issued a programme stipulating the frequency and the time when each Number may indulge in sexual exercises. To control this activity, the United State issues pink tickets which must be presented before each sexual encounter. Birth control is also zealously practiced within this utopia. Only those who fit a prescribed standard are allowed to become reproductive machines for the State. Desire is not a qualifying factor. O-90, who yearns to bear her own child, is ten centimeters shorter than the requirements set by the Maternal Norm. Therefore she is not allowed to conceive. The penalty for transgressing norms is death.

D-503 does not realize that the regulations which the Well-Doer has inflicted on the populace supposedly for the good of society, are at the expense of the individual. He does not see this as an injustice to the individual. Instead, he even scoffs at the idea that an individual should have rights. This concept seems just as ludicrous to

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<sup>30</sup>Ф. М. Достоевский, "Братья Карамазовы" в Собрании Сочинений том девятый (Москва 1958), 326.



him as the idea that a gram (the individual) equilibrates a ton (society).<sup>31</sup> He does not desire rights or his own individuality. He only wants to be happy.

Dostoevsky's Inquisitor governs on the premise that happiness and freedom are incompatible. Freedom involves making decisions and man is too weak, too base to handle them. Therefore the Inquisitor has liberated man from the agony of thinking by deciding and choosing for him. He tells Christ that in this way he will make man happy and contented in his "unfreedom":

У нас же все будут счастливы и не будут более ни бунтовать, ни истреблять друг друга, как в свободе твоей, повсеместно. О мы убедим их, что они тогда только и станут свободными, когда откажутся от свободы своей для нас и нам покорятся.<sup>32</sup>

D-503 is happy and satisfied in his unfreedom. He feels freer because he is not obligated to look beyond any walls, to choose. The ultimate illustration of non-freedom is the farcical election held within the United State. There is only one candidate, the Well-Doer, and naturally he is elected unanimously every time. However, at the forty-eighth election there are thousands of dissenting hands raised in opposition

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<sup>31</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы op.cit., стр. 100.

<sup>32</sup>Ф. М. Достоевский, «Братья Карамазовы», op. cit., стр. 324.

to the election of the Well-Doer. They are not even counted. On the following day the newspaper jubilantly proclaims that the Well-Doer was once again elected unanimously. And yet D-503 flatters himself with the idea that he and the other citizens actually play a part in electing the Well-Doer. D-503 really has no choice but to elect the Well-Doer for he cannot visualize any other type of existence. He fears change. Therefore he is forced to raise his hand in assent. The citizens of the United State are in that soporific state which the Underground Man abhors. Afraid to look beyond two times two equals four, they are contented to remain forever in the same state:

И нет счастливее цифр, живущих по  
стройным вечным законам таблицы  
умножения. Ни колебаний, ни  
заблуждений. Истина -- одна, и  
истинный путь -- один; и эта  
истина -- дважды два, и этот  
истинный путь -- четыре. И разве  
не абсурдом было бы, если бы эти  
счастливы, идеально перемноженные  
двойки -- стали думать о какой-то<sup>33</sup>  
свободе, т.е. ясно -- об ошибке?

The Inquisitor is right. D-503 does enjoy his submission, his freedom from anxiety and care. But then he is not and cannot be a complete human being. To be whole, one must enjoy positive freedom and not the pseudo-freedom, the negative freedom that D-503 extols. "True freedom consists in the concord of inner impulse and outer action, but the

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<sup>33</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы op.cit., стр. 60.

Inquisitor's utopia denies the essence of man, for it denies him freedom."<sup>34</sup> D-503 might feel that he acts upon his inner impulses and therefore does enjoy the true freedom that R. E. Matlaw is writing about. However D-503 has been so conditioned by dogma that his inner impulses are practically dictated. They are not his own. The underground Man's warnings have been realized in the United State. All human actions have been tabulated according to mathematical laws, thus eliminating any possibility of adventures.<sup>35</sup> D-503 is the epitome of a rationalist's dream. His feelings for love and life that I-330 arouses in him are real but he is unable to bear them. For the first time he feels pain, anger, frustration, and jealousy. However these emotions overwhelm him. He neither understands them nor is he capable of controlling them. He finally resorts to the operation, his salvation from desire and life, and becomes an automaton. He is now completely free from suffering. He has no desires of his own, only those of the Well-Doer. He is empty. He is now merely an organ stop, a piano key. When I-330, his beloved, is brought in before him, he barely recognizes her. He feels absolutely nothing as he watches her being tortured to death. The deterioration of his humanity is now complete.

Individuality, freedom, and suffering are all essential to man. "Suffering accompanies man's search for his essential meaning. It is ... a necessary, if unfortunate, by-product."<sup>36</sup> D-503 is incapable of

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<sup>34</sup>Ralph E. Matlaw, "Introduction" in Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor (New York, 1960), p. xxi.

<sup>35</sup>Ф. М. Достоевский, "Записки из подполья" op.cit. 152.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. xxi.

comprehending this. He believes that man has no meaning outside his function within society. Since man has already established his meaning, then pain is an unnecessary absurdity and suffering is irrational. Because happiness is the end result of reason, it is therefore both correct and desirable. Exasperated with his feelings for I-330, D-503 exclaims:

Благодетель великий. Какой абсурд -- хотеть боли. Кому же не понятно, что болевые -- отрицательные, слагаемые уменьшают ту сумму, которую мы называем счастьем.<sup>37</sup>

Zamyatin despises this euphoric happiness which eventually creates complacent automatons. He believes that pain, when it makes one feel truly alive, is sweeter and dearer than the happiness that D-503 longs for. I-330 yearns for this pain because she wants to feel, to desire for herself, even though it might be irrational. She expresses these wishes to D-503:

Что вам за дело -- если я не хочу, чтобы за меня хотели другие, а хочу хотеть сама, 38  
-- если я хочу невозможного...

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<sup>37</sup> Евгений Замятин, Мы op.cit. стр. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., стр. 178.

She adamantly opposes the Inquisitor's and Well-Doer's happiness. She consistently refuses to join the blissfully snoring herd, the result of this happiness. She wants to live.

In his essay entitled "Скифы ли?" (1918), Zamyatin portrays his ideal man, the Scythian. The Scythian, on his swift steed, gallops fearlessly on the vast steppe, his hair streaming in the wind. He loathes complacency and routine. He refuses to "settle down", to rest, to become a part of the herd and thus stagnate. Instead, this heretic, the eternal nomad moves on, constantly roaming and restlessly seeking but never attaining. Zamyatin's Scythian is an individual.

Zamyatin firmly believed in the individual. He totally opposed the suppression of the individual man in favour of the collective man because he felt that collectivism could only be disastrous for man. Collectivism would inevitably deprive man of his individuality and of his freedom which are essential if man is to develop, to progress. Man requires both his rational and irrational faculties to be creative and freedom permits him to initiate his various endeavours. The irrational pushes man forward so that he might explore and thus expand and grow while the rational side guides him in his quest. The free individual is not afraid to breathe, to live spontaneously, to move on, to progress. The free individual is one of a kind. Collectivism however, freezes man into a mould.

## CHAPTER II

### ZAMYATIN'S CONCEPT OF ENTROPY AND ENERGY

Zamyatin believed that there are two basic forces governing the world -- entropy and energy. I-330 concisely expresses their accompanying properties and ultimate results:

Вот: две силы в мире -- энтропия  
и энергия. Одна -- к блаженному  
покою, к счастливому равновесию;  
другая -- к разрушению равновесия, <sup>1</sup>  
к мучительно-бесконечному движению.

Entropy, a motionless, tranquil force essentially maintains a static state. Under the forces of entropy, both people and affairs remain the same. The euphoria that accompanies entropy creates contented masses of people that do not seek or desire change. Without movement, without change, people gradually become comfortable and as a result, stagnate. Therefore entropy leads to philistinism, complacency, and spiritual death.

Energy, on the other hand, is a very dynamic force which instigates movement and change. Energy creates revolution. Zamyatin

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<sup>1</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 142.

does not relegate revolution to any particular field alone, as, for example, the political, but applies it to every aspect of life. For Zamyatin revolution means two dead dark stars colliding and forming a new star.<sup>2</sup> It means Lobachevsky smashing the walls of the old Euclidean world and discovering the way to countless non-Euclidean spaces.<sup>3</sup> Revolution therefore, means creativity and discovery. Revolution breaks into new frontiers, smashes old truths, and essentially breathes life into man and his world. Revolution instigates progress, a movement forward in all spheres of life. Revolution combats the deadening forces of entropy.

Alex M. Shane in his book, The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin, demonstrates that Julius Robert von Mayer, a German physicist and also probably Frank C. Eve, a British physicist and physiologist, were instrumental in influencing Zamyatin in his scientific-philosophical world outlook. When Zamyatin discovered the work of Julius Robert von Mayer, he realized that Mayer's thermodynamic concept of entropy could be applied to his own philosophical concept of philistinism. Therefore instead of philistinism he adopted the term "entropy". Frank C. Eve, in his study of life and its origins in terms of energy, extended "physical (thermodynamic) concepts to biology (life itself)".<sup>4</sup> With this breaking

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<sup>2</sup>Евгений Замятин, «О литературе, революции и энтропии» в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 249.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., стр. 249.

