The work leading to this report was supported by funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.
Throughout his career, but increasingly from 1969 until his death in 1981, Iurii Trifonov analyzed the nature and consequence of moral choices within the matrix of Soviet history. All of his late (and best) fiction attempts to explore the relationship between the ideals of the October Revolution, the reality of the Stalinist world, and the offspring of both, present-day Soviet society. In each work one particular relationship between the present and the past is established, and then investigated: in Another Life (1975) the narrator's late husband was an historian by profession, particularly interested in the double-agents of the tsarist secret police; in House on the Embankment (1976) the protagonist tries to forget his role in the anticosmopolitan campaign as a graduate student in the late 1940s; in The Old Man (1978) the protagonist excavates personal memory and documentary texts to arrive at the truth of an incident in the Civil War with moral and political implications for subsequent generations; in Time and Place (1981) the protagonist, a novelist, attempts to unravel the past by means of his art. Trifonov himself, examining the Soviet past considerably before the onset of the new openness in public discussion of the subject and writing within a system of external and internal constraints, was of necessity oblique. He did not avoid judgment, but he expressed his judgments via the techniques of his art—narrative voice, metaphor, time-shifts and
Evolving both intellectually and artistically, Trifonov most clearly expresses his belief that memory is the *sine qua non* of the moral life in his two most accomplished works, *House on the Embankment* and *The Old Man*. Willful failure of memory and deliberate distortion of the past condemn not just an individual but an entire society to an ethical and spiritual void. When Trifonov’s "Moscow novellas" appeared in 1969, 1970 and 1971 their depiction of the Soviet *intelligentsia* provoked much debate; the anomie of his characters, and the spiritual vacuum of their lives, seemed a result partly of individual personality, partly of the conditions of modern urban life. In Trifonov’s later fiction, however, the contemporary urban Soviet world is always presented in the context of and in relation to the past. As one Soviet critic put it, in his later years Trifonov could no longer write the "horizontals" without the "verticals," without digging down into the bedrock from which the modern lode of Soviet reality has emerged.

In *House on the Embankment* Trifonov anatomizes the mentality of one of the props of Stalinism, the kind of man without which that system could not have survived. The central event in each of the two main periods of the novel (1937 and 1948) is an act of betrayal committed by the protagonist, Vadim Glebov. As a child during the Terror, he betrays other boys; as a man during the anticosmopolitan campaign, he betrays his teacher and mentor. Betrayal and the personal qualities which motivate it are directly
linked by Trifonov with an individual's demonstrated willingness to forget or significantly distort the past, and his careful delineation of the atmosphere of the times serves not to exculpate Glebov but to suggest the symbiotic process by which Stalinism both created men like Glebov and depended on and was sustained by men like Glebov.

In *The Old Man*, whose hero is obsessed with the men and ideas of the Revolution and Civil War and their heirs in today's Soviet Union, the Stalinist years exist as a persistent subtext for the reader, but are not part of the direct action of the novel. Like Glebov, the old man seeks arguments to justify his own complicity in the betrayal of the Cossack general Filip Migulin in 1919; like Glebov, he finds reassurance in recalling his own impotence, the "lava" which blinded him, the "current" that was sweeping everything before it. Yet comforting metaphors obscure the real dilemmas both he and Glebov faced and the real choices they had: by presenting alternatives, Trifonov insists that the "lava" did not blind everyone, and that it was possible to swim against the current; the metaphors are first and foremost excuses, and inadequate ones at that. Moreover, the old man's version of the past, which relies heavily on linguistic devices (passive and impersonal verb forms) and metaphor to convey the elemental, anonymous forces that were at work during the Civil War years, is countered by the memories of other characters and by the information contained in archives and dusty documents, bits of paper which reveal that specific decisions were made by specific
individuals, who bear responsibility for them. It is in the juxtaposition of, and interstices between, those two versions that Trifonov's views are to be found.

It was in part thanks to Trifonov's adroit manipulation of the "dotted lines," the ellipses through which his own judgments can be inferred, that he managed to publish works like House and The Old Man. He was favored by luck and circumstance as well. Although it is impossible to determine with any certainty why a given manuscript is passed by Soviet censors, a number of factors can be important influences. In Trifonov's case he was aided by his editor, Sergei Baruzdin: though the journal Druzhba narodov had a reputation for "conservatism, Baruzdin was willing to argue strenuously on Trifonov's behalf. (There were also rumors that he was too ill at the time to care overmuch about the consequences.) The emigration and/or expulsion of what was by the mid-1970s a substantial number of prominent artistic figures increased pressure on the authorities to keep those whom they could, and Trifonov's general reluctance to proclaim his views publically made him a likely candidate.

The publication of House may also owe something to Trifonov's mode of story-telling. As he became more probing thematically he coupled his historical consciousness with skillful aesthetic manipulation of narrative voice. What sometimes confused readers (and critics) accustomed by prevailing Soviet literary norms to explicit praise and censure may even have begun as a means of obfuscating his censors. But in all of Trifonov's mature fiction
his interweaving of narrative personae serves an aesthetic as well as ethical function, allowing the author to stand back yet make known his own opinions and forcing the reader to become a participant, juror and judge, defendant and prosecutor. Insisting that the past is knowable, Trifonov at the same time insists on its complexity, resisting intellectually the determinism of Marxist analysis and, artistically, the certitude of a single omniscient narrator.

In the Brezhnev era, conventionally considered years of repression and intolerance, many of the creative forces unleashed by Khrushchev's thaw were stifled or had to find their way into illicit channels. Yet even then literature was being published which defied apparently inflexible strictures. For writers like Trifonov a mutually advantageous if tacit contract seems to have governed the publication of their work. For the regime it served, in some cases, as a kind of lightning rod: critical, but far less dangerous than a Solzhenitsyn or a Voinovich. Writers, for their part, want to be read by the most appropriate audience. Although the terms were never spelled out, and could be changed without warning, individuals who avoided public protest, or who rejected the option of publishing abroad, or who criticized recently-visited Western countries, had some small but real room to manoeuvre. And while neither open, systemic criticism, nor explicit examination of Stalinism was tolerated in those years, writers otherwise acceptable could and did allude to such matters, establishing oblique connections and encouraging attent-
ive readers to draw certain inferences.

The strategists and theoreticians of glasnost' did not come from nowhere. Most of them are of the generation born in the 1920s and 1930s; they came of age during the Khrushchev era. Now, when economists like Nikolai Shmelev and sociologists like Tat’iana Zaslavskaya, literary critics like Vladimir Lakshin and poets like Evgenii Rein are publishing their work openly in the leading newspapers and magazines of the Soviet Union, when films made 15 and 20 years ago are being widely distributed, when leading historians are rewriting the textbooks of Soviet history, it is clear that even during the Brezhnev years these people were working, thinking, waiting, even if most of them could not go public with their work.

Writers like Iurii Trifonov met the response they did because in some sense they spoke for millions of their countrymen. Even in the Brezhnev years Trifonov was not unique in finding a way to manipulate into his fiction both the stuff of Soviet history and his own views about its meaning for the present. But he united a gravity of moral purpose with unusual artistic subtlety, a combination which helps explain both his success and his significance.
Iurii Valentinovich Trifonov's career began in a conventional manner and with relatively conventional fiction. Yet by the time he died, in 1981, he had produced a number of works which were, in the context of officially-published Soviet literature, anything but conventional. His examination of Stalinism, in the 1975 *House on the Embankment* and the posthumously published *Time and Place*, and his examination of Bolshevism in the 1979 *Old Man*, were commonly agreed by both Soviet and Western readers to stake out new territory both for Trifonov personally and for the pages of Soviet prose generally. The challenge for a reader and interpreter of Trifonov's fiction is not merely to chart the changes as his work developed over a period of three decades, but to attempt to explain what impelled those changes, how he kept his feet in the treacherously shifting sands of Soviet literary policy, and how he coped with the reality of censorship.

Superficially, at least, the pattern of Trifonov's work shows a clear if uneven and inconsistent progression. After working in an aviation factory in Moscow during the war (myopia kept him out of active service), he attended the Gorky Institute of Literature, from which he graduated in 1949. Although his first story was published two years earlier,¹ his career really began with the publication of the novel *Students* in 1950.² The Stalin era would end in a few more years, but in 1950, when *Students ap-


² *Novyi mir*, #10 and 11, 1950.
peared, the anticosmopolitan campaign was very much alive, and very much a part of Trifonov's book. Neither Trifonov's depiction of a group of institute students and their attitudes toward a professor who is accused of "formalism" and "toadyism," nor his resolution of the conflict with the firing of the professor, violated any of the strictures imposed by the times. 3 His hero Vadim Belov is a diligent student whose mediocre talents are outweighed by his reliability and decency; he is contrasted to two other students who are far more brilliant than he but whose flaws overshadow their brilliance. Both of them (one male, one female) too often stand apart from the collective; the man, who mistreats his women and exploits his friends, is finally caught in plagiarism, and at the end of the novel, chastened and wiser, is forgiven by the collective and allowed to rejoin it.

Students received a Stalin Prize, Third Class, and was reprinted several times during the early 1950s; it was also translated into a number of languages. 4 The genuine popularity of Students had less to do with its orthodox political content than with its detailed depiction of life, the realia of the social and emotional world inhabited by its characters. Readers weary of war fiction, with its grand-scale heroism, were hungry for authentic

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3 For discussion of some of the ways Students was typical of the fiction of its era, see Vera Dunham, In Stalin's Time (Cambridge, 1976): pp. 44-6, 80-1, 87-90, 207-10.

4 Within the Soviet Union Students was translated into Azerbaijani, Latvian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Finnish and Uigur (a Central Asian language); Progress Publishers translated it into English.
portrayals of their own lives. Trifonov, although only 24 years old, managed to convey the tastes and smells of what Moscow student life was like, with its crammed street-cars, scrimping and getting by on inadequate stipends, warm cameraderie and sense of excitement about the future. We can, looking at Students from the vantage point of a completed body of work, see in that early novel (from which Trifonov distanced himself in later years) some of the features that reappear in later, more significant work. Trifonov was already able to take note, if not quite make artistic use, of the evanescence of childhood, the idyllic quality of which stems in part from ignorance of what will destroy it; he was already concerned with the relationship between the ethical behavior of individuals and the era in which they live, though he came to see that interrelationship in quite a different light.

