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PREFACE

This report is one of 13 separate papers by different authors which, assembled, will constitute the chapters of a Festschrift volume in honor of Professor Vera S. Dunham, to be published by Westview Press. The papers will be distributed individually to government readers by the Council in advance of editing and publication by the Press, and therefore, may not be identical to the versions ultimately published.

The Contents for the entire series appears immediately following this Preface.

As distributed by the Council, each individual report will contain this Preface, the Contents, the Editor's Introduction for the pertinent division (I, II, or III) of the volume, and the separate paper itself.
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No one surpasses Vera Dunham in the ability to suggest the complex interaction between social and personal conditions that gives rise to a poem, a short story or a novel. She is, in short, not an arid formalist, but she nevertheless scrutinizes the verbal texture and sets beside the work being examined other texts that provide startling illumination.

The materials retained by Vera Dunham's students include poems that she copied by hand during the years when she had no access to xerox machines. She said spell-binding things about the significance of those poems and that literature. She brought to life for her students the tragic struggle of Soviet writers to be true to the obligation bestowed on them by Pushkin and his illustrious successors.

Vera Dunham understands the plight of Soviet writers: their special role, so different from that of the American writer; their struggle against the shifting dictates of a realism that is socialist rather than critical. The remarkable book that grew slowly and painfully in her piano bench focused on the years of Stalinism, but she knows no less well the years of fluctuating temperature that followed Stalin's death: the determined attempts to salvage the past, to restore the memory of a society systematically subjected to amnesia.

This set of papers considers some of those attempts. Monuments had to be erected: to the millions condemned like Solzhenitsyn to the camps, to the
Jews who died at Babi Yar, to the father that Trifonov lost in the purges.

Sinyavsky claims even the right to desecrate monuments.

Vera Dunham has meditated on these figures and events not in an ivory tower, but in a sad armchair, reminding us constantly not to underestimate the lethal pressures, not to judge too quickly or too harshly. We are all her students. We remember and admire not just the quality of what was transmitted—the intellect, the intuition, the provocative formulations—but also the quality of the commitment and the deep, abiding humanity.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper argues that the works of Iurii Trifonov, especially his so-called city novels, are valid historical statements, which through synecdochic detail encapsulate Soviet history; but they require closer analysis as studies not only of history, but of historiography—that is, of the mechanics of memory and the process of narrative, whether fictional or historical. As one of the Soviet Union's greatest advocates of memory—a concern shared with Aitmatov, Rasputin, Belov, and Solzhenitsyn—Trifonov is struck by the paucity of documented evidence of the past, and the accidental nature of its preservation. He is concerned with the rapid disappearance of historical witnesses, and the fading of their memory—sometimes total and always selective. A recurrent motif in the urban novels is the sometimes futile effort on the part of the historian or survivor to make contact with the past. A historical writer, Trifonov links past with present in narrative through use of metonymy and synecdoche, elevating tiny detail to the plane of universal significance so that individual scenes recapitulate the nature and structure of the whole, the microcosm containing and shadowing forth the macrocosm. In the narrative plot of each of his novels is embedded a larger plot: the unidirectional movement of history, the threads of which he tries to identify and disentangle from the random chaos of experience.

*Prepared by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research
Trifonov: The Historian as Artist

The suggestion in my title that Trifonov is both a historian and an artist, in fact an artist who should be studied as a historian, would have seemed a commonplace if uttered earlier than the nineteenth century. The response of an audience in Greece of the classical era would have been "So what else is new?" The muse of history, Clio, we must never forget, was really one of the nine muses and she presided over the work of artists along with Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, Thalia, the muse of Comedy, and all those others whose names are so well known, including of course Urania, the muse of Astronomy. Because the concept of Clio is inseparable from poetry and the arts, one shudders at such recent linguistic miscegenations as cliometrics and cliometrician. (Yet there are cliometricians who use the word without a trace of amusement or irony.)