<sup>4</sup>Alex M. Shane, The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968), p. 47.

down of barriers between organic and inorganic chemistry, Zamyatin then was able to extend his conception of energy and entropy from the physical sciences to the sociophilosophical level and back again. Therefore he could say that revolution is everywhere and in everything:

Революция -- всюду, во всем; она бесконечна, последней революции нет, нет последнего числа. Революция социальная -- только одна из бесчисленных чисел: закон революции не социальный, а неизмеримо больше -- космический, универсальный закон -- такой же, как закон сохранения энергии, вырождение энергии (энтропии). Когда-нибудь установлена будет точная формула закона революции. И в этой формуле будут числовые величины: нации, классы, звезды -- и книги.<sup>5</sup>

Through these influences, Zamyatin was able to enhance his own basic philosophy as expressed in his earlier essays by integrating it with and clothing it in new scientific forms. He brilliantly illustrated this synthesis in his essay entitled "О литературе, революции, и энтропии".

Since there is no final revolution, since it is infinite, therefore the progress that it incites is not merely a movement forward, but an unending movement forward. Herein lies Zamyatin's optimism rooted in Hegel's dialectic formula of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis:

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<sup>5</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О литературе, революции и энтропии" op. cit., стр. 249.



Сегодня обречено умереть: потому что умерло вчера и потому что родится завтра ... Сегодня -- отрицает вчера, но является отрицанием отрицания -- завтра: всё тот же диалектический путь, грандиозной параболой уносящий мир в бесконечность. Тезис -- вчера, антитезис -- сегодня, и синтез -- завтра.<sup>6</sup>

The new therefore, does not co-exist harmoniously with the old from which it has evolved. Instead it constantly battles with the old. The product of this conflict, the synthesis, is in turn challenged by newer discoveries, producing an eternal movement forward.

Because there is no final revolution, there can be no final truth. Nothing is infallible. Each new discovery should be open to question and debate. Therefore Zamyatin opposed the growth of dogma, concomitant with and an agent of entropy, in every area of life, be it scientific, religious, social, or artistic. In "Скифи ли?" Zamyatin explains his reasons for opposing dogmatization. Metaphorically, he compares discovery to fiery magma and the acceptance of a discovery to a cooling of the magma. Once this magma cools, it becomes coated with a rigid crust. This motionless, ossified deposit is dogma. Once discovery becomes crusted over with dogma, it no longer burns but gives off warmth. This warmth creates comfort. Instead of the Sermon on the Mount under the scorching sun to sobbing people there is a drowsy prayer in an ornate cathedral. Dogma pacifies and placates. It removes annoying question

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<sup>6</sup>Евгений Замытин, "Завтра" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967) стр. 173.

marks. Therefore Zamyatin condemns dogmatization as "энтропия мысли".<sup>7</sup>

Zamyatin opposed Christianity because it had been realized and dogmatized. He admired Christ the heretic but not the pot-bellied priest, the present manifestation of Christianity, who dispenses benedictions with his right hand and collects tithes with his left.<sup>8</sup> "As a humanist Zamyatin believed that all men were brothers, and he abhorred senseless violence; but he rejected Christian pacifism, particularly meekness, humility, and salvation through suffering as championed by Dostoevsky,"<sup>9</sup> because Christianity leads to this "энтропия мысли". Because there is no final truth, submission to a church, be it Orthodox or Catholic, is just as erroneous as submitting to a rational utopia. D-503 admits that the Christians, although imperfect, were the direct forerunners of the United State. Both the Christians and the Well-Doer teach that resignation is desirable and virtuous while pride is a vice. Both assure their followers that "I" comes from the devil whereas "We" comes from God.<sup>10</sup> Thus Christians worshiped entropy. I-330 informs D-503 of this:

Энтропии -- наши, или вернее --  
ваши предки, христиане,

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<sup>7</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О литературе, революции и энтропии" op. cit., стр. 250.

<sup>8</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?" in A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin tr. and ed. by Mirra Ginsburg (New York 1967) p. 22.

<sup>9</sup>Alex M. Shane, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>10</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы op. cit., стр. 111.

ПОКЛОНЯЛИСЬ, КАК БОГУ.<sup>11</sup>

Christianity, encrusted with dogma curtails meaningful activity and thought, prevents individualism and enforces conformity. Zamyatin, a zealous advocate of revolution and maximum individualism, could not accept entropy in any guise.

Energy creates the opportunity for man to progress, to participate in endless revolution. In this way man, through creativity, smashes dogma. Dogma grows and builds up slowly like corals:

Это уже путь эволюции. Пока новая ересь не взорвет кору догмы и все возведенные на ней прочнейшие, каменнейшие постройки.<sup>12</sup>

The man who smashes dogma with discovery is Zamyatin's ideal man, the heretic. Heretics, like I-330 and the Scythian ensure the eternal movement forward by rejecting the present in the name of the far and distant future. In this way they keep the world alive. These spiritual revolutionaries work only for the future because of their dissatisfaction with the present. They do not work for the near future because they know that an ideal, once realized, becomes philistinized. The lovely lady once married, simply becomes Mrs. So-and-So with hair curlers at night and a migraine in the morning.<sup>13</sup> A victory on earth inevitably

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., стр. 142.

<sup>12</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О литературе, революции и энтропии" op. cit., стр. 250.

<sup>13</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?" op.cit., p. 22.

means a defeat on the higher plane of ideas.<sup>14</sup>

The acceptance of heresy is necessary in order to smash yesterday's dogma. But the problem lies in the fact that once a fiery-red heresy victoriously explodes yesterday's "crust", it then has no choice but to cool down and enter the comfortable, soporific state of entropy. The heresy inevitably becomes philistinized. Within its very victory lies its defeat. A heresy, once accepted, is no longer revolutionary. Instead it initiates once again the evolution of new dogma and its inevitable calcification. Therefore the true Scythian sets his goal far into the future thus ensuring the validity of their ideals.

In order for man to progress, he must be a heretic. Zamyatin believed that heretics alone are "единственное (горькое) лекарство от энтропии человеческой."<sup>15</sup> Because heretics fight dogma, and all its manifestations in traditions, conventions, and institutions, they are condemned by the wise and cruel dialectic law to adhere to the way of Golgotha. In "Скифы ли?" Zamyatin also states that a heretic is often lodged at the government's expense in prison. The life of a heretic is a tumultuous one. It is far from easy. I-330 suffers and dies for her ideals. This is not an uncommon fate of heretics.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Евгений Замятин, О литературе, революции и энтропии op. cit., стр. 250.

The forces of entropy are powerful. Entropy, as enforced by the power-hungry<sup>16</sup> Well-Doer, can be compared to the white spider that entangles and traps man in its web of happiness.<sup>17</sup> I-330 dares D-503 to seek salvation from desire in the operation, so that he might partake of this leavened happiness and thus join the snoring crowd.<sup>18</sup> And because this happiness removes doubt and maintains a comfortable equilibrium, it becomes very dear to its participants. Therefore entropy has many staunch adherents. With its many followers, and its pleasant, euphoric, effect, entropy becomes a mighty force. Conquering entropy is a very difficult task because the people who reside comfortably in entropy, do not desire deliverance, but actually oppose it. What each adherent of entropy, each philistine despises most of all is the rebel who dares to think differently from him<sup>19</sup>. What the priest in the purple cassock hates most is the heretic who refuses to recognize his exclusive right to deny or permit; what Mrs. So-and-So loathes most of all is the Fair Lady who

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<sup>16</sup>Isaac Deutscher, Heretics and Renegades and Other Essays, (London 1955), p. 41.

<sup>17</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы op. cit. стр. 121.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., стр.178.

<sup>19</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?" op. cit., p. 23.

who refuses to recognize her sole right to the privileges of love.<sup>20</sup>

"Hatred of freedom is the surest symptom of this deadly disease, philistinism."<sup>21</sup> The philistine craves uniformity; he wants everyone to conform.

Heretics, however, actively battle the forces of entropy. They are the agents of revolution. The wise and cruel dialectic law ensures this. This law is cruel because it condemns the true heretic to an eternal dissatisfaction with the present, and wise because eternal dissatisfaction is the only pledge of eternal movement forward, endless creation.<sup>22</sup>

Zamyatin divides people into two groups-- the living-living and the living-dead.<sup>23</sup> The living-living are rebels, heretics and revolutionaries who really experience life. They are constantly in torment, always seeking, forever questioning and making mistakes. The living-dead reside in and maintain entropy. Even though the living-dead walk, talk, eat and sleep, they are not truly alive. They do not question but accept the status quo as it is. Because they do not question, they never make mistakes

<sup>20</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?" op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>21</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Scythians?" op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>22</sup>Евгений Замятин, „Завтра" op. cit., стр. 173.

<sup>23</sup>Евгений Замятин, „О литературе, революции и энтропии" стр. 252-253.

and they produce dead things.<sup>24</sup> Therefore the living-dead are like machines themselves and they also produce dead things.