In the decade that followed Students Trifonov continued to write, although the evidence strongly suggests that he was badly

5 The size of Soviet print-runs and frequency of republication must be used with caution as proof of popularity, since such decisions have traditionally been guided less by reader demand than by such factors as the work's social and political utility. On the other hand, a number of Soviet critics have commented on the enthusiastic response Students evoked from readers, who had been starved of even reasonably truthful depictions of bytovaia zhizn, everyday life. In his 1973 memoirs, Trifonov comments on the reasons for the success of Students. He notes that most of the best books published in those years were about the war, and readers wanted books about their own familiar, contemporary life. He adds, with dispassion rather than self-deprecation, "V istorii Rossii nikogda ne bylo bolee blagodarnoi chitatel'skoj auditorii, chem posle okonchanii voyny." [In the history of Russia there was never a more grateful readership than after the end of the war] Izbrannye proizvedeniia. M: 1978, v. 2; p. 522.
blocked for several years. Certain familiar themes appear in the writing of these years, but overall the work is mediocre; he seemed then, and in retrospect still seems to have been, an unexceptionable Soviet writer of his period. One of a series of turning points came in 1963, with the writing and publication of Quenching the Thirst [Utolenie zhazhdy]. The title refers both to the physical thirst felt by the characters, who are working in the desert on the construction of a canal, and to the metaphoric thirst for truth and justice experienced by Soviet citizens in the late 1950s, in the years after Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Congress. The formative experiences of his own life,

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6 More than ten years separate the publication of Students from the publication of Trifonov's next book, Quenching the Thirst [Utolenie zhazhdy], excerpts of which first appeared in 1961 (Literaturnaia gazeta, Jan. 24, 1961) and 1962 (Komsomolets Turkmenistana, Feb. 25, and Sel'skaia zhizn', Sept. 29, 1962. In between he published a number of undistinguished stories and sports sketches.

7 His wife, commenting on the "khalturshchina" [roughly, hackwork] which the narrator of Taking Stock [Predvaritel'nye itogi] does to make a living, observed that Trifonov did his share of such uninspired and unsatisfying work in the '50s and early '60s. In a number of conversations in the autumn of 1986, Mrs. Trifonova advanced the plausible hypothesis that Trifonov created, in his many "writer-protagonists," a range of alternative fates for himself, what he might have become had he made different choices and followed different professional directions.

8 Tamara Patera compares the 1963 and 1979 editions of the novel and notices some salient differences, due to the "colder" atmosphere in which the latter edition appeared. References to the 20th Congress are simply deleted, as are comments on Khrushchev's boldness, the year 1937, Stalin's errors, and characters' discussions of whether those errors would be corrected. The arrest of the hero's father is said, in the 1963 edition, to occur in April 1937; in the 1979 that line was dropped. See Patera, Obzor tvorchestva i analiz moskovskikh povestei Iuriia Trifonova (Ann Arbor: 1983), pp. 148-49.
especially his father's arrest and execution in 1937, aligned him with the de-Stalinizers; that same family history probably inclined him, during the Khrushchev years, to wait and see, to avoid testing limits that seemed to be expanding in the direction of reclaiming the revolutionary ideals of his father and grandmother.

More stories followed Quenching the Thirst, and in 1965 Trifonov published what he subtitled "a documentary novella," The Campfire's Glow [Otblesk kostra].\(^9\) The importance of this work, whose blending of historical evidence and fictional reconstruction is not entirely successful in aesthetic terms, lies primarily in its liberating effect on Trifonov's historical imagination. He relied heavily on official documents as well as his father's letters and his uncle's diaries. The Soviet critic Natal'ia Ivanova characterizes The Campfire's Glow as Trifonov's confrontation with his own Hamlet's ghost—his first attempt to come to grips with his father's history, which in microcosm is the history of a whole generation of revolutionaries and intellectuals.\(^10\) The Cossack Civil War officer Filip Mironov, who

\(^9\) An excerpt from Otblesk kostra appeared in 1964; the work ran in Znamia ##2 and 3, 1965, and it appeared as a book a year later. It should be remembered that Trifonov wrote Otblesk kostra in what were still hopeful years, although by the time the book was published Khrushchev was out of power, Sinyavsky and Daniel would soon be on trial, and the thaw had decidedly refrozen.

\(^10\) The two most complete accounts of Trifonov's family background are in Ivanova, Proza Iuriia Trifonova (M: 1984), and Patera, op. cit. Briefly, Trifonov's family were staunch supporters of the Bolsheviks and active party members. His maternal grandmother joined the Communist Party in 1904; his father, Valentin Trifonov, and his father's brother Evgenii joined the
became (as Filip Migulin) the focus of Trifonov's 1979 novel The Old Man, is briefly described in The Campfire's Glow. Shifting the action from 1904 to 1917, from 1920 to 1937, Trifonov for the first time used what Ivanova calls the "principle of time-montage," an aesthetic device which became the structuring principle of his best late work.\(^1\)

Between the writing of The Campfire's Glow and the first of Trifonov's "Moscow novellas," The Exchange [Obmen], a number of political and literary events intervened which may have influenced Trifonov's turn toward the acute analysis of Soviet moral malaise that characterizes that trilogy. By 1968 the hope felt by liberals like Trifonov (and Roi Medvedev, Evgeniia Ginzburg, Vasilii Aksenov and others) was gone, vanished in the wake of Khrushchev's removal, the 1965 Siniavskii-Daniel' trial, the 1968 Galanskov-Ginzburg trial, the repressions against Ukrainian nationalism, attacks on Solzhenitsyn, etc.\(^2\) The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, which is never explicitly mentioned in Trifo-

\(^{1}\) Ivanova, p. 77.

\(^{2}\) Abraham Rothberg, in The Heirs of Stalin, characterizes 1968 as the year of "re-Stalinization" (NY: 1972) p. 252. See chapters 13-22 for a detailed account of these events.
nov's work, may not have had any direct influence on Trifonov.\(^{13}\)
But the campaigns against Solzhenitsyn and, not long thereafter, Aleksandr Tvardovskii, the towering editor of Novyi mir, were certainly matters of concern to him.\(^{14}\) His relationship with Tvardovskii was, as his memoirs suggest, not untroubled.\(^{15}\) Nevertheless, they shared many views on literature, and as author and editor a mutual respect. Tvardovskii was shrewd in assessing the limits of what could and could not be published at any given time and deftly took advantage of all opportunities.\(^{16}\) He ran two

\(^{13}\) Vasilii Aksenov, who was a close friend of Trifonov's and who gave the trauma of the Czech invasion fictional shape in The Burn, does not think it did. Mrs. Trifonova agreed, although she added that insofar as the invasion meant, for intellectuals of that generation, another door slammed shut on freedom, it produced a sense of helplessness and frustration.

\(^{14}\) Trifonov was one of only 7 members of the Writers' Union (out of nearly 7000) to protest Solzhenitsyn's expulsion from the Union in November 1969. See Rothberg, p. 280.

\(^{15}\) A censored version of these reminiscences, "Zapiski soseda" [Notes of a Neighbor], was first published in the 1975 volume entitled Prodolzhitel'nye uroki [Ongoing lessons]. The omitted portions, published ten years later by Mrs. Trifonov, deal in part with the brutal treatment meted out to Tvardovskii in 1969 and 1970, before his magazine was taken away from him; his death soon followed. They also describe very matter-of-factly Tvardovskii's alcoholism, which was well known among the Moscow intelligentsia. "Vspominaia Tvardovskogo," Ogonek 44, 1986. Nevertheless, the "revelation" of this open secret elicited criticism from certain members of the literary establishment, who felt that Trifonov "besmirched" Tvardovskii's character, and that his widow was wrong to publish those passages. I myself was present at a meeting at the Gorky Institute of World Literature (November 13, 1986) when Vadim Kozhinov, a conservative critic generally hostile toward Trifonov, viciously attacked Trifonov on these (and other grounds), undeterred by the presence of Mrs. Trifonov.

\(^{16}\) For an account of Tvardovskii's early career, see Edith Frankel, Novyi mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature 1952-1958 (Cambridge, 1981). Two conflicting accounts of his
stories of Trifonov's in 1966 and a third some two years later, stories that can be considered the predecessors to the steady and creative productivity the author experienced from 1969 on.\textsuperscript{17}

The Moscow trilogy comprises \textit{The Exchange} (1969), \textit{Taking Stock} [\textit{Predvaritel'nye itogi}, 1970], and \textit{The Long Goodbye} [\textit{Dol'goe proshchanie}, 1971].\textsuperscript{18} The heroes of all three are shown at a moral crossroads, by no means the first in their lives but in some ways the crucial one. In each work Trifonov pits what Anatolii Bocharov later characterized as "clans," comprising not just individuals but values and ideas, against each other. In The\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Anatolii Bocharov, one of the most thoughtful critics of Trifonov's work, discerns a recurrent pattern: each new phase of his writing was initiated by short stories, which paved the way to longer prose. He saw these Novyi mir stories as signposting Trifonov's movement toward the Moscow trilogy. Shortly before Trifonov's death he (Bocharov) had read the stories subsequently published as Oprokinutyi dom [The Overturned House; Novyi mir 7/81] and had asked Trifonov if they marked the beginning of yet another phase in his writing; the author replied that although he had never consciously followed such a pattern, it seemed upon consideration an accurate description. (In conversation, Nov. 1986) For an excellent analysis of the third of these stories, "Golubinaia gibel,'" see Patera, ch. 1.

\textsuperscript{18} In English they were published together as \textit{The Long Good-bye} (Harper & Row, undated). Some critics consider the 1975 \textit{Another Life} [\textit{Drugaia zhizn']} the final "Moscow novella;" I do not. \textit{Drugaia zhizn'} seems to me a transitional work. It shares many features with the trilogy but it is the first of Trifonov's "historical" works, and is far more significant in the context of Trifonov's manipulation and incorporation of history than as a continuation of the bytovaia prose of the trilogy, which is rich in psychological and social insight, but in which the role of history is minimal and muted.
Exchange petit-bourgeois and vulgar philistinism combine with adroit and decisive pragmatism in the Lukianov clan, while idealism somewhat corrupted by arrogance is embodied in the Dmitriev family, former revolutionaries and members of the intelligentsia. In Taking Stock the spiritual decay of both "clans" is evident in the betrayal of the one loving and morally admirable character in the work, the nanny/maid Niura. Both the husband-narrator, who has some sensitivity but is a moral weakling, and his gifted but pretentious and self-centered wife Rita, exploit and depend on Niura spiritually as well as physically, but when she is recovering from a breakdown they will not look after her because she would be too much trouble. Although the meaning of the novella's ending has been debated, what emerges clearly from Taking Stock is a sense of the hollowness of contemporary Soviet life, which is dominated by careerism, corruption and hypocrisy. The Long Goodbye again juxtaposes two sets of values, but its time-frame is significantly different: virtually all the action is set in the early 1950s, before Stalin's death.