The relationship between history and literature is beautifully complex and not at all reducible to any simple distinction between fact and fiction as the work of many modern historiographers convincingly demonstrates. What was a commonplace to the Greeks—the idea that history is an art form—has now once again almost become a commonplace in our own time. A brilliant study of the two kinds of writing is Hayden White's essay, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" (Fletcher, 1970), a later version of ideas first presented in his *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (1973). There you will find such neat, lapidary statements of the matter as "What should interest us ... is the extent to which the discourse of the historian and that of the writer of imaginative fiction overlap, resemble, or
correspond with each other." And again, "Viewed simply as verbal artifacts, histories and novels are indistinguishable from one another." In other words, on the level of discourse, that is to say as verbal productions operating with techniques of selection, emphasis, omission; organization and coherence, comparison, analogy, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, not to speak of litotes and hyperbole, "History" as Hayden White puts it, "is no less a form of fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation." But one may object that "historians deal with events that really happened, whereas novels on the other hand ...." But the point is that, whatever the raw details of representation, both histories and novels are about some kind of reality external to themselves. Critics who consider themselves "pure" formalists may resist the idea that all novels and poems have extrinsic reference points, and it may come as a surprise to them that the purest of the formalists, Roman Jakobson, would have had no problem with such a position. Jakobson was, I believe, the first to point out that all literary schools claim to be "realistic" according to the conventions they accept or violate, and on this point contemporary studies of art and literature resonate curiously with ideas expressed in his article of 1921 "On Artistic Realism." The symbolists, as we know, rejected existing "realism," which only dealt with "realia," in favor of "realiora," the "more real"; writers who separated themselves from both realism and symbolism called themselves "neo-realistic"; the Acmeist poets rejected symbolist esthetics in favor of reconstituting in poetry the body and texture of real things. And so on. And Alain Robbe-Grillet in his collection of essays Pour un nouveau roman seems to echo Jakobson in speaking of his own and other "new" novels: "All writers believe they are realists. None ever calls himself abstract, illusionistic,
chimerical, fantastic, false ...." It is the real world which interests them; each one attempts as best he can to create "the real." To quote Hayden White once again, all discourse is an image of some reality, and "this is true even of the most ludic and seemingly expressionist discourse, of poetry no less than of prose, and even of those forms of poetry which seem to wish to illuminate only 'writing' itself." Literary works, in other words, are indeed historical documents (even if only "second-rate" historical documents, as Jakobson put it), the poems of Khlebnikov, Mandelstam, and Mayakovsky, no less than the novels of Turgenev, Rasputin, or Trifonov. And on the other hand, history as it's related, has the same qualities of coherence, composition, and structure that we perceive in so-called literary works. I opened with the statement that such a viewpoint would have seemed boringly commonplace in the ancient world, and has again almost become a commonplace among us. In fact a kind of Copernican revolution has been brought about in this century by the work of Croce in the first instance, then more recently of Jakobson, Foucault, Derrida, not to mention Hayden White. In fact I can claim, very modestly, to have been an early witness to the revolution. In my book, Stankevich and His Moscow Circle, written in the early sixties, I pointed out that "history, as we receive it, tends to have the qualities of good narrative fiction--it exhibits, that is, both content and form. The raw and untreated facts we seldom perceive. Rather, the past is a collective aesthetic product, fashioned and re-fashioned according to the needs and hopes of many generations." And there I even quoted Aristotle, not because I regard him as an authority on anything, but because his powerful mind threw light on anything it examined: "poetry is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."
It should follow from all I have said that the novels of Trifonov, assuming as we all do that they are valid as artistic statements, must also be valid as history, and may really have greater value than a purely historical record because, as art, they distill out of a given experience some universal meaning. It is within such a conceptual framework that I propose to analyze the work of Trifonov, especially the city novels, after comparing him briefly with Rasputin, a close contemporary. The contrast between them can be neatly expressed in Jakobsonian terms. Rasputin, I would like to suggest, writes mainly in the metaphoric mode, Trifonov in the metonymic. Rasputin's images, in the main, have the effect of relating his characters and their ambience to something not themselves, and not even like themselves, of juxtaposing totally unlike things between which the term of comparison is the inward equality of a particular human situation. In the novel Zhivi i pomni the unhappy hero Andrei, a deserter from the front line who must hide in his native village from relatives and friends, is repeatedly compared to a hawk, or a wolf, or a bear, comparisons emphasizing, of course, not only his isolation from humanity, but the tragic circumstance that every man's hand is against him. The fact that he hides out at first and that his wife discovers him in the bathhouse, the traditional scene of evil influence and even of converse with the devil, is another metaphor of his fate as an outsider, unclean and sinister from the viewpoint of the simple villagers. The predominance of metaphor in Farewell to Matyora is even more striking. The inundation and disappearance of an island in the Angara river, an episode in the construction of a great hydroelectric project, is a figure of the disappearance in the modern world of an old culture with its beautiful artifacts, its highly personal houses and patterned green fields, its well-
worn ways of securing and promoting life, and even its graveyards, the last link with the past. The tragic old people who carry the narrative and whose viewpoint the reader totally shares refuse to accept the passing of their native and habitual haunt, an event they dimly understand as a figure of their own death. As a matter of fact death, the death of an island in the Angara, of a culture, or of individual human beings, is the underlying theme of the novel; its structure of events figures forth the ultimate and universal experience. The thought reiterated by the doomed old lady Darya, the idea that the proudly rational men who planned the project don't really know what they are doing, is realized in a magnificent metaphor in the final scene. In that scene the representatives of the new life and the great hydro-electric project set out in a small boat to find and remove the island's last inhabitants, but they lose themselves totally in a fog: "Around them was only the water and the fog, and nothing else, only water and fog."