Zamyatin preferred errors to truths because errors are alive whereas truths are of the machine.<sup>25</sup> Errors lead man on in search of his unattainable goal. The more unattainable and impossible the goal, the better.<sup>26</sup> Errors are agents of revolution. They create life and movement. Errors are healthy. Truths, however, are agents of entropy. Truths arrest discovery and creativity. They lead to spiritual death. Truths, if accepted, convert living-living human beings into living-dead philistines.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., ctp. 253.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., ctp. 253.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., ctp. 253.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EFFECT OF ENTROPY ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Entropy seriously impedes man's development. Zamyatin demonstrates the effect that entropy has on the individual within his creative writings.

In "Уездное" (1912), set in provincial Russia, Zamyatin displays the ugly results of philistinism. Baryba, the central character around whom the action revolves, personifies philistinism. Entropy has left him devoid of human feelings. He only concerns himself with satisfying his own physical needs. To ensure a full stomach, Baryba prostitutes himself, steals, and even risks perjury. And he feels no remorse or guilt when the innocent suffer because of him. He also employs sex either as a means to an end or merely to satisfy his sexual appetite. He does not even know the meaning of love or deep physical desire. Any woman will do.

Such an anti-hero as Baryba should not triumph. Yet he does. He becomes increasingly successful and even achieves an official position of prominence within the town. The tale closes with a drunk Baryba ordering the townspeople not to laugh. Laughing is no longer allowed. Baryba has been increasingly dehumanized until he no longer even resembles a man but a stone image:



Будто и не человек шел, а старая  
воскресшая курганная баба,  
нелепая русская каменная баба.<sup>1</sup>

Within "Аллатырь" (1914) Zamyatin again uses provincial Russia as a setting. The inhabitants of Alatyry have all been philistinized. They lead dull, monotonous existences, steeped in gossip. Their interests are petty, their lives are even more so. Nothing ever happens in this town and life continues and will continue in the same vein for there are no heretics. No one even tries to rebel or to change his or her existence. They have all succumbed to entropy.

The most appealing characters, Glafira and Kostya, together could perhaps have risen above their tedious existences. However Kostya, who loves the beautiful Glafira is not loved in return. He is too awkward and too silly to entice Glafira. And Glafira, who has the temperament and the capacity to overcome her existence, wastes herself on the ineffectual and ridiculous "Князь". The decline of her beauty, symbolized by the first growths of facial hair, represents her increasing participation within philistinism.

The effect of entropy on Campbell in "Островитяне" (1917) is just as devastating as on Baryba. However, there is a difference. Campbell has as yet not been completely dehumanized. He is capable of falling in love.

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<sup>1</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Уездное" в Собрании Сочинений том первый (Москва 1929) стр. 112.

Mrs. Dooley is also capable of feeling and loving. When Campbell is moved into her home after his accident, she becomes alive, symbolized by the loss of her pince-nez. Her pince-nez, just as Laurie's veil fluttering about her lips, protects her from life and makes her respectable. However love strips both Laurie and Mrs. Dooley of their protective shields. They both begin to breathe. But when Campbell leaves, Mrs. Dooley recovers her pince-nez and her tedious existence.

Within "ОСТРОВИТАНЕ", Zamyatin satirizes British society with its strict adherence to a code of respectability and to convention. This preoccupation with propriety and decorum has turned Mrs. Campbell into a gaunt, lifeless mummy<sup>2</sup> and her son into a mechanical being.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell, who plods on in a straight line and is incapable of comprehending anything irrational such as Mrs. Dooley's advances, falls in love with Didi, a dance-hall girl. Through this love, he could overcome entropy but he is incapable of shedding his past, his preoccupation with propriety. He feels bound by duty to await the respectability of the marriage bed before he makes love to Didi. By the time he acquires the iron, his symbol for order and respectability, he loses Didi to the boisterous, red-headed lawyer O'Kelly. Both Didi and O'Kelly are not bound by convention. They represent dynamism.

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<sup>2</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Островитяне" в Собрании Сочинений том третий (Москва 1929), стр. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., стр. 9.

Dogma, in its most extreme and intolerant form is depicted by Zamyatin in his four act play entitled, "Огни Святого Доминика" (1920). The Spanish Inquisition, bent on saving the souls of heretics (reminiscent of the Well-Doer's compulsory happiness in Мы , and Vicar Dooley's "Code for Compulsory Salvation" in "Островитяне "), enforces conformity through terror. It destroys individualism and thought. A monk, in asserting his loyalty to the Church, demonstrates this:

Да если бы мне церковь сказала,  
 что у меня только один глаз --  
 я бы согласился и с этим, я бы  
 уверовал и в это. Потому что,  
 хотя я и твердо знаю, что у  
 меня два глаза, но я знаю  
 еще тверже, что церковь -- не  
 может ошибаться.<sup>4</sup>

The Inquisition, by enforcing dogma, represents spiritual death. Only the equation  $2 + 2 = 4$  is accepted. Spontaneity and human progress are rejected. Only that which is sanctioned by the Church is considered to be correct and permissible:

Там, говорят, еретиков, что  
 орехов в Барселоне. А у

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<sup>4</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Огни святого Доминика" в Собрании Сочинений, том третий (Москва 1929) стр. 288-289.

неверных, конечно, и наука неверная. Вот уж у нас в Испании, если дважды два, так спокойно можешь сказать, что это -- с благословения святой церкви -- четыре.<sup>5</sup>

The effect of such intolerance is obvious. With the exception of the true heretics, people continually seek opportunities to voice their loyalty to the Church. They all stumble over one another in their efforts to absolve themselves of all suspicion. In this type of an atmosphere where one is continually preoccupied with preserving one's own life, man can hardly be concerned with progress.

Within "Бич Божий" (1928-1935), Zamyatin contrasts the dynamic, vibrant state of energy with the depleted state of entropy by juxtaposing the barbaric, healthy Atilla with the effete Roman government. Through this contrast, Zamyatin emphasizes the deterioration and decline of Rome through its participation in entropy.

Events in Rome are in a turmoil. Gold has lost its value and bread is scarce. The Roman citizens, in order to forget, drown themselves in decadence. The emperor, feeble and petulant, enjoys an incestuous affair with his sister. Roman men have grown lazy and fat. The government, unable to provide a strong Roman army, hires barbarians to protect the city from barbarians. Even the language and the food have grown soft.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., стр. 265.

Atila, however, is vibrant and alive. He enjoys the untamed wildness of nature and scorns the plush surroundings of the weak and effeminate Roman men. When a paunchy guard gives him some berries, Atila crushes them under his heel causing the juice to spurt like blood. This is a foreshadowing of future occurrences.

Zamyatin believed that entropy inevitably dehumanizes man. Entropy reduces individuality and induces conformity and stagnation. Being a maximal individualist and a staunch advocate of dynamism, Zamyatin could not tolerate philistinism. He therefore exposed the various manifestations of entropy within his creative writings.

Не спи, не спи художник,  
Не предавайся сну.  
Ты -- вечности заложник  
У времени в плену.

Ночь -- Пастернак

#### CHAPTER IV

#### LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE

Zamyatin's belief in the dialectic process raises the question of his concept of literature and its role within society. Since Zamyatin believed that the dialectic path of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is a universal law affecting all spheres of life, he therefore asserted that it should also be applicable to art. This essential dialectic path creates and enforces growth and development within the creative field of art. Zamyatin delineates this process:

+ , - , --

Вот три школы в искусстве --- и нет никаких других. Утверждение: отрицание, и синтез -- отрицание отрицания. Силлогизм замкнут, круг завершен. Над ним возникает новый -- и всё тот же -- круг. И так из кругов -- подпирающая небо спираль искусства.<sup>1</sup>

Art, therefore, progresses in an eternal spiral and each circle on that spiral bears one of the above-mentioned stamps: + , - , --.

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<sup>1</sup>Евгений Замытин, "О синтетизме" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк, 1967), стр. 233.

In his essays "Современная русская литература" (1918) and "О синтетизме" (1922) Zamyatin deals with Realism, Symbolism, and Neorealism. To demonstrate the relevance of each of these schools and their roles within the dialectic process, Zamyatin allegorically utilizes Adam's physical and spiritual encounters with Eve.

Realism, which had its start at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, represents the plus sign. Zamyatin compares Realism to Adam's and Eve's physical relationship, representing the clay world. The Realists, such as Chekhov, turned their gaze toward the earth and used their creative writings as a mirror to reflect a vivid piece of the earth. They employed plausible characters within their works and described only such incidents and events as could actually have occurred. Their religion was the earth and their god was man.

When Realism had reached the limit of its development and could progress no further, a new and antithetical phenomenon arose. Zamyatin compares this movement to Adam's spiritual discovery of Eve. Adam, physically satiated, looks up and discovers a faintly glimmering, misty new world in Eve's eyes. Fascinated by this unattainable, infinitely more beautiful Eve, he discontinues their physical embraces. This minus, the denial of all flesh, represents the Symbolists.