The heroine's common-law husband, Grisha, is an intelligent with a family background of urban revolutionaries and a profound

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19 The narrator's return to his wife has been seen by some as a moral defeat, by others as a promise of renewal; See Lev Anninskii, "Intelligenty i prochie," in Tridtsatye-Semidesiatye (M: 1977), and Patera, pp. 204-5.

20 Although never explicitly described, the artistic climate of those years provides the context, and subtext, of the novella. Patera offers an excellent discussion of Trifonov's oblique treatment of "the times," and how they are reflected in the power struggle in the heroine's theater.
interest, personal and professional, in the history of rebellion in Russia, though he cannot get any of his work published or his plays produced.\textsuperscript{21} Her lover, Smolianov, is a talentless writer although a decent man (at least at first) who becomes terrifically successful thanks to the political criteria governing literature at the time.

According to Trifonov's wife, relatively few changes were demanded of Trifonov when the novellas were being edited for publication, although he came in for a large share of criticism once they were out. The more orthodox Soviet critics objected to what they dubbed the "hermetic" quality of the world Trifonov depicts in the novellas, his lack of attention to the "advances" made by the larger society, his ignoring of the "big world of communist transformation and revolutionary morality."\textsuperscript{22} He was abused for portraying women who have affairs because they are afraid of missing out on passionate love or because they have romantic illusions about sex.\textsuperscript{23} More serious were the claims that

\textsuperscript{21} Patera rightly points out that his interest is not in organized revolutionary movement of the masses, a perfectly orthodox and acceptable focus of historical curiosity, but in the unacceptable theme of the rebellion of single individuals; p. 210.

\textsuperscript{22} G. Brovman, "Izmereniia malogo mira." Literaturnaiia gazeta, March 8, 1972. For a sampling of the criticism Trifonov received, see also V.I. Ozerov, "Literaturno-khudozhestvennaia kritika i sovremennost'," Voprosy literatury, No. 4, 1972; V. Sokolov, "Rasscheplenie obydennosti,' Vop. lit. 2, 1972 and Literatura i sovremennost' 12, 1973; M. Sinei'nikov, "Ispytanie povsednevnosti'iu: nekotorye itogi," Vop. lit. 22, 1972. Trifonov had his defenders, chief among them Bocharov and Anninskii.

\textsuperscript{23} See L. Libedinskaia, "Iliuzii i real'nost'," Lit. gaz. 14, 1973, V. Smirnova, "Lichnaia zhizn'...," Lit. rossiaia 16, 1973, and Iu. Idashkin, "Nesostoivshiisia variant," Oktiabr' 8,
Trifonov was too "disinterested," that he failed explicitly to condemn the moral flaws of his characters.\textsuperscript{24}

One "Aesopian" aspect of the works which may have eluded the watchdogs—or to which, at least, they do not refer—is the way Trifonov encloses the action in specific time-frames, like book-ends.\textsuperscript{25} The Exchange, for instance, is bounded on one end by May 1954, the month when Dmitriev and Lena courted and married and which is recalled in flashback; the other boundary is August 1968, the month of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the intervening years, as Patera correctly observes, not merely Dmitriev's family but the whole country has "oluk'ianilos'"—become Lukia-1973. For an interesting discussion of this issue see Xenia Gasiorowska, "Two Decades of Love and Marriage in Soviet Fiction," Russian Review Jan. 1975.

\textsuperscript{24} A contemporary of Trifonov's, the novelist I. Grekova, recently wrote that she too was attacked for 'over-objectivity:' "Critics accused me of a 'dotted-line manner', 'indistinctiveness' [sic] and worst of all--'the absence of an explicit stance of the author' which at the time was a tag fraught with dire consequences for a writer." Moscow News, No. 24, 1987; p. 11. Even Anninskii faulted Trifonov for what amounts to moral fence-sitting, although Anninskii's rationale was sophisticated and couched in aesthetic rather than political terms: "In such an artistic context authorial uncertainty leads to the destruction of the metaphorical structure [...] k razrusheriiu obraznoi struktury..." "Neokonchatel'nye itogi: o trekh povestikh Iuriia Trifonova." Don, 5/1972, p. 191. In 1977 Anninskii repeated this idea: "Iurii Trifonov's stories are written in the kind of assured and consistent style that suggests decisive resolution of problems. In such an artistic context authorial uncertainty can cheapen [obestsenit'] everything." "Intelligenti i prochie," p. 226.

\textsuperscript{25} See Lev Loseff, On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature (Munich: 1984). Although his only direct reference to Trifonov occurs in connection with the story "Golubinaia gibel'," his analysis of Aesopian language is very useful.
novized, adopted the selfish, materialist values of Lena's parents. The indifference—indeed incomprehension—Lena's parents manifest toward Dmitriev's grandfather, embodiment of revolutionary idealism, is indicative of Soviet society's indifference toward its own history (a theme which became continually more prominent in Trifonov's work). The trepidations experienced by Soviet citizens when Stalin died is touched on at the end of Last Goodbye, when Grisha is running away from Moscow: an unspecified death occurs, people speak in whispers, and the scene concludes with the question, "Will it be different now?" Though Stalin's death did, indeed, make things "different," by 1969 the message emanating from official quarters was that the Stalinist chapter was to be considered closed. It must have seemed futile to wait for any official reexamination of the Soviet past and its influence on contemporary Soviet society. Indeed, while Trifonov's work suggests that he was slow to move from the present to the Stalin years, and slow to see beyond them—slower perhaps than many of his peers, either from calculation or from genuine uncertainty—once begun, he steadily pursued the threads from the present backward, back to Stalin's death, back to the anticosmopolitan campaign, back to the Terror, back to the Civil War and its terror, both White and Red.

Before the four books of the 1970s in which Trifonov examined that past he wrote one long novel, Impatience [Neterpenie], a treatment of the idealistic young radicals of the 1870s and 1880s. Though the book, part of a series on the Russian revolu-
tionary tradition, was probably written mainly for financial and political reasons, and shows little of Trifonov's usual flair, the People's Will movement it portrays was of deep interest to him. A few years later, in The Old Man, Trifonov returned to the question of how and why idealists become terrorists, and the moral dilemma involved in choosing to pursue terrorist tactics. From examining political and private morality in the "safer" context of Impatience, Trifonov came to the far more recent past in Another Life, The Old Man, House on the Embankment and Time and Place.

Another Life is the most "private" of the four late works, and deals with the grieving process undergone by Ol'ga Vasilievna when her historian husband, Sergei, dies at the age of only 42. Again Trifonov seems to have had little trouble with the censors (and/or editors) in publishing Another Life; again his work

26 Trifonov also discussed this in an article on Dostoevskii, in which he distinguished between Nechaev, and Nechaev's definition of morality as whatever helps the revolution, and Andrei Zheliabov and the People's Will members, who despite their final resorting to acts of terrorism were horrified by the possibility that bystanders might die. Nechaev's sole program, he wrote, was destruction, while the narodniki did not reject a Christian understanding of goodness, comradeship, etc. "Zagadka i providenie Dostoevskogo." Novyi mir, 11/81. Reprinted under the title "Nechaev, Verkhovenskii i drugie..." in Kak slovo nashe otzovetsia, M : 1985.

27 Mrs. Trifonov expressed the view that in Another Life Trifonov incorporated both his own experience of grief, after his first wife died, and that of the woman he was living with in the early 1970s, herself a young widow.

28 For a sensitive explanation of how the function of editor overlaps with that of censor in modern Soviet literary history, see Dewhirst and Farrell, eds., The Soviet Censorship (Metuchen, N.J.: 1973), especially pp. 50-95.
provoked a lively debate. For some critics Sergei is an attractive, appealing seeker-after-truth, an historian who suffers as a result of his unwillingness to compromise, and whose death is caused at least in part by the stresses and pressures to which his morally more elastic colleagues subject him.29 Others, Bocharov among them, consider Sergei weak and passive, an infantile character. Bocharov judges Sergei severely, regarding what many consider Sergei's "integrity" as a kind of passivity, an unwillingness to engage in the grubby reality of ordinary life; he considers such private or individual integrity inadequate and even meaningless if it is devoid of a social context.30

Another Life is pivotal for several reasons. It is not the first Trifonov work whose hero is interested in history: Grisha Rebrow in Long Goodbye, for instance, has a passion for history, but his research is limited both by the times he lives in and by what, in 1971, Trifonov himself was prepared to examine in his work. It is, however, the first of his heroes for whom the past consciously forms and informs his life in the present, which will

29 Ivanova characterizes Sergei as "samyi svetlyi obraz" in the whole pantheon of Trifonov's heroes. When I asked why, she adduced his internal purity, his determination "dokopat'sia do dnia, do kontsa," and his probable inability to betray anyone.

30 Bocharov expounded his view in "Vremia kristallizatsii." Voprosy literatury, 3/76. (He continues to hold the same view ten years later, when I challenged some of his points in conversation in October 1986.) The novelist Vladimir Dudintsev, on the other hand, who also dislikes the character of Sergei (and all the other characters too) wrote a remarkably wrong-headed essay on the work: see "Stoit li umirat' ran'she vremeni," Literaturnoe obozrenie, 4/76.
be true for all subsequent Trifonov protagonists. Sergei is an historian by profession, and his profession both shapes and grows out of his character. His understanding of virtually everything is conditioned by his conception of the past and of the individual as the thread stretching from the past into the future. Moreover, the problems he has at his institute are directly related to his view of history and his refusal to compromise his own research.