Trifonov is radically different from Rasputin in many ways—in theme, in language, in narrative viewpoint and structure—but the most important difference between them is, if I may be excused the expression, tropological. Trifonov's dominant mode, as I have suggested, is metonymy rather than metaphor, and by that I mean that the narrative plot of each of his novels is embedded in a larger plot: the unidirectional movement of history itself, the threads of which he is trying to identify and disentangle from the random chaos of experience. The effort to identify the pattern—the threads, as he repeatedly calls them—is the explicit concern of an authorial persona that intrudes upon the events in some if not all of his novels written since 1965. The dominant concern of that authorial intruder is that the pattern of the past and its connection with the present not be lost, in other words—that
memory not be lost. "What interests me most," he has said, "is memory."

Trifonov is a historian primarily of the revolution, its origins, its hour of triumph, and its degradation. He is usually described as an urban writer, or as a recorder of every-day Soviet life, and of course he is. However, overemphasis on that aspect of his work tends to obscure the most important thing, namely that he is a historical writer, a writer over whose work the muse of history, Clio, presides. And this is true even of such a novel as Another Life, where the surface narrative focuses on petty marital conflicts and jealousies, at times verging on hysteria, as reported from the viewpoint of a faithful but frustrated wife. As Trifonov himself put it, he presents "у kratkom, beskonechnoe"; the infinite in a little room.

His sequence of historical works, as I call them, was inaugurated by a kind of documentary, Light of the Campfire, published in Znamya in 1965, which investigates the career in the revolution and the civil war of his father, an eminent old Bolshevik who disappeared in the purges. Trifonov's early boyhood had been spent in the "house on the embankment" where the privileged elite were lodged, until 1937, when some men in military uniform and with blue piping on their caps came and picked his father up. He never returned. Light of the Campfire presents the results of Trifonov's own researches in the archives into the activities of his father as a leader of the Red Guard in revolutionary Petrograd, and a commissar under the Red Army commander Mironov in the campaigns in the Don Cossack country and in the defense of Tsarytsyn. It is a remarkable performance and a pivotal work in the history of Trifonov as a writer. His venture into the archives in search of the truth about his father left a permanent mark on him. He was struck, first of all, by the paucity of documentary evidence and the accidental nature of its preservation;
he repeatedly characterizes a document he presents as "preserved by pure chance." The rapid disappearance of most witnesses to historical events and the fading of memory, sometimes total and always selective, on the part of survivors, was another source of consternation. He learned in the archives at first hand of the fragile and fragmentary nature of historical evidence, and of how tender the strands are that keep memory alive. And so he became one of the Soviet Union's most eloquent advocates of memory, a concern he shared, as a matter of fact with Aitmatov, Rasputin, and Belov in the Soviet Union, and with many others, notably Solzhenitsyn, outside the Soviet Union.