The Symbolists turned their back on everything earthly and extended their gaze to the other mystical, unattainable world. Instead of the Realists' mirror, the Symbolists employed an X-ray. With this apparatus, the Symbolists penetrated through the body to the skeleton

and to the dark spot where the bullet is lodged. This skeleton and the dark spot symbolically represented the Symbolists' melancholy view of life. In life they continually saw death. They no longer believed in daily life but in the eternal tragedy -- Love and Death. The impossibility of ever attaining goals on earth as symbolically epitomized by Blok's Fair Lady demonstrates the fate of every realized goal. For this reason, the Symbolists could not laugh. They rejected life and Man and instead turned their gaze heavenward to the upper regions of space where they sought answers to their questions.

As in the case of the Realists, the Symbolists also exhausted all of their potentialities. Then, out of the two hostile phenomena, a third was born. This third phenomenon reconciled its two predecessors by making use of the results achieved by them both. In this way art develops and progresses.

Neorealism, the synthesis of the two preceding antithetical movements and the movement with which Zamyatin associates himself, made its appearance in the 1920's. Adam, having touched Eve's lips and knees, is once again passionately aroused. He does away with the minus. However, this Adam has already been poisoned with the knowledge of the other unattainable Eve. Therefore his kisses leave not only sweetness but a bitter touch of irony on this Eve's lips. Zamyatin explains that this Adam who has gone through negation, has grown wiser and knows the skeleton. But this knowledge enhances his love:



Но от этого --- только еще  
 иступленной поцелуи, еще  
 пьянее любовь, еще ярче  
 краски, еще острее глаза,  
 выхватывающие самую секундную  
 суть линий и форм.<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge of both the physical and spiritual and a heightened awareness characterize Synthetism, Neorealism.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of the Realists' mirror, the Neorealists employed a microscope. Through the microscope, maintains Zamyatin, they saw the more real world. This world, although distorted, more shocking and fantastic, reveals the true nature of a thing far more accurately than the credible world of the Realists. Instead of merely depicting the ordinary world visible to the naked eye, the Neorealists delved below the surface and revealed the true reality of a thing. To illustrate this point, Zamyatin uses the example of a hand viewed by the naked eye and through a microscope. The hand when viewed by the naked eye of the Realist appeared to be pink and smooth. However, when this same hand was placed under the microscope of the Neorealist, the delicate smooth skin was transformed into huge bumps and pits. A hair became a thick trunk of a tree; a speck of dust became a boulder. This is no longer a hand but could perhaps be a plain on Mars. The microscope therefore, enhanced the Neorealists' awareness and sharpened their perception.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup>Zamyatin uses the term "Synthetism" synonymously with "Neorealism".

Because the Neorealist deals with this incredible, although more real world, his creative writings often hold the element of exaggeration. The grotesque and fantastic are an integral part of his writing. Zamyatin calls this method of merging the credible with the incredible "impressionism". To illustrate this method, Zamyatin cites an example from his own work. In order to depict the stealthy, sly nature of the lawyer in "Уездное", Zamyatin conveniently nicknames him "Моргунов".<sup>4</sup> In his description of Morgunov, Zamyatin states that not only Morgunov's two huge dark eyes constantly blink, but his whole being blinks:

Да, это что -- глаза. Он и  
весь как-то подмаргивал,  
Семен-то Семеныч. Как пойдет  
по улице, да начнет на левую  
ногу припадать -- ну, как есть,  
весь, всем своим существом,  
подмаргивает.<sup>5</sup>

A being that blinks can hardly be sincere.

Zamyatin had mastered the technique of impressionism. He very ably demonstrates this ability within his creative writings. To depict the exceedingly slow and plodding character of Campbell, Zamyatin throughout "Островитяне" consistently compares him to a tractor. Campbell's

<sup>4</sup>Zamyatin adapted "Моргунов" from the verb "моргать", meaning to blink.

<sup>5</sup>Евгений Замытин, "Уездное" в Собрании Сочинений том первый (Москва 1929), стр. 84.

huge square boots trudge "как грузовой трактор, медленно и непреложно."<sup>6</sup>  
 When Campbell thinks, Zamyatin comments "скрипели колеса".<sup>7</sup> However,  
 of the many excellent impressions, Zamyatin's best impression of Campbell  
 consists of the following:

Медленно и тяжело переваливается  
 трактор -- всё прямо -- ни на  
 дюйм с пути.

This impression unalterably establishes Campbell's unswerving and un-  
 thinking nature.

Impressionism enabled the writer to transmit either a character  
 or a situation to the reader. However, impressionism was deemed im-  
 portant by Zamyatin for yet another reason. Impressionism made it possible  
 for the author to communicate his ideas succinctly.

Zamyatin believed that literature should respond to the pace  
 of the epoch. The tempo of life had quickened, become more feverish.  
 Life had become more complex. People no longer had the time to read  
 long, ponderous novels. Therefore the Neorealists responded by writing  
 more briefly and compactly. Their teacher, in this respect was Chekhov.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Евгений Замытин "Островитяне" в Собрании Сочинений  
 том третий (Москва 1929), стр. 9.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Contemporary Russian Literature" in A Soviet  
 Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin, ed. & trans. by Mirra Ginsburg  
 (Chicago and London 1970), p. 46.

The Neorealists could no longer indulge in writing lengthy descriptions. They had to limit themselves and impressionism enabled them to do so. Through the impression, the Neorealists were able "to show" in a very few words that which previously had taken authors lengthy passages "to narrate". But for the impression to be both vivid and effective, the Neorealists had to be precise in their choice of words. For this they are indebted to the Symbolists.

The Symbolists, because of their unusual choice of themes, had some difficulty in conveying their emotions verbally. Therefore they perfected the technique of word usage and developed verbal music. This legacy was their most important contribution which the Neorealists employed to best advantage.<sup>10</sup>

Zamyatin exemplifies both brevity and verbal music in his works. In "Север" (1918) for example, through the repetition of various quiet sounds such as the soft labial "м", nasal "н" and the fricatives "ш", and "ж", Zamyatin conveys a hushed mood and the presence of the all-enveloping fog:

Тихо тренькает трехструнка, и  
кружатся фигуры в тумане,  
приходят, уходят в туман. Лопские  
парни -- с медленными, белыми  
здешними девками, здешние -- с  
черными лопками, ...<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39 and pp. 46-47.

<sup>11</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Север" в Собрании Сочинений, том четвертый (Москва 1929), стр. 18.

The soft, misty fog has encompassed and subdued the activity. The music seems less audible, the dancing less intense. Through the repetition of " ходят " in "приходят " and "уходят ", by repeating the sound "...ыми " and its variations of "...ими " and "...ами " and the recurrence of " здешними " in "здешние ", Zamyatin has also created the impression of dancing, swaying couples.

By the time the Neorealists had come into being, the world had changed a great deal. Einstein had discovered that time does not progress in a straight line but instead is relative. Zamyatin reflected this in his historical outlook. He believed in the relevance of the past, present, and future upon which the dialectic process functions. The past combines with the present to form a future development which is in turn challenged by newer developments. Parallels of things past may be found in the present and will continue to be found in the future. His story entitled "Бич Божий " and his play "Огни Святого Доминика" both emphasize historical parallelism. Within the field of literature it has already been demonstrated that the brevity of the past Realists and the verbal music of the then present Symbolists were combined, adapted and adopted by the future Neorealists. Future epochs will continue to demonstrate the relevance of the past and present.

Zamyatin believed that the past, a vital aspect of time, could no longer be classified as inconsequential. His novel Мы testifies to his conviction in the relevance of the past. In Мы, the Well-Doer and Guardians have attempted to obscure the past through socio-physical conditioning and through derision. However they are not able to eradicate physical characteristics such as U-'s cheeks which resemble

fish-gills, R-13's agile body which reminds D-503 of a gorilla, and I-330's sharp white teeth. These atavisms indelibly recall primitivism. However, the most conspicuous, and as far as D-503 is concerned, the most odious reminders of the past are his very own hairy hands. These primitive hands visually demonstrate their incongruity with the sterile, artificial environment inflicted upon the populace. However, these atavisms do not just recall the past but they demonstrate something much more significant. Cut off from the past with its primitivism and emotionalism, D-503 has evolved into an incomplete human being.

Einstein's discoveries had dislodged the whole concept of time and space from their foundations. Purely chronological narration was no longer appropriate in modern literature. Therefore Zamyatin in his "Рассказ о самом главном" (1923) employed such techniques as he felt were appropriate to post-Einsteinian literature. Within this tale, Zamyatin avoids the purely chronological passage of time and instead presents the action on three different planes. In this way he establishes the relativity of time.

On the first plane Zamyatin presents the world of a yellowish-pink caterpillar *Rhopalocera*, dying in a lilac bush in order to become a butterfly. The second plane deals with the world of the Kelbuy and Orel peasants engaged in fighting on opposite sides of the October Revolution. On the third plane Zamyatin presents a distant star on which the last four inhabitants simply named the "Mother", "man", "woman", and "blind boy", are dying from lack of oxygen.

In presenting these three planes, Zamyatin does not begin and finish with one world before continuing with the next. Instead, he presents the world of each plane and then, at various points throughout the tale, he refers back to and continues the action of each level. This interweaving of the three planes establishes the simultaneity of the three lines of action and hence emphasizes the relativity of time.