Second, Another Life employs Trifonov's only female narrator, and uses that female narrative vision to manipulate the image of Sergei and the way the work's moral dilemmas are presented. In my view Trifonov for the first time exploits a network of narrative personae in Another Life to render authorial judgment on both characters and society while avoiding direct comment. In the conflict of worldviews between Ol'ga and Sergei, Trifonov understands and transmits Ol'ga's views, while fundamentally siding with Sergei. Ivanova illuminates the way in which the confessing consciousness, in this case Ol'ga Vasilievna's, becomes the expression of the author's ethical position as well. For her willingness to try to understand the past, and her role in it,

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Ivanova points out the complex layering of narrative voice in The Campfire's Glow, and I agree with her triple-division: dispassionate quasi-epic narrator, through whose voice historical truth is imparted; lyric voice of the son; elevated, highly colored voice which stands above the events, the epic narration and the lyric attitude; see pp. 92-93. But the texture of these voices and their interplay is not used for judgment, as the criss-crossing of voices in Another Life is.
Trifonov rewards his heroine with a new love and a new life.\(^{32}\)

Third, Another Life is the first exercise in what one critic calls "remembrance-contemplations" [vospominaniiia-razmyshleniia], the genre to which all the rest of Trifonov's work belongs. In the Moscow trilogy isolated flashbacks were interpolated into the main text primarily as a way of recalling times of greater innocence. In Another Life past and present are melded as a way of presenting reality through the prism of time itself: "not childhood, but the recollection of childhood, not love but the memory of love, not mistakes but their retrospective analysis.\(^{33}\)

Indeed, in the works which follow Another Life the past becomes the subject of the author as well as, in The Old Man and Time and Place, of the hero.\(^{34}\) The past is sometimes excavated in a process Sergei dubs "grave-robbing;" sometimes discerned under the layers of a palimpsest;\(^{35}\) the present may be relatively un-

\(^{32}\) The title of the novella was interpreted in wildly different ways by critics: see, for instance, N.N. Shneidman, "Iurii Trifonov and the Ethics of Contemporary Soviet City Life," Canadian Slavic Papers, v. 19, 1977, p. 341; Bocharov, "Vremia kris-tallizatsii," p. 47; Ivanova, p. 187; Mrs. Trifonov considers the heroine's "new life" the one false note in Trifonov's "masculine" depiction of a feminine persona: no woman, she feels, would be ready for a new man so soon after a beloved husband's death.

\(^{33}\) L. Sozonova, "Vnutri kruga," Lit. obozrenie 5, 1976; p. 53.

\(^{34}\) In Igor' Dedkov's words, Trifonov in his late works could no longer even describe the present without the past: "Trifonov could no longer [write] without the verticals: the pure present had ceased to exist for him." Dedkov, "Vertikali Iuriia Trifonova," p. 231.

\(^{35}\) Ivanova points out that Sergei's methods of investigation are anathema to adherents of a determinist [read: Marxist] approach to history. His insistence on "searching out the threads" and "grave robbing" are a means of demythologizing history,
important, as in *House on the Embankment*, or it may be almost as important as the past, as in *The Old Man*. But in every one of Trifonov's later works, including the autobiographical stories of *Overturned House*, the past of his society is presented in a much more complex relationship to the characters' lives than in the coded presentations of the earlier works, even *Another Life*.36 Recreation of everyday life, refreshingly realistic in Trifonov's early work, becomes an aesthetic means rather than an end in itself, not simply the context of his characters' choices but part of the choices themselves, part too of his characters' psyches. Modern Soviet urban society becomes the topsoil of his fiction, shifted aside, spadeful by spadeful, to lay bare its roots in the past.

As Trifonov became more consciously certain that the past was integral to the present, he became bolder in his treatment of Soviet history. What are only hints, even in the Moscow novellas, of the corrosively fearful Stalin years became, in *House on the Embankment*, a full-fledged examination of a Stalinist. His perturbation about the relationship between desirable goals and political expedience, between the degree of free choice and

liberating its true image from layers of greasepaint; p. 101.

36 Patera has been the most diligent decoder of Trifonov's historical references and allusions; by comparing editions of different years she has inferred, from textual differences, differing demands imposed by the censors and--by extension--the times. In *Another Life*, for instance, she explicates the time-frame of Sergei and Ol'ga's courtship, spring and summer of 1953, which is couched by Trifonov in deliberately vague language. See pp. 230-32ff.
individual responsibility and the sweep of historical momentum, took him from gingerly and sidelong allusions to the years of revolution and civil war (even as late as Another Life) to a painful confrontation with the reality created by, as well as in despite of, admirable ideals. In House on the Embankment Trifonov returns to the themes of Students—to the anticosmopolitan campaign, to conformity and the price it exacts, and to the "little men" on which Stalinism depended.

II

When House on the Embankment appeared in 1976, speculation was intense: how was Trifonov able to publish a work which exposed the moral cowardice of those who actively or passively abetted the Stalinists?37 One rumored explanation at the time gave credit to Sergei Baruzdin, editor of Druzhba narodov: supposedly he was very ill and didn't care about the consequences. Moreover, since Druzhba narodov was generally regarded as a conservative journal, "maybe Glavlit...doesn't look so closely at this magazine as at Novyi mir." An emigre who claimed to be on the staff of Druzhba narodov at the time has written that the publication of House on the Embankment was in the nature of a fluke: it was, he reports, a last-minute substitute for a more controversial manuscript.

37 Western correspondents at the time wrote that the issue of Druzhba narodov containing House sold out at the kiosks almost instantly, and was available on the book black market for grossly inflated prices. See, for instance, Peter Osnos, "Coping with the System," The Guardian (June 11, 1976) and Robert Toth, "New Novel Exalting Passivity Stirs a Controversy in Russia," Int'l. Herald Tribune (May 25, 1976, reprinted from L.A. Times, May 24, 1976). Toth added that the relevant issue was removed from library stacks in "at least two suburban towns."
about the construction of the Moscow Metro which the censors blocked at the last minute. Mrs. Trifonov offered the rather inadequate explanation that "the censor liked" House. The most likely explanation combines luck and timing, the shrewdness of Baruzdin and the force of external circumstances: several sources agree that the emigration and/or expulsion of what was by 1976 a substantial number of the most prominent artistic figures of the Soviet cultural world increased pressure on the authorities to keep those whom they could; Trifonov, who had never been an open dissident, was a likely candidate. Although House was--accord-

38 Iurii Iurenen, Radio Liberty Research Report 244/85. Various Moscow sources, including Natal'ia Ivanova who is now the poetry editor of Druzhba narodov, said that Iurenen's story was implausible, and that he had had only a tenuous relationship with the journal at the relevant time. The editor-in-chief, Sergei Baruzdin, was unfortunately in hospital during most of my stay in Moscow so I was unable to ask him directly.

39 During another conversation I speculated that perhaps the censor saw himself in the character of Glebov, whose moral cowardice is depicted with what can be construed as some degree of compassion, and she agreed that it was possible.

40 It became clear from many conversations with members of the Moscow literary establishment, as well as with emigres, that there is often no particular explanation for the appearance of a controversial and unexpected work. Decisions of censors and editors are sometimes so arbitrary that most people whom I asked about this would mentally shrug, reluctant even to speculate. The consensus was that Trifonov was very lucky in having Baruzdin's patronage, as well as very clever in himself manipulating an establishment whose rules he had, through most of his literary career, obeyed. But the question was of far less interest to those I asked and, I was persuaded, is far less important, than what Trifonov did within House and his other late works. Mrs. Trifonov commented that the publication of House was of great importance to Trifonov, and freed him to write The Old Man, which he produced very quickly. Had House been severely censored or totally blocked, she thought he might not have continued to pursue his investigation of Soviet history, for it would have seemed a professional dead end.
ing to Mrs. Trifonov--published in Druzhba narodov without any changes imposed by the censors, obstacles were thrown up to its publication in book form and Trifonov had to fight hard to get even the small edition which finally appeared (a print-run of 30,000 instead of the usual 100,000 or even 200,000.)

The publication of House may also owe something to Trifonov's mode of story-telling. As Trifonov became more probing thematically, he coupled his historical consciousness with a skillful manipulation of narrative voices that enabled him, in between the lines of his prose, to render judgment on the behavior and choices of his characters. What sometimes confused readers (and critics) accustomed to explicit praise and condemnation may even have begun as a means of obfuscating his censors, but in all of Trifonov's mature fiction his interweaving of narrative personae served an aesthetic as well as ethical function, allowing the author to stand back yet make known his own opinions and forcing the reader to become a participant, juror and judge, defendant and prosecutor. Insisting that the past is knowable, Trifonov at the same time insists on its complexity, resisting intellectually the determinism of Marxist analysis and, artistically, the certitude of a single omniscient narrator.

Certainly the appearance of House on the Embankment provoked a vociferous reaction, much of it negative. At a session of the

41 The two-volume collection of selected works which appeared in 1978, and which contains every major work except House on the Embankment, was published in a print-run of 100,000; the 1980 single volume containing The Old Man and Another Life came out in 200,000 copies.
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Writers Union held in April 1976, the novella was branded "ideological subversion." In the press the attack on Trifonov was led by Literaturnaia gazeta; on the one hand he was berated for implicitly condemning the comfortable life led by high officials: "these famous people deserved to have such a comfortable life;" on the other hand he was attacked for his "over-objectivity," for merely "showing that life without drawing any conclusions." Critics were quick to notice the relationship between House and Students, though they were not always so quick to understand it. There are obvious parallels between the two works, such as the transparent transformation of the name of Students' hero, Vadim Belov, into its virtual anagram Vadim Glebov, and the identical time and place of the main conflict—indeed, virtually the identical conflict, between the prevailing politico-literary dogma and the professor who comes under attack. Vadim Kozhinov, a critic hostile to Trifonov, notices the many parallels yet speculates that Trifonov may have rewritten Students "completely uncon-

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42 For insights into the sources of acceptance of the affluence of the "new class," see Dunham, chapter 3.

43 Iu. Surovtsev, "Sotsialisticheskii obraz zhizni i literatura," Lit. gaz. June 9, 1976. N. Klado, in one of the pieces criticizing Trifonov for dwelling on byt without articulating a clear authorial stance, offered a not atypical comment: "Only through authorial position, through the author's evaluation of what is being portrayed can the responsible social tendency [grazhdanskaia napravlennost'] of a work of art, its moral and social significance, appear." "Prokrustovo lozhe byta" [The Procrustean Bed of Byt], Lit. gaz., May 12, 1976.
Kozhinov faults Trifonov for failing to deal with his own younger self, by which he means failing explicitly to condemn Glebov; he would like a literal rejection of the positive hero Trifonov created (and admired) in Students. Kozhinov asserts that by avoiding such condemnation--by purportedly allying his own author's voice with Glebov's--Trifonov in effect fails to exculpate his guilt for joining the campaign against Kozel'skii, the besieged professor of Students. As a number of Soviet critics have noted, Kozhinov does not distinguish Trifonov's voice from the voice of his characters, hence he fails to see that Glebov's wish and ability to forget the past is abhorrent to Trifonov. Nor does Kozhinov recognize that Trifonov, by eliciting his reader's sympathy for Glebov while at the same time making quite clear that Glebov's actions are morally reprehensible, offers a far more subtle judgment than the black-and-white simplifications Kozhinov asks for. One of the sharpest rebukes to Kozhinov came from V. Pertsovskii, who calls Kozhinov's piece

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44 "Problema avtora i put' pisatelia," Kontekst 1977 (M: 1978); Stat'i o sovremennoi literature (M: 1982). At the meeting referred to above (fn. 14) Kozhinov delivered what could only be called a diatribe against Trifonov as a fourth-rate purveyor of popular literature, stylistically impoverished (indistinguishable from, for instance, Il'ia Erenburg) and incapable of comprehending Russian philosophers. (His stress on "Russian" was unmistakable, and all the inferior writers whom Trifonov supposedly resembles were Jewish.)