A recurrent motif in the so-called urban novels is the sometimes futile effort on the part of a historian or a survivor to make contact with the past. A terribly poignant though outwardly comic passage in the novel Another Life (1975) describes the search of the central character, Sergei, a historian, for one of the still-living men who had served as informers for the Tsarist security police in February 1917. Sergei has unearthed in the archive a list of the political informers the police used. They are referred to only by code names, though he is able to identify one of them according to his real name and the town where he lives. Overwhelmed at the prospect of making contact with a live thread linking him to the past, he makes a journey to the little town, where he finds the one-time informer. The meeting of a historian with a living grain of evidence is a matchless study in the total failure of communication and a commentary on the evanescence of the past. The old man has forgotten--perhaps selectively--anything worth remembering, and only mumbles irrelevant nothings into his beard. "The old fellow," writes Trifonov in an authorial intrusion, "was incredibly little at that time, a grain of dust in the storm. And yet, 53 years had passed, and the grain of dust for
some strange reason still existed, still danced in the sunlight, while everything else had been cleared away and carried off." And Sergei's search for that still surviving grain of the past ends in a beautifully pointless drunken argument with the old man's son-in-law, Pantiusha, who like the great mass of decent Soviet citizens, doesn't give a rap in hell about history, and won't stand for this city fellow interrogating his father-in-law for the sake of some kind of "memory." "And what if I give you a punch in the nose?" he says. "That'll be a history for you!"

Few things in contemporary Russian literature can touch that scene in its elevation of the tiny detail to the plane of universal significance. The scene illustrates once more Trifonov's special talent for synecdoche, for giving us "v kratkom beskonechnoe." That picture of the old man, once an informer for the okhrana, "dozing off quite calmly, his head with its crown of gray hair hanging down on his chest" tells us of the stubborn silence of the past. And in the final scene of the novel The House on the Embankment, the author again intrudes as a historian of the twenties who seeks out one of the leading characters, Ganchuk, to interview him on matters of the past that he had known at first hand. Ganchuk had been deeply involved in the polemics of the twenties around the RAPP program, and Pereverzev, and the Bogdanovists and Bespalovists, and other followers of fallen and almost forgotten figures. But Ganchuk, now eighty-six, has lost all interest in that period of his life, reads only the latest papers, and watches television. The novel ends with an expression of a historian's melancholy over the almost total disappearance of all witnesses to those "semi-legendary" days. In the novel The Old Man the character from whose viewpoint the story is told, in his late seventies and in failing health, makes a final effort to discover the truth about an episode of
his youth in which a Cossack officer in the Red Army had been tried and shot as a traitor. The officer in question is Mironov, here fictionalized as Migulin, who had figured importantly in Trifonov's father's life and in the documentary Light of the Campfire. The novel opens with news of Migulin's rehabilitation, and the old man—possibly a fictional stand-in for Trifonov's own father—had an imperative need to discuss the disturbing case with someone who might share his concern and his urge to get at the truth. But there are no such people left, and since the past is blurred in his own mind he tries to find evidence on the Migulin trial in the archives. But the documents are incomplete, at times baffling, and often irrelevant. In a number of passages that might have been written as an illustration of history as art, it develops that no incontrovertible truths arise from the ample documentation, but instead we receive a fascinating picture of the Revolution and its "heroes" and a rich harvest of human character and experience. The old man's tentative, groping treatment of the "glorious days" and his ironic neglect of established Soviet certitude was a radical departure in Soviet literature, and some readers believed the censors must have blundered in passing the novel. Yet it appeared unchanged in book form two years after its original publication in 1978.