Relativity of time is also established by Kukoverov, the leader of the Whites. He tells Talya that the world is spinning a hundred times faster.<sup>12</sup> She only fully comprehends the meaning of this statement when she discovers that Kukoverov, captured by the Soviets, is doomed to be executed. Then she exclaims:

Но может быть прав Куковеров, одно  
и то же -- минута и год, и иногда  
час -- это вся жизнь.<sup>13</sup>

Timelessness is established by drops dripping on stones:

И в тишине --- капли; от капли до  
капли --- века.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Евгений Замятин, „Рассказ о самом главном“ в Собрании Сочинений, том третий (Москва 1929), стр. 213-214.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., стр. 243.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., стр. 256.

The recurrence of the image of the drops emphasizes the relativity of time:

В тишине -- капли о камень, от  
капли до капли -- века, секунды.<sup>15</sup>

By dealing with each of the three planes of existence, Zamyatin demonstrates that the most important thing is subjective and relative. The most important goal for Rhopalocera is to become a butterfly. For the White Orel peasantry, the most important task at hand is to defend and retain the bridge. Capturing the bridge is the primary concern of the Soviet Kelbuy peasants while on the dying star, the most important thing is to breathe.

Death, when imminent, brings into sharp focus what is truly the most important thing. Not who retains or gains the bridge but fulfilling the basic function of life, living and loving is important. The man and woman on the dark swirling planet, hurtling toward the earth realize this and consummate their love. When faced with the inevitability of Kukoverov's death, Talya also fathoms the secret of the priorities of life and goes to Kukoverov in prison to do what is most important, to consummate their love. She realizes that a few "seconds become ages and one moment of fulfillment is worth years of stunted existence."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., стр. 260.

<sup>16</sup> Alex M. Shane, The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968), p. 173.



Therefore she goes to Kukoverov. Herein lies Zamyatin's philosophy of life. He deplored a lukewarm vegetative existence and instead advocated a life that is truly lived, richly and fully. "In essence, this is a restatement of the maximalism that underlay his concept of the galloping Scythian."<sup>17</sup>

At first glance, "Рассказ о самом главном" might seem to reflect pessimism. The caterpillar *Rhopalocera* is doomed to die a painful death. Kukoverov, captured by the Soviets, faces the death sentence. The last inhabitants on the dying star are slowly suffocating. And finally, the dark star and Earth are doomed to collide, the impact of which no one will survive. However, throughout the tale, Zamyatin weaves a barely perceptible thread of optimism. He uses the caterpillar symbolically to demonstrate that death is not an end but a beginning of something better. And from the collision of the two planets something new, something indescribable and infinitely better will be formed because of the universal dialectic law. He concludes this tale on a note of optimism:

Земля раскрывает свои недра все  
 шире -- еще -- всю себя чтобы  
 зачать, чтобы в багровом свете --  
 новые, огненные существа, и  
 потом в белом теплом тумане  
 -- еще новые, цветоподобные,  
 ТОЛЬКО ТОНКИМ СТЕБЛЕМ

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Ibid., p. 173.

привязанные к новой Земле, а когда<sup>18</sup>  
 созреют эти человечьи цветы -- ...

The Soviet critic A. Efremkin criticizes Zamyatin's "Рассказ о самом главном" for deriding the October Revolution and for being "туманен, ослужен фантастикой".<sup>19</sup> Zamyatin was not degrading the Russian Revolution in this tale. He had never been against the occurrence of the Russian Revolution. However, he could not sanction bloodshed and believed that it was time to place the Revolution into proper perspective, time to look ahead. To reiterate, not bridges but life and love are important. Regarding the fantastic element within this tale, Zamyatin asserted that it was appropriate to post-Einsteinian literature and therefore he applied it in his works. His novel Мы serves as an excellent example of Zamyatin's liberal application of the fantastic. In his essay "О синтетизме" he writes that art, which has grown out of the present-day reality created by Einstein's revolutionary discoveries, can only be fantastic and dream-like. But along with this fantastic world, there still exists the ordinary:

Но всё-таки есть ещё дома, сапоги,  
 папиросы; и рядом с конторой, где  
 продаются билеты на Марс -- магазин,

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<sup>18</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Рассказ о самом главном" op. cit., стр. 260.

<sup>19</sup>А. Ефремин "Евгений Замятин" в Красной Нови том первый (Москва Январь, 1930), стр. 229.

где продаются колбасы. Отсюда в  
 сегодняшнем искусстве -- синтез  
 фантастики с бытом. ...И всё  
 же из камней, сапог, папирос и  
 колбас -- фантазм, сон.<sup>20</sup>

This union of the ordinary with the fantastic represents Neorealism.

Zamyatin realized that on earth there are only a few heretics through which the world is kept alive. The rest, the vastly greater majority of the masses, succumb to entropy. Easily frightened, they require dogma to guide them. They seek periods rather than question marks and complacency rather than development.

In his creative writings Zamyatin demonstrates the popularity of entropy. All of the characters in "Уездное " have contracted the sleeping-sickness of entropy. In Мы , only a few revolutionaries, led by I-330, attempt to live rather than vegetate. The rest of the populace blissfully snores. All except Didi and O'Kelly in "Островитяне " adhere strictly to the rules of proper decorum and only Bailey and Laurie love spontaneously in "Ловец человеков ". The rest have succumbed to vulgar philistinism.

Wiser through negation, the Neorealists no longer entertained illusions about the grandeur of man. Instead, Zamyatin's optimism lay

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<sup>20</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Осинтетизме" op. cit. стр. 238.

in the universal dialectic law. However he loved mankind and saw its plight. Therefore he could not accept art for art's sake alone. He believed that art had a duty to man and a purpose. This purpose was to enlighten and awaken the snoring masses, to fight the forces of entropy. The artist therefore had a terrible and awesome mission in life. He was the prophet and guide, the purveyor of truth.

Zamyatin compares the artist to a sailor who climbs aloft to the masthead and from this position warns of the dangers that lie beyond.<sup>21</sup> He does not look behind him or below him, but ahead to the future. He is necessary for those on deck rely on him to espy dangers which as yet are not visible to them. This artist's only allegiance is to truth.

Zamyatin deplored the special purpose propagandist literature employed by the regime to further its political ideology. Subordinating art to political aims destroys the basic purpose of art and degrades both the artist and his craft. This literature can no longer have truth as its basis. Therefore art is reduced to mediocrity.

Zamyatin classified harnessed and controlled literature as living-dead literature.<sup>22</sup> The imposition of political aims on art creates agile and nimble writers who bend with each trend. The

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<sup>21</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О литературе, революции и энтропии" в Лицах (Нью Йорк 1967), стр. 251.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., стр. 253.

literature that they produce lacks significance for it deals only with the issues of the day and not with the meaning of the age as a whole. Zamyatin compares the meaningless spate of their creativity to the twittering of sparrows.<sup>23</sup> The only possible future for this type of literature is its past.<sup>24</sup>

Living-living literature however, does not live by yesterday's or today's clock, but by the future's.<sup>25</sup> Living-living literature springs from the artist and consists of truth as he sees it and not as he is supposed to see it.

To see truth, the artist must first be a courageous, free individual. He must be like the galloping nomadic Scythian who constantly looks to the future. He cannot be bound by dogma, convention, and tradition. If he is restrained by entropy, then he can only create the living-dead literature, the literature of today which is discarded tomorrow. True literature, the literature which cannot be philistinized, is created by heretics, rebels, and dreamers:

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<sup>23</sup> Евгений Замятин, "О сегодняшнем и о современном" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 213.

<sup>24</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Я боюсь" в Лицах (Нью Йорк 1967) стр. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Евгений Замятин, "О литературе, революции и энтропии" op.cit стр. 251.

Главное в том, что настоящая литература может быть только там, где ее делает не исполнительные и благонадежные чиновники, а безумцы отшельники, еретики, мечтатели, бунтари, скептики.<sup>26</sup>

True literature should also have as its basis a genuine love for man; it cannot be built on such negative emotions as hatred for man.<sup>27</sup> Zamyatin, the Neorealist, no longer believed in man, yet he still loved mankind and adhered to an idealistic conception of man. He believed man could be and should be a free individual retaining both the rational and irrational elements and experiencing the full range of human emotions. Yet he also realized that man is mortal, that he requires attention and aid. Literature should provide man with assistance and guidance. During the political and social upheavals of the Russian October Revolution and with the ensuing triumph of collectivism, man, as an entity, had been forgotten. Concerned, Zamyatin writes:

Война империалистическая и война гражданская -- обратили человека в материал для войны, в номер, цифру. Человек забыт -- ради субботы; мы хотим напомнить другое: суббота для человека.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Я боюсь" op. cit., стр. 189.

<sup>27</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Цель" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 177.

<sup>28</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Завтра" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 174.