45 "The beleaguered middle-aged professor multiplied in fiction. For, in the terrible last years of Stalin's life, entirely nonfictional intellectuals swelled the ranks of those behind barbed wires. And fiction, no matter how false, optimistic, and obfuscating, kept pointing by reflex to the victims." Dunham, p. 206.
"the apogee of misunderstanding of Trifonov," and points out that the clearcut positive and negative characterizations of Students have been replaced, in the work of the mature Trifonov, by a far more complex and subtle depiction of Glebov as a social, living type.\textsuperscript{46} Ivanova also disputes Kozhinov's conclusion that because Trifonov doesn't "correct" Glebov's opinions explicitly, the reader derives the impression that Trifonov's voice is identical with Glebov's. She rightly observes that Glebov's words and thoughts are not "corrected" [in the sense of shown to be wrong] by the author's voice but by Glebov's own actions and behavior, as they are objectively depicted.\textsuperscript{47} And the perceptive Evgenii Shklovskii comments that Students is the book which gave Trifonov his horror of cliches and cliche-ridden thoughts; as a result of Students he avoided taking upon himself the role of judge and moralist.\textsuperscript{48}

If the relationship between Students and House on the Embankment, however problematic it may be, illustrates the maturation

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\textsuperscript{46} "'Avtorskaia pozitsiia' v literature i kritike." Vop. lit., 7/1981. "By posing the question of the artistic expression of the authorial position, V. Kozhinov graphically shows how not to analyze that position in critical practice." Fn., pp. 102-103.
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\textsuperscript{47} Ivanova, pp. 231-234. She offers a convincing interpretation of the relationship between Students and House, writing that Trifonov does not merely "overcome" [preodolevaet] his earlier self, he overcomes that "image of the time which ... dictated the cruelty of judgment and demanded from the author above all passing sentence." [Tot obraz vremeni diktoval zhestkost' otsenok, ot avtora trebovalsia prezhde vsego prigovor.] (pp. 26-27)
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\textsuperscript{48} "Fenomen zhizni," Literaturnoe obozrenie, 4/86.
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of Trifonov as a writer and his greater skill in creating a nuanced portrayal of the nexus of choice, fate and circumstance in moral decisions, the relationship between House on the Embankment and The Old Man gives evidence of Trifonov's growing certainty that the ability to betray is closely linked with the willingness to forget, ignore and distort the past. In the later novel Trifonov probes the choices made and attitudes evinced in the years of revolution and civil war which gave birth first to the monstrosity of Stalinism examined in the earlier work, and then to the anomie characteristic of modern Soviet society. House on the Embankment exposes the mentality of one of the props of Stalinism, without which that system could not have survived; The Old Man, whose hero is the old man of the title, investigates the men and ideas of Leninism and their heirs in today's Soviet Union. The Stalinist years exist as a persistent subtext for the reader, but are not part of the direct action of the novel.

One way of dealing with the past is by ignoring it. The protagonist of House on the Embankment, Vadim Glebov, attempts to do precisely that. In the modern Moscow of the first few chapters Glebov is shown to be a privileged member of the Soviet elite, with a dacha in the country and permission to travel to Western countries. A chance meeting with an old friend, whom he at first barely recognizes, and their subsequent conversation over the phone late that night spark the journey into the past that constitutes the bulk of House. The action is set primarily in two epochs: the mid-1930s, culminating in the wave of terror which
affected most directly Party members; and the late 1940s, culminating in the anticosmopolitan campaign. The central event of each period is an act of betrayal committed by Glebov, directly linked by Trifonov with Glebov's willful amnesia. In the first instance the 11-year-old Glebov is called upon to betray the names of boys involved in beating up the stepson of a high level NKVD man, in return for help for his arrested uncle. He does so out of a mixture of motives which render him almost sympathetic. In part he is afraid that silence will harm his Uncle Volodia, and in part he is desperate to get away before his rumbling stomach humiliates him with a loud belch. Naming two boys whom he dislikes, "He told himself this was quite fair, because those who would be punished were bad." (p. 231) Within a few days he manages to overcome the bad taste of betrayal, reassuring himself that nothing terrible happened to them.

This is Glebov's first betrayal. It is one conditioned by the atmosphere of the times, which Trifonov carefully delineates, not in order to exculpate Glebov but in order to portray the circumstances that influenced his actions. For Trifonov is depicting a symbiosis: the way Stalinism created men like Glebov, and way it depended on and was sustained by men like Glebov. As he told an East German journalist in 1979, in an interview subsequently re-

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49 For ease of reference, all page numbers within the text refer to the English translation of House on the Embankment, which appeared in a volume together with Another Life (N.Y.: 1983), tr., Michael Glenny. On occasion I have modified his translations, and sometimes, when the Russian is particularly important, I have included the original text in brackets following the quotation.
printed in the Soviet Union. "Of course a man resembles his era. But at the same time he is to some degree—however insignificant his influence may appear—the creator of that era. It's a dual process." The Soviet critic A. Demidov, writing about the dramatization of House on the Embankment performed at the Taganka theater, echoes Trifonov's thought: "Every man is both a mirror of nature and a mirror of the flaws and merits of his age which...as it forms people, also forms itself by their actions." Trifonov combines the child's recognizable, forgivable fear of embarrassing himself with a self-serving kind of calculation that implies moral cowardice. Glebov himself, we learn, was one of the ring-leaders of the attack, though typically he stood aside and let others do the actual fighting. Raised in the shadow—literal and metaphoric—of the looming house on the Embankment, envious and resentful of the power he imputes to its occupants, and enveloped by a miasma of fear in which sensible adults avoid any kind of conspicuous behavior, the 11-year-old Vad'ka Glebov has already internalized the value of advantageous connections and the logic of taking the easiest way out of a tricky situation.

Glebov's culpability in betraying his friends is mitigated in part by his youth, in part by the fact that he is being made use

50 "Roman s istoriei: Beseda s Iu. Trifonovym." Voprosy literatury (Moscow), 5/1982; p. 67. This is the slightly abridged translation of an interview given to Rolf Schroeder, which was published in Weimarer Beiträge, 8/1981; Schroeder describes that interview in "Moi god eshche ne nastupil," Literaturnoe obozrenie (Moscow), 8/1987, pp. 96-98.

51 "Minuvshee," Teatr (Moscow), 7/81; p. 100-101.
of (in ways he doesn't understand, for as a child he is still in part an innocent) by his vulnerable parents. Our own negative assessment of Glebov's behavior results less from the denunciation than from his self-exoneration: "...when Glebov feels that he had behaved correctly and 'said the truth about bad people,' and when 'the sense of having betrayed someone' bothers him only for a few days we begin to distance ourselves."52 Moreover, from the point of view of one of the betrayed boys, something "terrible" does happen: he ends up having to leave his home.

But Glebov is not longer a child at the time of his second betrayal, in the spring of 1948. The air is rank with slogans: "petty bourgeois tendencies," "excessive admiration for foreign scholars," "toadyism" [nizkopoklonstvo]. The campaign gets underway at Glebov's institute with attacks on one instructor for knowing only "literary" language, not the alleged "language of the people". In these battles of the anticosmopolitan campaign, politics and ideas are not the real issues: power is. Despite the veneer of ideological jargon, it is clear that at stake is less principle than vengeance, thinly-veiled, and that the power is shifting from those who were in the ascendancy immediately after the war to a new group, their erstwhile subordinates.

This time Glebov betrays Professor Ganchuk, a man who is at once his dissertation advisor, his mentor and his future father-in-law. When Glebov is called in to the director's office he does

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what he did as a child: he takes what seems to be the easiest way out, agreeing to apply for another supervisor for his dissertation. He thus accedes to his own involvement.\textsuperscript{53}

What Glebov does not understand—what he chooses not to understand—in his attempts to manoeuver this way and that vis-a-vis the anti-Ganchuk campaign is that once the decision to get rid of Ganchuk is made, the "grounds" and the "proof" will be found. His inquisitors are trained to sniff out the particulars of any heterodoxy: hidden Freudianism, camouflaged Menshevism, inattentiveness to class struggle.\textsuperscript{54} Glebov can be under no illusion, except one he willfully chooses to believe, that the matter is unimportant: it may "in truth" be idiotic and trivial, but "in reality" it is serious and fateful for Ganchuk. Since Glebov at some level understands this full well, he then attempts to convince himself that Ganchuk, like the "bad boys" 12 years ear-

\textsuperscript{53} Trifonov ironically (and judgmentally) paraphrases Glebov's thoughts: "If only he had known where it would all lead! But in some things Glebov was a little slow-witted, lacking in foresight..." Glebov has many qualities, but dullness and lack of calculation are not among them.

\textsuperscript{54} Aleksandr Gershkovich, in his description of rehearsals for the production of \textit{House on the Embankment} staged by Iurii Liubimov at the Taganka Theater, quotes Liubimov's directions to the actors in preparing for the scene of the meeting: "What cosmopolitanism is you must not explain. In the few minutes you're given you couldn't explain it anyway. Nor in hours, for that matter. But that's not our job anyway. You hold forth at the meeting, make speeches, throw around slogans, pin labels: 'We must strike!','Finish them off!','Tear it out by the roots!','Wipe it off the face of the earth!','Scoundrel!','Spy!','Foreigner!'—that's your entire vocabulary." \texttt{[udarit', pokonchit', iskorenit', smesti s litsa zemli, vreditel', agent, bespasportnyi, bezrodnnyi]} \textit{Teatr na Taganke (1964-1984)} (Benson, Vermont: 1986); p. 22.
lier, deserves what is going to happen. There is no real difference, he wants to think, between the way Ganchuk behaved when he was a Chekist without "hesitation or pity," and the way his adversaries are behaving now, no difference between his calumny of former opponents and the calumny now directed at him, other than the fact that Ganchuk's days of ruthlessness and cruelty are over. Does it matter that Ganchuk and his revolutionary peers acted in the name of ideals in which they sincerely believed, while the current crop of vigilantes are impelled by careerism, ambition or fear? If the result is, in both cases, that innocent people suffer, what distinctions can fairly be drawn?