The earliest of Trifonov's historical novels is The Exchange, the action of which, not unlike Another Life, takes the form of a deadly contest between a husband and wife. In this case the struggle that spins the plot is between a husband who is an intellectual and the scion of good revolutionary stock, on the one hand, and a wife whose forebears were meshchane, low level merchants with a narrow range of interests and pursuits, people who concentrated on business deals, getting good values for themselves, a grasping and cruel lot.
The Lukianov in-laws are petty-bourgeois types who have wormed their way into the inner mechanism of the Soviet state and are adept at pulling off slightly shady deals—they are expert in the underground operations of the second economy, as we call it. Lena, the philistine wife, has devised a complicated scheme according to which her husband, Dmitriev's mother, who has a terminal cancer, will move in with them and thus qualify them for a larger apartment, which they would then enjoy upon her imminent death. Her plan takes no account either of her husband's or her mother-in-law's feelings: she calculates only her own interest. To her husband, Dmitriev, Lena and all his Lukianov in-laws are some kind of monsters, but he is too weak to resist the implacable drive for possessions of the new bourgeoisie, and he compromises fatally. Most readers understand the novel as an encoded statement on the dominance in Soviet life at the highest level of a social element traditionally despised by the intelligentsia as the negators of all but the lowest values. The meshchane, without principles, ideals, or ethical ballast, capable of adjusting to and exploiting any system for the sake of goods and power, have laid hold of the Soviet system, decked themselves out in the hammer and sickle and learned to mouth Marxist phrases. The novel offers an encapsulated history of Soviet social development, and it powerfully recalls the anathemas pronounced on meshchanstvo by Herzen, Ivanov-Razumnik and others in the nineteenth century. Ivanov-Razumnik in his History of Russian Social Thought said of the meshchane: "Anything deep the meshchanin renders shallow, anything wide he makes narrow, anything brightly individual he converts into dull anonymity." The meshchanin, moreover, is traditionally the enemy of revolutionaries because he is satisfied with things as they are in any established order, capitalist or Soviet; since he fears change he distrusts
anyone who questions any status quo. The deadly contest in The Exchange between the Dmitrievs and the Lukianovs, then, is a tiny episode in an ancient and ongoing struggle, a fictional illustration of Ivanov-Razumnik's binary opposition between two social groups.

Trifonov's images are, as I have said, a kind of synechdoche, pars pro toto, or, in Kenneth Burke's phrasing, individual scenes that recapitulate the nature and structure of the whole—the "microcosm" as a synechdoche of the "macrocosm." In Another Life such a "microcosm" was the doddering old man Koshelkov, once known to the Tsarist okhrana by the code name "Tamara," a tiny grain that stood for all the vanished human evidence. In The Exchange another kind of "microcosm" unfolds in the dacha area of Pavlinovo, where a pleasant summer stroll in the woods brings together three generations of Dmitrievs and Lukianovs, and degenerates into a bitter battle in the deadly war. Grandfather Dmitriev, who initiates the hostilities, holds a law degree from the University of St. Petersburg and magnificent revolutionary credentials—subversive activity as a young man, exile, prison, escape abroad, party work in Switzerland—or Belgium—friendship with Vera Zasulich (another beautiful metonymy, by the way) and much more. But to the Lukianovs he too is some kind of monster, "only one or two specimens of which still survive." Dmitriev's mother, a pawn in the Lukianov's operation, is a sensitive intellectual, but to the Lukhianovs she is worn out and passe: "her song is sung—her number is up," says her competent philistine daughter-in-law. The bloody engagement between the two camps when grandfather Dmitriev expresses his distaste for the kind of people now overcrowding the dacha area:

There were a lot of people around that day. They jostled each other in the woods and on the shore, they occupied all the benches: some in sports outfits, some in striped pyjamas, with their children, their dogs, their guitars, and vodka bottles spread out on newspapers. And Dmitriev waxed
ironical about the contemporary dacha residents: the devil only knows, he said, what kind of people these are. But before the war, he recalled, another kind of people, wearing beards and nose-glasses, strolled about here... Vera Lukianova, surprisingly, supported him. She pointed out that before the revolution, too, Pavlinovo was really a marvellous resort area, she used to visit her uncle here when she was little. There had been a restaurant with gypsy music, it was called "The Riverside," but it had burned down. Mostly very solid people had come here then: stockmarket operators, businessmen, actors. Chaliapin's dacha had been right over there in the clearing.

Ksenya Fyodorovna was curious: who was this uncle? To which Vera Lazarevna answered: "My papa was a simple worker, but a very good highly skilled worker. People ordered expensive things from him..." "Mommie dear!" Lena laughed. "You're asked about your uncle and you answer about your father." The uncle, it turned out, had a leathergoods shop: purses, suitcases, briefcases. It was on Kuznetsky, on the second floor, where there's a women's clothing store now. During NEP there had been a leathergoods store there but not her uncle's, because her uncle had disappeared in 1919 during the famine. No, he hadn't run away, he hadn't died, he'd just disappeared somewhere. Ivan Vasilevich Lukianov interrupted his spouse with the observation that biographical details were of very little interest to anyone.