Being a humanist, Zamyatin abhorred violence and bloodshed. He believed "that ideals imposed by force are corrupted in the struggle."<sup>29</sup> His fable entitled "Церковь Божья" (1922) not only allegorically demonstrates that even the most praiseworthy goals achieved by violent means are philistinized, but that violence causes a regression to barbarism. Zamyatin states that man ceased being an ape when the first book was written.<sup>30</sup> The implications here are axiomatic. Therefore the only revolution worthy of the modern and human man is the psychological revolution. Furthermore, the psychological revolution carried on through literature is infinitely more effective than the explosive weapons which result in bloodshed:

-- Есть книги такого же химического состава, как динамит. Разница только в том, что один кусок динамита взрывается один раз, а книга -- тысячи раз.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore the artist can engage in a peaceful, progressive, continuous revolution. Through literature both the author and reader can combat without bloodshed entropy in all its guises.

<sup>29</sup> D. J. Richards, Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic (London 1962), p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Для сборника о книге" в Лицах op. cit., стр. 257.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., стр. 257.

Zamyatin viewed life as being essentially tragic. His philosophy of the galloping Scythian, always seeking but never attaining, belies this outlook. However, Zamyatin firmly declares that there are two ways of conquering the tragedy of life -- religion and irony.<sup>32</sup> Naturally Zamyatin chose irony with its concomitant smile which, he maintained, is the most terrible of all explosives.<sup>33</sup> Under the cruel irony of the microscope the delicate smooth skin is transformed into huge bumps and clefts.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this revelation is unpleasant. Nevertheless, irony allows one to laugh at what is offensive and disagreeable. Through irony, a worthy weapon of man, the artist brings to the foreground that which requires attention. Through laughter, the enemy is destroyed.

Literature organizes and builds life.<sup>35</sup> To accomplish this, the artist must create living-living literature through the portrayal of truth as he sees it. And this literature must be based on love. Only then can he warn those below of the dangers ahead.

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<sup>32</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Contemporary Russian Literature" op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>33</sup>Евгений Замятин, «О синтетизме» op. cit., стр. 237.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., стр. 237.

<sup>35</sup>Евгений Замятин, «Цель» op. cit., стр. 237.



Zamyatin fulfilled the role of prophet more than adequately. He courageously depicted within his expository and creative writings those dangers which he felt were imminent. Because of the excessive violence of the age, Zamyatin believed that man was regressing to barbarism. Therefore he expounded this theme within his works and warned that it was time to pick up the weapon of the word:

Умирает человек. Гордый homo erectus  
становится на четвереньки, обрастает  
клыками и шерстью, в человеке --  
побеждает зверь.<sup>36</sup>

His story "Мамай" (1920) through humour attests to the chilling fact that all are capable of murder. Within "Пещера" (1920) Zamyatin delineates the schizophrenic struggle between man and beast, both of whom are present within the protagonist Martin Martinych. In "Рассказ о самом главном", Zamyatin depicts the pettiness of the struggle over the bridge at the great cost of loss of human life by juxtaposing it with the fact that all will soon die when the two planets collide. He also presents cruelty within this tale. In order to breath a little while longer the man murders the blind boy.

But surely, states Zamyatin, life is sacred and man is brother to man:

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<sup>36</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Завтра" op. cit., стр. 174.

Возвращается дикое средневековье,  
 стремительно падает ценность  
 человеческой жизни, катится новая  
 волна европейских погромов.  
 Нельзя больше молчать. Время  
 крикнуть: человек человеку -- брат!<sup>37</sup>

By using irony in his story "Дракон " (1918) Zamyatin demonstrates the need for fraternal feelings. A soldier, who automatically, without even flinching murders people, warms a little bird to keep it from freezing. The incongruity created by the juxtaposition of the concern for the bird with the complete lack of feeling for his fellow-man vociferously expresses the regression to barbarism and the need for love.

Zamyatin believed that because of the dialectic process, Neorealism was the legal heir of Realism and Symbolism. He characterized Neorealism with the following traits: compactness of expression, impressionism, a distortion of reality depicting the more real world, the element of the grotesque and fantastic combined with the ordinary, and a philosophy oriented to the future. He rejected the idea of art for art's sake and instead maintained that literature should guide and build life.

The only literature that can adequately engage in the monumental task of organizing life is living-living literature, which is based on truth and love for mankind. Living-living literature is created by

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., стр. 174.

the artist who fulfils the difficult role of prophet and guide. He is capable of purveying the truth to the masses because he is a maximal individualist and a fearless Scythian. Through irony, a most worthy weapon of man, and its concomitant smile, the most terrible of all explosives, the heretical artist engages in a peaceful psychological revolution against the stagnating forces of entropy.

## CHAPTER V

### ZAMYATIN'S LITERARY TECHNIQUES

Zamyatin maintained that the role of literature within society is to awaken the masses to the dangers of the deadening forces of entropy. Entropy is particularly effective because it lulls its adherents into contentment and sleep. Therefore literature should be especially striking and vivid if it is to fulfil its function in life. For this reason, Zamyatin developed various techniques which would procure reader participation and in this way, awaken him from the sleeping sickness of entropy.

In order to impress upon the reader his ideas, Lev Tolstoy exploited his creative writings. This is especially evident in such later works as "Смерть Ивана Ильича". In this particular work, he blatantly moralizes on the ills of society. He decries its sham and hypocrisy and concludes that true peace and happiness can only be achieved through Christian love.

Zamyatin also at various times employs his characters as vehicles for the expression of his philosophies. For example, he points

out the inevitable conclusions of total industrialization and collectivism in Мы through his spokeswoman I-330. He depicts the results of dogmatic intolerance in "Огни Святого Доминика" through Rui. However, Zamyatin's intrusions of the omniscient author are much more subtle than those of Tolstoy. Zamyatin's presence is less obtrusive than Tolstoy's. Tolstoy merely extends his moralizing finger and straightforwardly points out the existing evils whereas Zamyatin, through various techniques succeeds in transmitting his philosophy and hopefully in influencing the reader.

Chekhov asserted that total objectivity in portraying some social ill or injustice affected the reader much more than angry tirades made by the author in reference to some committed cruelty. He realized that objectivity, on the part of the author, is an excellent method for arousing empathy within the reader for the character. By describing factually and unemotionally the evils that do exist, the author creates a cold background against which the sorrows of the characters stand out in stark relief. "В овраге" aptly illustrates this. Chekhov's objective portrayal of the murder of Lipa's baby arouses both fury and frustration within the reader.

Zamyatin, although not objective throughout his works, does utilize objectivity very effectively. In Мы, he depicts D-503, now a complete automaton, watching cold-bloodedly as I-330 undergoes torture. He feels no twinge of pain or remorse when I-330 painfully closes her

eyes as the air is pumped out from beneath the Bell. She loses consciousness and is brought to by means of electrodes. The process is repeated three times but I-330, a heretic to the end, refuses to testify. Throughout the whole painful process she gazes at D-503. Still he is not moved. He merely thinks that she is very pretty. His lack of concern is all the more frustrating in view of the past. He had loved I-330 passionately and jealously. The death of I-330 symbolizes the death of individualism and humanity. The reader, aware of this, feels helpless. The reader, if perceptive, also realizes that D-503, the robot, is the end result of industrialization and collectivism.

Zamyatin utilizes objectivity very successfully in "ОГНИ СВЯТОГО ДОМИНИКА". By portraying without comment the chatter of the crowd, he depicts the callousness of the gathering. One wife angrily denounces the site selected for the burning of the heretics because the smoke will soil her home. Another citizen complains about the choice of the day for the auto-da-fe. He grumbles that he is too ill to witness the burnings, but he must attend if his integrity is to remain unquestioned. The plight of the heretics is poignantly heightened by a child who, playing the part of a heretic in a game, is licked by a flame. She exclaims in disbelief that it actually hurts.

By portraying the public and private comments of the crowd, Zamyatin also succeeds in establishing the ever-present undercurrent of fear. Everyone, despite his position within society, be he nobleman or peasant, lives in constant fear. All adamantly swear loyalty to

the Grand Inquisitor and sanction the Inquisition as being worthwhile, holy, and from God. Dogma, in its most extreme and intolerant form, thrives on this fear. And this fear reduces the weak to servile abasement and repellent sycophancy. Through Zamyatin's manipulation, the reader inevitably arrives at this conclusion.

Impressionism enabled the author to convey his mental image to the reader using a minimum of words. The writer no longer had to rely on lengthy external depiction to convey his ideas. Instead, by using the grotesque he could create a desired impression.

Zamyatin deemed impressionism to be appropriate to modern literature. The pace of life had quickened. There was no time to dwell on details. Life was now being viewed from the inside of a speeding motor car.<sup>1</sup> The passenger in this car is incapable of grasping the whole view at a glance. Nevertheless, he still manages to glimpse the essence of the scene.

The grotesque enabled the author to transmit the essence of his mental picture. The grotesque rendered secondary details superfluous. Zamyatin mastered this technique within his works. His grotesque comparison of Chebotarykha's voluminous folds of fat to doughy flesh immediately creates a mental picture within the reader. However, his depiction of the physical relationship which ensued between Baryba and the revoltingly obese Chebotarykha is a masterpiece:

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<sup>1</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О синтетизме" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 241.

Барыба и, стиснув челюсти,  
запустил глубоко руки в мягкое  
что-то, как тесто. ...