Glebov puzzles over this for a long time, oblivious to its irrelevant to his own moral dilemma. He is not being asked to judge, to the best of his ability, Ganchuk's merits or flaws, he is being asked to participate in a kangaroo court. And he knows it: he considers the attack on Ganchuk a "sickening business."

Yet he manages to reassure himself with a combination of self-deceit and evasion, pretending that the fellowship he'll receive for testifying against Ganchuk is valuable less financially than for the "moral boost" it will provide him, pretending not to understand that failure to act is quite as meaningful as "active" action. His bitterest complaint is not that he has been asked to inform on Ganchuk, but that he has been told to do so at a meeting where others can hear him and will condemn him: "They didn't mean, 'Say your piece'--they meant 'smear yourself with shit.' Come to the meeting and pour shit over yourself in
Trifonov makes sure to show that there are, in fact, genuine options among which to choose, by offering a range of characters similar in age and status to Glebov, who react in a variety of ways, from completely corrupt cynicism to valorous (and, in the circumstances, possibly self-destructive) loyalty. Trifonov allows Glebov to think through the alternatives in a narrative passage that mimics Glebov's thought processes: reading it, we understand both what he thinks and how he thinks. Glebov knows that Ganchuk is fundamentally different from those who are out to destroy him: as Ivanova writes, "Ganchuk is far from being a positive hero for Trifonov. But his opponents...are poison." So he must find an argument to justify his own betrayal, and what he comes up with is that nothing he can do will matter anyway: to try to save Ganchuk would be like "swimming against a current that carries everything before it" (p. 487) It is a reassurance that we hear time and again from Trifonov's characters, from the Glebovs, but also from much better men than Glebov. Metaphor obscures the real dilemma they face: history becomes a flood, "the times" become a flow of lava, an airstream, a current. Such images, with their connotations of overwhelming force and concomitant human helplessness, comfort the individuals who use them. Yet although there may be some truth to them, Trifonov insists that they are first and foremost excuses, justifications.

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55 Ivanova, p. 224.
and that they simply won't do.\textsuperscript{56}

Glebov depends on self-deception; he also depends on forgetting. Having made his choice, Glebov's method of survival is to forget. He tries hard to forget his meeting with Ganchuk's main defender eight years later, when his guilt produces a physical rage so intense he nearly strangles him. He tries equally hard to forget Ganchuk's wife's frozen white face when they meet after she has been fired. She dies soon afterward. Most of all he tries to forget his betrayal of Ganchuk's daughter, the entirely innocent, wholly victimized Sonya. His credo is, "Whatever one didn't remember ceased to exist." But as the meeting which opens House on the Embankment reveals, that is not quite true. Glebov prospers, but at the cost of rejecting his own past, which means rejecting what was good or potentially good in him.

"Having Remembered All There Is To Remember..."

The Old Man continues and amplifies many of the same themes central to House on the Embankment, but there are some salient differences. In some ways House is a bolder work within the Soviet context, for it anatomizes a psychology and an era which were virtually taboo in official Soviet literature until quite recently, years after Trifonov's death. On the other hand The Old

\textsuperscript{56} Bocharov comments that unlike the work of Valentin Rasputin and other "village" prosaists, Trifonov's fiction lacks fatalism and the concept of "misfortune" [beda]. The world he portrays is dramatic, fissiparous, concerned with defining itself, and his characters, even when they experience blows of fate, consider themselves tested or on trial; they believe they have choices. "Vetvi odnogo stvola." In Perspektiva o Sovetskoi literatury zrelogo sotsializma. (Moscow: 1983); pp. 368-370.
Man, which examines not the Stalinist years but the years of revolution and Civil War, goes even further, challenging some of the most sacrosanct assumptions about the Bolsheviks and implicitly connecting the Stalinist period with the years (and actions) that preceded it.\textsuperscript{57} If the protagonist of House on the Embankment is intent on forgetting, the protagonist of The Old Man is hellbent on remembering, recovering and recreating the truth of the past. If, in the character of Glebov, Trifonov examines the personal cost of one individual’s amnesia, in The Old Man Trifonov probes the cost of societal amnesia, what happens to a society that forgets or deliberately distorts its past. In The Old Man, as in virtually all of Trifonov’s works, modern Soviet society lacks ideals and idealism; the Moscow creative and technical intelligentsy who populate Trifonov’s fiction are isolated and lonely. The symptoms are clear as early as the Moscow trilogy; in House on the Embankment and The Old Man so are the causes—forgetting the past, not caring what really happened, rewriting history for a whole variety of reasons.

Those reasons may not always be venal or self-serving. Trifonov carefully demonstrates in The Old Man that emotions—jealousy, love, envy, resentment—color, hence distort, even the most honorably-intended exercises of memory. But conscious distortion is another matter, a matter of choice. How and why the past is rewritten and the role of memory in attempting to discern the

\textsuperscript{57} The Old Man does have one revolutionary character who is a kind of positive hero, while the sole quasi-hero of House is killed during the war.
truth about the past are the central questions of The Old Man. Their subtext is tacit but well understood by attentive readers: were the Stalinists heirs of the Leninists or traitors to them? Did the behavior and decisions of the Stalinists in the 1930s and 1940s stem from, or violate, the policies and actions of the Bolsheviks during the Revolution and Civil War?

The centrality of history is staked out from the first page of The Old Man, with the letter the hero receives from his childhood friend Asia Igumnova. In elliptical phrases which the reader doesn't yet understand, she alludes to the key historical moments out of which The Old Man is built: the years of their childhood and adolescence in Petersburg before the revolution; the Civil War and its cruel division of families and friends into opposing sides; terror both White and Red; the trial of Sergei Kirillovich Migulin; the post-Stalin rehabilitation of individuals.

Hard on the heels of the letter, the old man of the title, Pavel Evgrafovich Letunov, joins his family on the veranda of their dacha in the middle of a heated debate on the role of Ivan the Terrible in Russian history. The parallels between Ivan the Terrible and Stalin are clearly intended.58 Pavel Evgrafovich's son-in-law, Nikolai Erastovich, defends Ivan the Terrible on three grounds: historical context, political expediency and

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58 It is a very plausible irony that Pavel Evgrafovich is absorbed in the Soviet past, furious at his family's lack of interest in it and obsessed with the relationship of ends and means, yet he can't see the point of "arguing about tsars;" he thinks his son and son-in-law are really interested only in besting each other.
national interest. The times were bloody all over Europe at the time, he says, and Ivan was no worse than other monarchs of that period. The goal of expanding the Russian empire justified the warfare necessary to achieve it; Ivan "did a great deal for Russia" \(\text{beskonechno mnogo}\) (p. 12).\(^{59}\) Letunov’s son Ruska shouts that historical context is double-edged: it may have been a time of carnage but it was also the time of the Renaissance and Michelangelo. The new territories weren’t worth gaining at the cost of so much bloodshed, and Ivan the Terrible’s true legacy was the division of Russia’s population into butchers and victims, a total corruption of the nation.\(^{60}\) Finally, when Ruska mentions Ivan’s flight during the Tatar invasion, the reader cannot help but think of Stalin’s behavior on June 22, 1941.

Thus from the very outset The Old Man shows itself to be a

\(^{59}\) For ease of reference, all page numbers within the text refer to the English translation of The Old Man (N.Y.: 1984); trs., Jacqueline Edwards and Mitchell Schneider. On occasion I have modified their translation; when the Russian is particularly important, the original text follows the quotation in brackets.

\(^{60}\) Herman Ermolaev notes that by paralleling French revolutionary terror with Bolshevik terror, Trifonov implies that Bolshevik tyranny is rooted not in the character of the Russian people (i.e., Ivan the Terrible) but in the revolutionary class approach that resulted in the human destruction caused by the Jacobin dictators. ("Proshloe i nastoiashchee v 'Starike' Iuriia Trifonova." Russian Language Journal, 128, 1983; p. 133) Ivanova puts the Ivan debate in the context of modern Soviet historiography. She cites the work of S.B. Veselovskii and others who chide the revisionists--those who regard Ivan as the repentant tsar--for arrogantly assuming that they, carriers of enlightenment, are the first to understand Ivan correctly. She continues: "A major Trifonov theme is developed in the argument about Ivan: can a man’s actions be justified by the times? That is--can one hide behind the times, and then, when they have passed, fail to reckon with them [s nimi ‘ne zdorovat’sia’], as the resourceful Glebov proposes?"; p. 240.
novel built on and out of the past, out of what are, broadly speaking, the two central experiences of Soviet history, Bolshevism and Stalinism. Yet the wish to remember and understand the past, a concern whose primacy Trifonov insists on both for its own sake and for the sake of understanding and creating a desirable present, is by no means a central concern of all the characters. In the present of the novel—that is, in Moscow and the dacha colony in 1973—very few of the characters take much interest in the past. Even in the Civil War period which Pavel Evgrafovich recalls and relives, knowledge of history and personal memory are highly selective.

III

The historian John Lewis Gaddis, in a review of several books on the history of the cold war, characterized what he termed the "schizoid activity" of writing history:

It involves imposing upon the past, but also stripping away from it, layers of retrospective interpretation. It aims to reconstruct "what actually happened", but it goes about this in apparently contradictory ways: by allowing preoccupations of the present to determine what we find relevant from the past, so that history becomes a device for explaining how we got to where we are; but also by rejecting such "presentism" on grounds that those who made history can hardly have had our concerns uppermost in their minds when they did so. To say that the past affects the present but that the present affects only our perception of the past is to point out an obvious asymmetry.61

If for Trifonov, by the time he was writing *House on the Embankment* and *The Old Man*, the pure present had ceased to exist,

the same is true for the protagonist, the old man himself. For Pavel Evgrafovich Letunov the past is far more meaningful than a present filled with unhappy children squabbling over incomprehensible and uninteresting problems, and indifferent to the past. The most openly contemptuous attitude is represented by—indeed incarnated in—the character of Kandaurov, the "iron boy" [zheleznyi malysh] familiar to Trifonov readers from virtually every one of his works. He is the prototypical pragmatist whose definition of "good" is whatever serves his interests, and who lives by the precept of doing everything "to the limit," [do upora]. Kandaurov lives exclusively in the present. We know nothing about his background or family both because he is self-creating and because as soon as the present becomes the past he discards it.