At this point grandfather, who had been silent, suddenly spoke up, addressing himself to Dmitriev: "So, dear Vitya, just imagine, if your mother-in-law's uncle had lived to the time when the beards and the nose-glasses strolled about here, what would he have said? No doubt he would have said: what kind of people are these? Trashy people wearing Tolstoy blouses and nose-glasses. Isn't that what he'd say? But before that there was an estate here, and the landowner went broke and sold his house and his land, and fifty years later an heir drops by in a mood of nostalgic curiosity and he looks at the wives of the businessmen and bureaucrats, at the gentlemen in derby hats, and at your uncle," grandfather bowed to Vera Lazarevna, "just rolling up here in a cab, and he thinks 'What awful filth! This crowd is nothing but trash! What do you think? Isn't that what he'd say?'" grandfather asked with a laugh.

And so, framed by the river and the pleasant wood, you see the dacha-dwellers of the present day, Soviet philistines, crude and half-drunk, whom grandfather contrasts to the intellectual types of the twenties with Trotskyist beards and Lunacharsky-like nose-glasses. But for Lena's mother it had really been nice before the revolution when actors and smart operators ate fine food and listened to gypsy music. And of course before them a landowner held the place... and before him? The brief but powerful scene communicates a sense of social movement and social change; it encapsulates a vast sweep of
human history without suggesting any dialectic pattern or direction, except of
course that each of the displaced group regards the displacing and dominant
group as "filth." Ksenya Fyodorovna, the mother whose illness is terminal,
even provides a formula for the remnant of the revolutionary intelligentsia in
their defeat and frustration: "We have nothing left but our contempt for
them." As in The Old Man, here too history's movement provides no sure goal.

In The House on the Embankment the synechdochic "microcosm" is that
enormous apartment building which stands for all to see, in the real world and
in the novel, on the Bersenyevskaya Embankment overlooking the Moscow river.
The Soviet reader for whom the novel itself is a viable "sign" has no problem
understanding that "House" as a statement on the vicissitudes of the Party
elite indeed on the history of the Soviet system, though the names of Lenin,
Stalin, Yezhov or Beria never appear, and there is not a word about the purges
or the camps or the total disappearance of a number of names from the plaques
on the walls around the main entrance of the building on Serafimovich Street.
Since the early thirties the enormous apartment building, known sometimes as
"government house," often enough as "NKVD house," had accommodated the cream
of the Soviet elite: officials of the NKVD, ministers of various
commissariats, honored writers (there is still a plaque honoring the "great
Russian writer" Serafimovich, who once lived there), the Secretary of the
Moscow Party Committee and others of like dignity. In that house the
Academician Ganchuk, a central character in the novel, occupied a spacious and
richly appointed apartment on a high floor, one coveted by his student Glebov,
and by a number of crude newcomers to literary criticism and the academic life
who are out to destroy him. The plot turns on the successful efforts of the
latter, with the discreet help of Glebov, to brand Ganchuk as a "menshevizer"
who "undervalues Marxist philosophy" and "overvalues the West." Of course tenure in the House had always been precarious, as one wave of honored occupants were dishonored and earlier moved out into the shadows to be replaced by others. Ganchuk himself had won his position among the elite not only as a participant in the Revolution and the Civil War, but in the lethal ideological battles of the twenties and thirties when he had struggled against the "distortions of Marxism" perpetrated by Rappists, Pereverzevites and the like. Ganchuk in 1949 has become the victim of just such polemics as he had earlier used against others, and he must now leave the House and all the privileges he had enjoyed as a stalwart hunter of "enemies." Once again we see the history of the Soviet Union encapsulated: the middle and upper class urban intelligentsia, those who have emerged intact from the prewar purges and the war itself, appear in this novel as a people without ideals, convictions, or any firm principles, dominated by petty bourgeois, and, as Vera Dunham would put it, crassly middle class values. What was the meaning then of all the human sacrifices to "History"?