Потонул Барыба в сладком  
и жарком тесте.<sup>2</sup>

Implicit within impressionism is another literary device. An impression only depicts the essence of a thing. The reader himself has to complete the picture with his imagination. And modern man, the man of the speeding automobile, requires no coddling or indulgence. He is capable of completing the mental pictures himself.<sup>3</sup>

Zamyatin extended his use of the grotesque to colours and emotions. He used brilliant, garish colours and intense emotions to symbolize life and energy and dull, cool colours along with disinterest and apathy to represent entropy. For example, when speaking of D-503's environment, Zamyatin employs cool blue, transparent colours. He juxtaposes this glass world with the vital, red and green world of I-330. To depict the intensity with which Zamyatin infuses the world of energy, D-503's reaction to the music of the ancients may be cited here as an example. D-503 has been conditioned by and is accustomed to the dull, orderly, mechanical music which the Well-Doer employs to subdue the people. However, when D-503 first hears the music of the ancients, such passionately powerful emotions well up in him that he can barely contain himself. He responds to the emotionally intoxicating music. He feels

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<sup>2</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Уездное" в Собрании Сочинений  
том первый (Москва 1929), стр. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Евгений Замятин, "О синтелизме" op. cit. стр.  
241.



as if he were experiencing an epileptic fit. He sees brilliantly dazzling colours. And he craves more:

Да, эпилепсия -- душевная болезнь  
 -- боль ... Медленная сладкая  
 боль --- укус -- и чтобы еще  
 глубше, еще больнее. И вот,  
 медленно -- солнце. Не наше,  
 не это голубовато-хрустальное  
 и равномерное сквозь стеклянные  
 кирпичи --- нет: дикое, несущееся,  
 попяляющее солнце -- долой все с  
 себя -- все в мелкие клочья.<sup>4</sup>

Through such striking contrasts as those achieved by his use of colour and emotions, Zamyatin awakens the reader to the value of living and sways him against complacency and apathy.

Zamyatin deplored routine sex as exemplified by Baryba's mundane sex life. Baryba did not experience love or desire. He merely satisfied his physical needs. Instead, Zamyatin extolled love rooted in deep physical desire for in it he saw an antidote to entropy. For this reason he condones Dasha's murder of her elderly husband in order to have a young lover in "Русь" (1923) and sympathizes with Glafira's obsessive craving to love and be loved in "Аллатыр".

In order to sway the reader in favour of feeling, Zamyatin presented love in such a way that it would appeal to the reader. He clothed deep physical desire in glorious colours and in verbal music. In "Север" Zamyatin glorifies and enhances the love scenes between Pel'ka and Marey by setting them in beautifully poetic, natural settings.

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<sup>4</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 19.

The scene of I-330's and D-503's lovemaking is brilliantly coloured in oranges and vivid blues. I-330's apparel which enhances her charms and arouses D-503 is strikingly coloured. Her dress is not merely yellow but bright yellow. Her black hat and black stockings present a stark contrast to the yellowness of her short dress. In "Аллатерь" when Kostya glimpses Glafira's lace and pink softness, he is powerfully overcome:

Сердце заббло у Кости, заныло,  
забыл все слова.<sup>5</sup>

The repetition of the "за" sound creates an impression of stuttering which audio-visually emphasizes Kostya's helplessness in his passion. Even Campbell, who plods on unerringly straight ahead, feels the waves of passion as they engulf and suffuse his whole being. However, much to Didi's consternation, Campbell successfully overcomes his emotions and restrains himself.

Zamyatin's best weapon against the forces of entropy was satire. With satire, he openly attacked the various manifestations of entropy. By arousing laughter within the reader, Zamyatin participated in conquering indifference on the part of the reader and in this way he fulfilled his duty as an artist.

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<sup>5</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Аллатерь" в Собрании Сочинений том первый (Москва 1929), стр. 127.

In Мы Zamyatin satirized the special purpose literature employed by the regime to promulgate its ideology. Zamyatin's depiction of D-503's exaltation and excitement over the dry, tedious literature produced by the poets and writers employed by the state is humorous and therefore effective. His portrayal of Mrs. Campbell who buys her housekeeper white gloves so that she might serve dinner with dignity demonstrates Gogol's method of "laughter through tears"<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Campbell spends the money designated for food on the purchase of the white gloves. She does not realize how foolish she has been or how ludicrous the situation is that she has created. Nevertheless, Mrs. Campbell rests contented. She has satisfied propriety if not her stomach. Zamyatin's stories "Икс" (1926) and "Слово представляется товарищу Чурьгину" (1926) also demonstrate Zamyatin's satirical prowess.

In most of Zamyatin's creations, Zamyatin's heroes or heroines meet with tragedy. I-330 is tortured to death and the rebellion is quashed. Rui is burned at the stake as a heretic and both Marey and Pel'ka die. However, this pessimism is in itself a literary device. Zamyatin used pessimism "to spur the reader on to thought and action."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Gregory Zilbourg, "Foreword" in We (New York 1959), p. XV.

<sup>7</sup>Alex M. Shane, The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968) p. 132.

To make his literary creations more credible, Zamyatin employed a language that was appropriate to his characters. For example, in "Уездное", he employed regional and dialectal expressions:

Жили-были Балкашины, купцы почтенные, на заводе своем солод варили-варили, да в холерный год все как-то вдруг и примерли. Сказывают, далеко где-й-то в большом городе живут наследники ихни, да вот все не едут. Так и горюет-пустует выморочный дом. Похилилась деревянная башня, накрест досками заколотили окна, засел бурьян во дворе.<sup>8</sup>

In Мы, however, he used a precise, mathematical language suitable to that of a mathematician:

Первое: я, действительно, получил наряд быть именно в аудитории 112, как она мне и говорила. Хотя вероятность была --  $\frac{1500}{10.000.000} = \frac{3}{20.000}$  (1500

-- это число аудиториумов, 10.000.000 -- номеров). А второе... Впрочем, лучше по порядку.

This excellent use of language both demonstrated Zamyatin's prowess as a stylist and flavoured his creations with an authentic air. This

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<sup>8</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Уездное" в Собрании Сочинений, том первый (Москва 1929), стр. 26.

<sup>9</sup>Евгений Замятин, Мы (Нью Йорк 1967), стр. 17.

authenticity lent weight to his suppositions and admonitions and influenced the reader to accept them as plausible and probable rather than improbable.

Zamyatin abhorred entropy with its numbing forces. He dedicated himself both as a man and as an artist to fight entropy in all its guises. Because he was a staunch heretic and a master stylist, he proved to be a formidable opponent.

## CONCLUSION

The examination of Zamyatin's works and Weltanschauung has led this writer to conclude that Zamyatin was an idealistic humanist. He was against the machine and for man, the individual. He believed that the individual should be a free heretic, not hindered by the external trappings of society. And his struggle against philistinism placed him in the category of a progressive thinker.

Zamyatin extolled dynamism and deplored the status quo. He believed in continuous revolution (eternal movement forward) and strongly urged man to participate within this movement. He advocated that man should not remain content with his achievements but that he should move on, constantly seeking but never actually attaining his goals. The realization of ideals only philistinizes them. They become encrusted with dogma. Therefore man should set his goals so far into the future that they will never be corrupted through realization.

The placing of goals into the far and distant future implies a continuous forward movement. Man participates within this movement because of the presence of the irrational and rational elements within him. The balance of these two elements ensure his development and growth.

The irrational eternally pushes man forward, to reach for the unattainable while the rational guides him in the pursuit of his quest.

However, man is only capable of participating within energy if he is a free individual. Once collectivism or any other restricting policies are enforced at the expense of the individual, then man begins to atrophy. Once man loses his individuality, he inevitably becomes entangled within the complacent web of entropy. He ceases to struggle, to live, to develop. He falls asleep.

Zamyatin stands in the tradition of such renowned authors as Gogol, Lev Tolstoy, and Chekhov in his use of constructive literature. He did not believe in art for art's sake. Instead, he maintained that art should organize and build life.

Within entropy, he saw a dangerous foe of creativity, of life. Entropy, with its euphoria, very capably arrests man's movement forward. By criticizing and by satirizing within his creative writings such enemies of the individual as collectivism, industrialization, dogma, convention, and anything else that might infringe on man's freedom, Zamyatin combatted the forces of entropy, in this way fulfilling the purpose of art.

Zamyatin viewed the artist within the role of a prophet, a purveyor of truth to the masses. In order for the artist to successfully fulfil his function, Zamyatin, like Pasternak, maintained that the artist must not be fettered in any way to political considerations. And the true artist, owing allegiance only to truth, is not afraid to verbalize dangers which he feels the future holds.

To adequately fulfil his role of prophet and guide, the artist must be a heretic and an individual. He must not rest on his laurels; he cannot adhere to the secure path which leads to certain success on earth. Instead, he chooses to follow the difficult path which is fraught with persecution and intolerance:

But the road of the truly great artists is always the road of Ahaseurus; it is always the road to Calvary, always a giving up of the bird in the hand for the greater one in the sky.<sup>1</sup>

Zamyatin, both as a man and an artist, exemplified within his life and art the same precepts which he advocated for a non-vegetative existence. Never satisfied with his achievements, he strove to broaden himself by tackling the more difficult and more dangerous tasks in life. He began to savor life at a very early age.