Kandaurov is not a monster; in some ways he is even likable. He is far from stupid, shrewd enough to know when and how to use influence, money, curses, threats and flattery to get what he wants; only rarely does he miscalculate, because he assumes that other people are like himself and he is not wrong too often. He is insensitive and he lies as a matter of course, not only to avoid unpleasantness but because he doesn't believe there is such as thing as objective truth. As a pure relativist, he believes only in expedience. Truth, like "good," is a function of circumstance. Thus when Svetlana, his mistress, says at their last meeting, "I envy women men don't lie to," his reply is: "There are no such women."
Because of his all-too-successful attempts to live exclusively in an unanchored present, Kandaurov is a moral cripple living a death-in-life similar to Glebov's in *House on the Embankment*. Ironically, just as he is about to achieve his greatest successes he is dismissed from the novel, struck down by the fate that he always believed he could direct and the chance that he always knew he could manipulate. Since he has jettisoned his past, and is abruptly deprived of a future, his present becomes irrelevant, and he disappears; we know of him at the end only obliquely, through the image of his suffering wife.

Of all those who "forget," Kandaurov is the most extreme, for he is willing entirely to obliterate the past, and his motives are wholly venal. His mother-in-law, Polina, distorts her own past, claiming to have been a "revolutionary activist" when she was only 14 years old in order to get into an old-age home for veterans of the Civil War. Letunov, who is both shocked and amused by her deception, repeats to his grandson Polina's version of her past, exaggerating for the sake of a better story and to hold Viktor's interest. There is nothing terrible or corrupt in this: it's natural, commonplace. But it shows how the past can become distorted even by those who are most concerned with representing it accurately and truthfully.

Then there are the present-day characters who deliberately try to forget the past because of the pain associated with it, most poignant among them Sanka Izvarin. Izvarin is given some of the central experiences of Trifonov's life: Izvarin lived in the
dacha colony as a child and had a German governess; his father vanished in 1937; he and his mother were pushed out of the colony, and his mother died the winter of 1938 (the arrest of Trifonov's mother in 1938 must have seemed a deprivation almost as sudden and total as death for a 12-year-old). For decades Izvarin has repressed the horrible events of 1937/1938; when an old neighbor from the dacha colony phones him he doesn't even remember the name. But as soon as he sees Prikhodko he recognizes him, and "the memories came of their own accord," somehow all the fresher for having been avoided for so long, like clothes packed away in a cedar chest.

Izvarin remembers the little girl Maia who drowned in the river; the departure of the governess Maria Adol'fovna, whom his mother--after his father's arrest--can no longer afford to pay; the dread which so infects this kindly and affectionate woman that she is afraid to visit or contact Izvarin's mother. (Despite her caution she is deported in 1941.) He remembers the Burmin family, who advocated "progressive nudity" with the fanaticism of ideologues ("The bourgeois," said Burmin, "hide their filthy souls beneath their hypocritical clothes." Izvarin's father had contempt for Burmin, but during the Terror it was Izvarin's father who was arrested and Burmin who was "swept up onto the crest of a wave of monstrous force."

Prompted by the sight of Prikhodko's big nose, Izvarin remembers the "dirty trick" Prikhodko "played" on them (the language, like the memory, belongs to the child's time): the grown man had
villified the child Sanka for breaking Ruska Letunov's leg. Ruska's mother never blamed the child for what was obviously an accident. But Prikhodko was a man of the times: "The father sabotaged the job he was on and the son is doing the same thing in his own circle, crippling other children." He remembers his last birthday party in August, shadowed by their imminent eviction from the dacha. The world Izvarin had known and grown up with disappeared forever from the earth that year, "crumbled and collapsed like a sandy bank," and yet what is buried under the collapsed bank still exists, in his memory. He recognizes as much, thinking that "nothing existed independently...nothing ever disappeared completely."

Izvarin does not choose to forget out of disdain for the past. His forgetting is one way of dealing with—if not ever coming to terms with—the trauma of abandonment, of sudden orphanhood, of fatherlessness, which recurs in every one of Trifonov's late works. It is a carapace, meant to protect him from reliving the pain. Izvarin's memory, once activated, is presented as the only version of the events he describes: we are not given Prikhodko's, we are not given Ruska's. Thus it is not open to reinterpret-

62 In an essay on memory Academician D.S. Likhachev puts it succinctly: "Memory opposes the destroying force of time...Memory is the overcoming of time, the overcoming of death..." "Sluzhenie pamiati." Nash sovremennik, 3/83; p. 171.

63 That is true for every version Trifonov wrote of his father's arrest, with the partial exception of the posthumously published The Disappearance [Ischeznoenie], where the father himself is shown waiting for the inevitable. Time and Place, for instance, opens with the confused anger of the child whose father promised to return in time for a parade—and did not return in
ation: this is what happened, nothing else. In the Migulin affair, on the other hand, Asia's memories are presented as one variant "reading," while Letunov's provide another, and documentation provides yet another. There is even a comic variant, the conflicting memories of some old men Letunov interviews.64

"Memory is an unreliable thing," Pavel Evgrafovich thinks to himself as he rereads Asia's letter and compares it with stenographic records of Migulin's trial. In The Old Man what generally makes memory unreliable is emotion, such as Asia's love for Migulin and Letunov's love for Asia, or emotion parading as principle, such as the ideological dedication of most of the Bolshevists.65 The most egregious example is connected with Bychin, revkom [revolutionary committee] chairman of the Mikhailinskaia stanitsa [a large Cossack village] in February, 1919, a time and place of intense fighting. Among the forty or so people Bychin
time for that or anything else. In other words, while Trifonov usually offers multiple points of view on any particular event, to show both its complexity and the distortions imposed by individual memories, he repeatedly presents that central trauma through what amount to his own 11-year-old eyes. It seems that there is, there can be, no other version of that event, no other "reality," than the one he perceived.

64 Many Western writers (Robbe-Grillet, Julian Barnes in Flaubert's Parrot, John Fowles) and a few Soviet authors (notably Andrei Bitov, in Pushkin House) offer multiple variants of an event as a means of showing that the truth is only a matter of interpretation, and essentially unknowable. Trifonov's purpose is different: the truth of the past, which must be known, can be known, carefully extrapolated from a complex bundle of sources.

65 Ideology does not figure in the "present" of Starik. Not even token adherence, not even hypocritical obeisance is paid by a single contemporary character to Marxism, Leninism, Bolshevism or any other -ism. Ideology is, for the people who populate Moscow and its environs in 1973, entirely irrelevant.
arrests as suspected counterrevolutionaries are the two sons of
the schoolteacher Slaboserdov, supposedly "harmful to the revolu-
tion" [Ot nikh revoliutsii vred] (p. 75). Only later do we learn
that behind Bychin's ideological "vigilance" lies a personal
resentment. He wants the sons executed not, in fact, because of
any "harm" they might cause to the revolution but for vengeance:
friends of the Slaboserdov family—not the two boys—had badly
beaten his brother, who had "rumpled up the teacher's daughter in
the garden" [uchitelevu dochku v sadu pomial]. (p. 77) Whether
this was rape, as it sounds, or—as Bychin claims—love (his
brother's revenge for being rejected as a suitor by the family),
it is clear that Bychin's real motives in wishing to get rid of
the Slaboserdovs have much more to do with envy and resentment
than with any real or imagined political disputes.

Ideology screens emotion in the Migulin affair as well.66 The
party's suspicions of Migulin, while to a degree explained by his
disagreements with Bolshevik policies, have more to do with psy-
chology than with politics. They are rooted in mistrust of his
obstinate independence, his Cossack loyalties, his "different-
ness" from the majority of the Bolsheviks, especially the leader-
ship. The emotional factors which shaped perceptions of Migulin,

66 The character of Migulin is based mainly on Filip
Kuzmich Mironov, the Cossack military leader whom Trifonov first
described in The Campfire's Glow. Mironov's name was resurrected
after 45 years' silence in an entry in the Soviet Historical
Encyclopedia in 1966. For a factual account of Mironov's career,
including some of the documents Trifonov cites in The Old Man,
see Roi Medvedev and Sergei Starikov, Philip Mironov and the
Russian Civil War (N.Y.: 1978).
and judgments of his behavior vis-a-vis the Bolshevik high command, in 1919 and 1920, are still evident in both Asia's and Letunov's recreation of those events.

Letunov claims he needs to know why Migulin disregarded orders and set off for the front in August 1919. In fact, however, he seems to answer that question quite satisfactorily. Migulin was driven nearly mad by the mistrust he felt on the part of the Bolshevik leadership; a proven military leader, he could not bear the immobility to which his orders confined him, and was determined to help defeat the Whites. Migulin admits at his trial that his actions were treasonous, insofar as they directly contravened orders; he justifies himself in terms of his lifelong search for justice and his deep concern for his people, the Cossacks, which led him to find the system (and party) which promised the most equitable division of goods and land. In the end he threw in his lot with the Bolsheviks, to whose cause he is genuinely (but not blindly) committed.

The sequence of events, as reconstructed from the documents Letunov has amassed, his own recollections, and Asia's, makes all this reasonably clear. It follows, then, that Letunov needs answers to other questions, at once broader and more personal. He wants first of all to understand himself. Deeply involved in the Migulin affair as secretary of the 1919 tribunal, he has a need to understand his own role in it. As Ivanova writes, "Letunov is convinced that he is investigating the Migulin case, but really he is sorting out the Letunov case." Second, his children and
grandchildren have inherited the Russia that was born then, born as much in Balashova near the Don as in Petrograd or Moscow, as much at Migulin's trial as in the storming of the Winter Palace, as much in Trotsky's articles about Migulin in Pravda as in Lenin's April Theses.

For those people, then, Letunov wants to set the record straight; he believes, in David Malouf's words, that "a people can face the future only when they have fully and imaginatively lived their past," and he wants to bequeath to his children a heritage of truth.\textsuperscript{67} (Pavel Evgrafovich talks of the distortions produced by time and memory; implicit in the text is the legacy of officially sanctioned distortions.) Unavoidably, however, Letunov's unselfish motives are mixed up with his own emotions, his own fears and dreams. Even he, honest though he tries to be, cannot admit the extent to which his memory of Migulin and the trial is colored by his emotions, especially by his old, unrequited love for Asia.