There are even more striking examples of synecdochic statement in Trifonov's posthumously published novel, Time and Place. That novel continues and deepens the long meditation on Soviet life so beautifully developed in the earlier novels. It is the story of a budding ambitious and in the end successful Soviet writer named Antipov, whose father was shot in the purges of the thirties, whose mother was then arrested as the wife of an "enemy," but who manages in spite of all that to have a modest success as a Soviet writer. Some of the details are close to Trifonov's own biography. Antipov is a "fairly honest" chap and perhaps in that sense the "antipode" of the weak and compromised character Glebov in The House on the Embankment. In the course of
developing Antipov's story Trifonov offers an abundance of beautifully written scenes rich with the details and characters of everyday life in the Soviet Union, something that makes this an invaluable source for a particular historical period. His range is remarkable broad: he shows us editorial offices with their secretaries, bosses, and sex, communal kitchens and the vile gossipy bitches in them that make life not worth living, an illegal abortion in Antipov's apartment, inebriate parties and their pointless chatter, given with a sure ear for character and intonation, a number of pathetic people badly hurt by their lives, and on the other hand hard-headed operators with influence and power but without ethical ballast of any kind, the apartment of a dykey Soviet girl featuring macho dirt and disorder, lifting weights for upper arm and shoulder strength, a bicycle, and photographs on the walls of "parts" of the anatomies of other girls (this must be a first in Soviet literature). And we get glimpses of a kind of demimonde with its stupid, repellent violence. This novel displays better than any of the others Trifonov's mastery of the revealing synechdochic detail: clothing, appearance, gesture, phrase intonation, setting and ambience, in fact the whole inventory of human reality in a given "Time and Place."

The most telling of the synechdoches in Time and Place and I believe some of the finest writing in modern Russian fiction is an account of those strange days in 1953 when the great dictator died, and soon after friends and relatives long forgotten began turning up in Moscow. The dread day of Stalin's obsequies is remembered in a chapter entitled "The End of Winter," the central event of which is not the death of Stalin or his funeral, but an abortion which Antipov's wife Tanya thinks she must undergo. She has reached the very end point in her pregnancy of the time when an abortion would still
be possible, and she and her husband are both worried because the doctor has been delayed and may not be able to reach their apartment. The center of the city has been closed for the funeral, most subways have stopped running and the doctor has had to take the long peripheral subway line, then try to get a taxi or something. Antipov and his wife are living in a communal apartment on Rozhdestvensky Boulevard, which leads down toward the center and Trubnaya Square. The street is thronged hour after hour and from curb to curb by men, women and children walking in the direction of Trubnaya and the center in the hope of viewing the earthly remains. "They say the Hall of Soviets will be open from two o'clock on," the word has gone around. And in an immensely moving and mysterious passage Trifonov transmits the human reality of that incredible outpouring of grief and consternation mixed with a strange fear at the passing of the cruel monster who had shaped all of their lives: "The crowds kept coming, filling the street, and Antipov listened to the low roar of the tightly packed mass. Some of them came singly, some in long ranks with linked hands. Some faces were griefstricken, some serious and solemn, others covered with tears, and still others dark and morose. Some tried to converse in loud tones, but others shushed them down. Everyone felt what Antipov himself was experiencing, a kind of partial loss of sanity." When Antipov happened into the communal kitchen to get some hot water for Tanya, he ran into some females, vile ugly gossips and informers who had caused him problems. And he heard someone moaning in the kitchen: "Anna Artemovna had doubled up her huge back over near the window and her fat shoulders were shaking, and the moans of grief that came out of her were low-pitched, coarse, and gruff, like an old peasant wailing, and at the same time she was sobbing something that couldn't be understood. And Bella, the wife of Irakliiev, was
grinding meat in a grinder, breaking up bread crumbs into it, and all the while she kept crying and bit her lips and stifled her moans, while the tears rolled down her cheeks. The women were crying, as it seemed, each for herself; they'd turned their backs to each other and seemed not to notice one another."