In his fairly sketch "Автобиография"<sup>2</sup> (1929), Zamyatin describes an experiment which he had performed on himself when he was just a schoolboy. When bitten by a rabid dog, he decided not to inform the authorities but instead to await the first signs of madness and meanwhile record in a diary those thoughts and sensations which would

<sup>1</sup>Yevgeny Zamyatin, "The Future Russia" in A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin, ed. & trans. by Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago and London 1970), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Zamyatin was very reticent about his personal life.



occur to him in the intervening time. When two weeks had elapsed and still he had not experienced any symptoms of insanity, only then did he decide to go to the authorities, who immediately sent him to Moscow for inoculations.

Zamyatin did not facilitate his academic career in any way. When he graduated from the Progymnasium, he chose to study naval architecture at the Petersburg Polytechnic Institute. He had excelled in literature but instead chose shipbuilding, a most mathematical career simply because mathematics was his weakest subject.

Zamyatin also refused to listen to sound advice. Upon his receipt of a gold medal, he was warned by the inspector not to pursue a career within the field of literature. Writing, as far as the inspector was concerned and as demonstrated by a former graduate of the same Progymnasium that Zamyatin had attended, led to prison. Knowing the perils of such a career, Zamyatin still chose to write for which he suffered both harrassment and imprisonment.

In the early 1900's, when it was extremely dangerous to be a Bolshevik Zamyatin again displayed a tenacious courage. He joined the Bolshevik party:

В те годы быть большевиком --  
значило идти по линии наибольшего  
сопротивления; и я был тогда  
большевиком.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Евгений Замятин, "Автобиография" в Собрании Сочинений том первый (Москва 1929), стр. 12.

It was just a matter of time before he was caught, imprisoned and exiled.

In his book entitled The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin, Alex M. Shane delineates Zamyatin's variations in style throughout his career as a writer. Faithful to his theory of revolution affecting all areas of life, Zamyatin extended this idea to style. As an artist, he was not content to rest on the laurels of a set style. Adherence to a particular style, even though it has brought recognition, means to yield to the forces of entropy. And entropy stifles art:

В искусстве, вернейший способ  
убить -- это канонизировать одну  
какую-то форму и одну философию:  
канонизированное очень быстро<sup>4</sup>  
гибнет от ожирения, от энтропии.

Nor did he restrict himself in his choice of subject and content. In his writings, he spoke out against that which he felt endangered the individual. For his allegiance to truth in art, he suffered persecution, exile and imprisonment.

If Zamyatin had decided to take the safe, well-trodden path in life, he could very well have achieved prestige within Soviet Russia. He was respected by his contemporaries for his talents as a writer, stylist, and critic. He was an admired friend of the influential Gorky.

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<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Новая русская проза" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 208.

He was a member of the governing council of the House of Arts where he taught prose techniques to aspiring writers. He greatly influenced a group of young writers who called themselves the Serapion Brothers, some of whom later achieved prominence as Soviet writers. He edited the periodicals "Дом искусств", "Современный Запад", and "Русский Современник" besides writing numerous biographies, essays, criticisms, and book reviews. Nevertheless, criticism of Zamyatin began to mount.

Zamyatin sincerely believed in revolution. He viewed revolution in terms of progress (unending movement forward) which he felt should touch and be a part of every aspect of life. Therefore, when the Soviet government began imposing restrictions on writers in order to employ them in its efforts to promulgate the regime's ideology, Zamyatin could not and would not co-operate. He regarded both the promotion of ideology and the tightening of controls in any sphere of life as definite hindrances to creativity, to progress. It is then not surprising that he fell out of favour with the government, proletarian writers and critics.

Zamyatin's beliefs in the individual, in heresy, in unending revolution, were not compatible with the doctrines adhered to by the proletarian faction of writers and critics. By applying incessant pressure, they attempted to force Zamyatin to publicly change his mind. However, he did not vacillate even slightly in his beliefs. With the publication abroad in 1929 of his anti-utopian novel Мы, which had been written nine years prior to this date, the attacks became even

more vehement and persistent until Zamyatin was finally silenced as a writer.

The Soviet critics persisted in viewing Zamyatin as a bourgeois writer. They believed that he was against the October Revolution because he refused to glorify it. Trotsky criticized Zamyatin for being "too individualistic ... and too undeveloped,"<sup>5</sup> to which he attributed Zamyatin's failure to grasp the Revolution in its entirety. Efremin also condemned Zamyatin's "крайний индивидуализм"<sup>6</sup> and in his critique of "Рассказ о самом главном", he concludes that the tale "не оставляет сомнений, на чьей стороне симпатии автора."<sup>7</sup>

However, Zamyatin was not against the Revolution. When the Revolution had first erupted in 1917, Zamyatin welcomed it. True, as a humanist, he deplored violence and bloodshed, but he still regarded the revolution as being essential and inevitable. He was not reactionary. He did not want to return to prerevolutionary Russia. In fact, he was too radical in his outlook. He could not accept the October Revolution as the final revolution.

Because he believed in an eternal movement forward, he could not accept a final revolution or a final utopia. Implicit within the

<sup>5</sup> Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, trans. by Rose Atrunsky (Ann Arbor 1960) pp. 79-80.

<sup>6</sup> А. Ефремин, «Евгений Замятин» в Красной Нови том первый (Москва Январь, 1930), стр. 235.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., стр. 229.

establishment of a final utopia lies a paradox. Instead of creating an ideal situation for man, a utopia stifles man. Struggle is necessary for growth and development. A utopia removes the need for struggle and lulls man to sleep.

Zamyatin refused to canonize and glorify the Revolution for yet another reason. The Revolution, through realization, had become philistinized. Dogma was quickly encasing it in order to protect it. Writers were being persecuted. But there was no reason for this:

писателей, враждебных революции,  
в России сейчас нет -- их  
выдумали, чтобы не было очень  
скучно. А поводом послужило то,  
что эти писатели не считают  
революцию чахоточной барышней,  
которую нужно оберегать от  
малейшего сквозняка.<sup>8</sup>

Zamyatin was one of those writers who did not believe in guarding and protecting the October Revolution from every draught. He had applauded the occurrence of the Revolution but now it was time to look ahead, to participate in newer revolutions.

Zamyatin's reasons for not canonizing and glorifying the Revolution were not political in nature. Zamyatin was totally dedicated

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<sup>8</sup>Евгений Замятин, "Новая русская проза" в Лицах (Нью-Йорк 1967), стр. 195-196.

in his art to fighting entropy in all its manifestations. Being a maximal-individualist, he attacked anything that infringed on the freedom of the individual. Therefore his criticism of the aftermath of the Revolution was not due to political inclinations but because of his staunch belief in the necessity of individualism. His satirical writings may be applied to any location in the world. However, being sensitive, the Soviet critics insisted in interpreting Zamyatin's works as allegorical lampoons on the Soviet government and its system.

Zamyatin may be criticized for his failure to deal coherently with the future as he envisioned it. He believed in an infinite movement forward. He applied Hegel's dialectic process of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis to his own philosophy. Unlike Hegel, however, Zamyatin does not extend this process to any logical suppositions about the future. Being anti-utopian, he could not envision the glorious future that the rationalists prophesied. Having grown wiser through the negation of the Symbolists, Zamyatin, although he had returned to earth, no longer believed in the grandeur of man. Therefore he could not accept the idea that man would eventually develop into the absolute as Hegel predicted. Zamyatin did believe in a better, more creative future. However, he does not lucidly expound his views on the future man and world.

Zamyatin may also be criticized for his failure to deal with his concept of freedom. The whole concept of man moving forward implies

freedom, which is implicit in his Weltanschauung. However, the reader is left guessing as to what type of freedom he means. He obviously does not employ Dostoevsky's mystical concept of freedom within his philosophy. D. J. Richards claims that Zamyatin's freedom is a positive freedom which provides "a capacity for self-fulfilment which must be developed by each individual for himself".<sup>9</sup> This positive freedom is characterized by "the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality."<sup>10</sup> Freedom in this concept is comparable to that of Pasternak's as depicted in his novel, Dr. Zhivago. Lara and Zhivago are determined to protect their "human essence, their personal privacy and dignity, and they are defending those values against the intrusion of distorting and political forces."<sup>11</sup> And they actively assert their personalities and live spontaneously. This illustrates Zamyatin's concept of freedom. He saw freedom in the more physical terms. His freedom consisted of freedom from the intrusion of constricting forces. His freedom allowed the individual to experience life, to express himself and to breathe.

To classify Zamyatin as a profound philosopher is erroneous. He does not deal lucidly with freedom or with the future. Instead he

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<sup>9</sup>D. J. Richards, Zamyatin: A Soviet Heretic, (London 1962), p. 59.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>11</sup>Marc Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems 1917-1967, (New York) 1967), p. 229.

was only concerned with the present battle with entropy and not to where it would lead man. For this reason he can be regarded as a perceptive prophet of the dangers inherent within the modern age and its phenomena. His love for man, which is central to his Weltanschauung, impelled him to articulate and expose within his expository and creative writings those dangers which threatened the individual.



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