The weeping and gnashing of teeth continues and Antipov feels a menace in that increasing uproar out on the street, that rumble of a thousand voices. The night is "packed tight with people, and roaring in anticipation of death," and that is, of course, the operative phrase in the whole passage—the informed Soviet reader knows that many of the people in that crowd were moving towards their deaths from suffocation near Trubnaya Place. Trifonov has given us an array of mute signifiers, and the reader is himself obliged to make them speak: Stalin's funeral day (but Stalin is never mentioned), a wintry spring day in early March, and the weeping, surging, swaying, crushing mob moving inexorably down toward Trubnaya. But the terrible procession down the wide street, the great historical event, is actually peripheral to the main business of the scene. Antipov at that point in his life is almost totally absorbed with taking care of Tanya and worrying about the belated doctor. Tanya's planned abortion is in the foreground and in clear focus: the spontaneous, dreadful funeral march is simply a background marker of time and place.

The passage is quite possibly Trifonov's most powerful historical synechdoche, a microcosm that beautifully contains and shadows forth the macrocosm. Before the massive and mysterious movement of history—monstrous, menacing, indifferent—which the individual human being can neither understand nor control, the only refuge in which he can create a reality of his own in
his separate, personal life. The scene is a summing up of Soviet history almost Tolstoyan in its sweep and thrust. Two lonely people try to preserve something of their own through all the weird misery of revolution, socialist construction and reconstruction, purge and rehabilitation, war and peace. The idea is of course not new. Matthew Arnold in "Dover Beach" spoke of the need for a sure private love in a troubled world:

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

And of course we have long since received the injunction: "il faut cultiver notre jardin."

Images of an individual life at the mercy of events yet to some degree private are frequent and compelling in Time and Place. The frail old lady Veretinnikova, who had moved into the apartment on Rozhdestvensky long before the revolution, observes the funeral throng from her little balcony, and recalls other great and terrible moments that had swept by her down that street: "... She had seen the calvary run down a crowd of women, and the junkers had come rushing past toward Sretenka, and she'd seen others tear down the sign "Schmidt Brothers" from the house across the street, and people marching with flags to the sound of drums, and she'd seen a welcoming parade for some aviators ... and the dark emptied houses with their windows papered over, and she'd heard tanks thundering along on Trubnaya shaking the earth so much that her little balcony trembled. And tears poured down her cheeks. No one could have explained, and she herself didn't know, why she was crying."

That scene as a whole is a cogent synecdoche; each of the old lady's memories is itself a tiny part of some larger action; and though each one of them fits into the reader's own pattern of events, it's not clear at all that
Veretinnikova remembers the significance of the junkers, or the mob tearing down the sign, or the tanks, or the aviators. Like many other passages in the novel this one seems to lay bare the mechanics of memory itself, reducing its operation to the simplest associative level. Each of Trifonov's "historical" novels communicates a sense of flow without direction, and features a narrative intelligence which can only grasp at disjunct items—the house on the embankment Koshelkov code-named "Tamara", the funeral mob in March 1953, Moscow parapsychologists experimenting with psychokinesis, all the things Veretinnikova remembered—but that intelligence is uncertain whether they are parts of the total flow or only surface flotsam.

The human need to pursue the past is treated satirically in a laughably humorous scene from Another Life, when the historian Sergei, in search of a new life of some kind, finds his way to parapsychologists and spiritualists. In one seance a medium tries to bring Hertzen back, but the great writer says nothing meaningful and even makes a spelling mistake. In another the inquisitor Torquemada returns in answer to a summons, but his spirit "just kept on talking at length and not to the point and his style was that of a newspaper article." Sergie's experiences among the spiritualists involves a confrontation of historical science, which searches for evidence and uses rational procedures in evaluating it, with a modish Moscow mysticism striving for direct contact with the dead. The authorial persona seems to have little faith in either method.

Trifonov's "historical" novels with their dominant use of metonymy and synecdoche as a key to the structures of memory and the flow of time, can be studied as an extended commentary on the process of narrative itself, whether fictional or historical. Those novels have an importance which far transcends
their undoubted value as a record of Soviet life at a particular time and place. They are a study, not only of history, but of historiography, and they are also, I am suggesting, documents of special interest to the theory of narrative. As such Trifonov's work invites a much deeper study than it has yet received (even here, of course) in the philosophical sense that work is above all a rejection of the appeal to "History" and the "Future" as a justification for anything. Its publication in the USSR is one more evidence of thick opacity in the Soviet official mind.