His refusal to give full weight to his love for Asia on a conscious level shifts the conflict into his subconscious, where it takes expression in two nightmares. In one, Letunov confuses Asia with Galia: his Galia is terrified--but not for him; she cries--but not for him; she loves someone boundlessly--but not him. In his second nightmare Letunov sees a man and a woman embracing, recognizes them as Asia and Migulin, and kills Migulin.

with a blow on the head. But even these transparent messages do not overcome Letunov's deep reluctance to admit the power of his emotions to cloud his reason, or to provide an impetus unique to him, different from the elemental forces he does admit and with which he tries to exonerate or at least justify himself. Fifty years after the fact, Asia's rejection—her eternal love for someone else, never for him—still gnaws at him, influencing his memory to an extent that he persists in hiding from himself. Objective circumstances may have "proved" Migulin's treason, the "lava" of history may have blinded the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, it is apparent to the reader that Pavel Evgrafovich believed in Migulin's guilt not, fundamentally, because of the circumstances or the "lava," or, for that matter, because of Migulin's self-incrimination. He believed in it primarily because of Asia.

Indeed, his work is an attempt to cleanse himself of his guilt and to make reparations for the role he played in the past. Yet in remembering those times, Letunov offers two versions of the past that deliver essentially incompatible messages. One version relies heavily on linguistic devices to convey the elemental, anonymous forces that were at work during the Civil War years. The critic Igor' Dedkov points to the prevalence of impersonal

68 Bocharov categorically condemns Letunov for writing the article only when it became permissible. ("Strast' bor'by i igrushechnye strasti," p. 66.) In conversation with Bocharov I raised the point that his judgment was too harsh, since before it "became permissible" it simply was not possible, and that at least Letunov did take advantage of the new climate to write the piece. He agreed: in his article, he said, he had been at pains to distinguish between Letunov's own evaluation of his actions and Trifonov's.
past-tense verbs (smylo, uneslo, utopilo, otrezalos' navsegda, proneslos' mimo, issokhlo, ischakhlo; wiped away, carried off, buried/drowned, cut off forever, carried off, dried up, wasted away) in the portions of the novel dealing with the past.\textsuperscript{69} He and others note the frequency with which the past is compared with one of the elements: tremulous air; flood; froth of blood; volcanic lava; currents of hot and cold wind that sweep individuals along--and away. In such a flood-washed world man is merely a cork tossed about on the waves.\textsuperscript{70}

Yet such metaphors gloss over the responsibility each individual bears and for which he can be held accountable. Dedkov dryly comments that from Letunov's description of why Migulin died—the collision, in a fateful time, of two streams of warmth and cold, of belief and unbelief—one might think no people were involved, that Migulin's death was as inexorable (and unpredictable) as an act of God. And Ivanova points out that Letunov skips over not just his part in the Migulin trial, but two other betrayals: he mentions 1928 and then corrects himself by substituting 1935, thus implying that both years involved betrayal. "Letunov's paradox is the paradox of self-deceit, a form of salvation required for existence but which doesn't suffice for one's conscience.... He was "weak" more than once, three times he denied his conscience."\textsuperscript{71} Trifonov debunks the idea of a passive, blind

\textsuperscript{69} Dedkov, pp. 226-7.
\textsuperscript{70} Dedkov, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{71} Ivanova, p. 254.
subordination to the "lava;" he does not accept the capitulation of the individual, although he does recognize the force of events: "On the one hand the 'arrow' of history could be slightly deflected in its path; on the other the historical process is not infinitely variegated, but singular. On the individual depend both an understanding of the direction of that process and responsible participation in it."\(^7^2\)

Trifonov counters the "elemental forces" of Letunov's memory with the character of Letunov's admirable uncle Shura, who is able to withstand "the flood." More important, he allows a second "version" of the past to undercut evasion of responsibility.\(^7^3\)

This is the past Letunov constructs and reconstructs out of documents he finds in archives and dusty file boxes, "old bits of paper..." which reveal that specific decisions were made by specific individuals, who bear responsibility for them.

In the first part of The Old Man there are virtually no documents. Letunov recounts his memories of the years in Petersburg before and during the revolution, and of events in the Don region, paraphrasing and summarizing speeches and télégrams and

\(^{7^2}\) Ivanova, p. 254.

\(^{7^3}\) N.N. Shneidman minimizes the distinction between the author and his protagonist when he comments, "the reminiscences of Letunov and his analysis of past events could lead the reader to conclusions which are very much in the spirit of Leo Tolstoi's interpretation of history. Man is a blind tool of circumstances. He participates in historical events, deluding himself that he is in possession of the truth, while in reality he is only emotionally attached to a cause without being able to make a rational decision about the real course of events." Soviet Literature in the 1970s, (Toronto, Buffalo, N.Y.: 1977); p. 99.
conversations. In the second half of the novel many of those same incidents are presented via texts. The reader thus has two views of the same episodes. The Bolshevik directives against the Cossacks, for instance, are presented first as Letunov recalls them. His memory minimizes their horror both by picking out "trivial" detail and by using metaphor: "It's ludicrous, the stupidities that were committed: stripes down your trouser-legs were forbidden, you couldn't use the term 'Cossack,' they even abolished the word 'stanitsa,' you had to call it a 'volost.' As if it was a matter of names and stripes! They thought they'd plane down a people in three months. My God, how much timber was felled that spring!" (p. 76) The text of the directive, which he was not permitted to read at the time but saw (and paraphrases) some 50 years later, is far from being a matter merely of "names" and "stripes." It mandates mass terror against Cossack leaders, grain confiscation, destruction of any surplus, forcible relocation to the Don region of peasants (i.e., non-Cossacks) who would be equal in status to Cossacks, disarming Cossacks and arming only non-Cossacks, etc. Nor is the paraphrase as extreme as the directive itself: it modifies or abridges some of the worst clauses. As Ermolaev points out, the version in The Old Man suggests that the Decossackization orders were the responsibility of the Don Revolution Committee, rather than of the leadership in Moscow. "[Trifonov does not say] that the directive came from the very top of the Bolshevik government, was passed by the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee and signed by its chairman Iakov Sverdlov.... The omission of this fact automatically places all responsibility for the terror on the Bolshevik powers in the Don region, in the first place on the Don Revolutionary Commit-
of the decree, like other documents included in the novel, conveys the tension [nakal] of the struggle of that 'ferocious year'... [giving rise] to the conclusion—which emerges as if by itself—that truth and faith are inextricably woven.”

What the documents in the second half of The Old Man cumulatively reveal is, first, the responsibility which individuals bore for specific actions and decisions, and second, the extent to which ideological considerations blinded most of those involved to common sense and pragmatism, not to mention traditional morality. When Migulin and Shura send a telegram to Southern Front headquarters which tries to convey an accurate picture of the dismal morale of Cossack troops in order to justify forming and training new units, they are ignored. A few days later Migulin sends another telegram to Moscow to impress on the Bolshevik high command that its Don resources are minimal. He minces no
words: misjudgment can cost them victory. He asks for social
development that people can see and participate in [stroitel'sto
glasnoe sotsial'noi zhizni]; he heaps scorn on the available
troops and gives a realistic assessment of what role his Corps
can play against Denikin's regrouped forces; he says that the
mood in Cossack villages is so hostile to the Bolsheviks that
many Cossacks are advocating the reinstatement of the tsar. Such
gloomy honesty merely increases Bolshevik mistrust: Letunov
quotes Trotskii's comment scribbled on one of Migulin's tele-
grams: "Don Cossack Establishmentarianism and Left Social
Revolutionaryism."

Although Letunov faults Migulin for "slandering himself," what
the documents make clear is that Migulin blames others, "pseudo-
communists," for actions which are hurting the revolution,
especially "all the scoundrels who have artificially roused the
people as a pretext for eliminating them." It is obvious that he
is right. But Letunov makes excuses, reluctant to admit that
virtually no one wanted to hear what Migulin was telling them:
the letter, he says, was read by "other people" than those who
should have read it; those who should have didn't read it in
time; there were no real commissars like Furmanov and Chapaev
around; Lenin, who according to Letunov "understood the essence
of the problem," didn't know the details of this particular case.
He keeps sliding away from the point.

At issue during the trial are not the facts. Migulin pleads
guilty to the bulk of the charges. The truth, however, is some-
thing more than the facts alone. The documents therefore—the
directive of the Revolutionary Council declaring Migulin an "out-
law" and traitor, the indictment, excerpts from Trotsky's artic-
le on Migulin and from the trial transcript, Migulin's exchanges
with the president of the court, the testimony of several wit-
nesses, the closing statements of prosecutor, defense attorney
and defendant and more—prove to be as unreliable as the fallible
memories of individuals. They do not distort the past the way
that memory does, but they reflect the biases, preconceptions and
needs—political, emotional, psychological—of the people in-
volved no less than Asia's love influences her memories, and
Letunov's jealousy of Migulin influences his. Trotsky's article,
for instance, purports to state facts: that Migulin was an
exploitive careerist. Yet it appears two days before the start of
the trial, and as Shura says with vehemence, only the trial can
establish such "facts." Indeed, Shura is so outraged at the
kangaroo court nature of the trial leads him to dissociate
himself from it by physically removing himself from the town.76

The truth of the Migulin affair must take into account some-
thing more than facts. It requires cognizance of the poisonous

76 Shura's departure, though it leaves him with clean hands
and unblemished integrity, is something of an evasion and a tacit
admission of failure on Trifonov's part: since Shura could not
change a course of events he knows to be wrong, Trifonov gets him
off the scene. The same thing occurs earlier, when the Slaboserdov
sons are killed by Bychin: Shura, who steadfastly protests
against an action which he knows to be immoral and unjustified by
political necessity, is allowed to escape complicity by falling
ill. He has a very high fever, and is delirious and obviously
hors de combat. By the time he is clear-headed enough to ask
about the fate of the Slaboserdovs, it's too late.
atmosphere which surrounded—and choked—Migulin, and his acute frustration as an active military leader forced to be passive. It must recognize his fear that the revolution was being undermined and might even be destroyed by scoundrels. It must understand his philosophy, not incorrectly characterized by the prosecutor Yan-son as "semi-Tolstoyan," "semisentimental" and amateurish. It must acknowledge his masculine pride, which impels him to show off to Asia, and even his vanity, which is insulted by the order to stay put.

Trifonov, though never inclined to pronounce direct judgment on the ethical and political issues involved, by no means avoids comment. As always he conveys his views through linguistic devices, narrative voice and structural montage. In this case a brief scene abruptly intrudes the present into the recreation of the past. Letunov, answering Asia's letter, is interrupted by the sound of shots. Women and children are shouting and crying because a group of men are shooting the dogs in the colony, supposedly on orders from the dacha trust, and tossing the corpses into a truck. The protesting spectators are rebuffed by Prikhodko, Letunov's old enemy, who claims that it is a matter of "orders," but Letunov realizes that behind Prikhodko's reliance on "orders" lies personal spite. Letunov is especially horrified that one of his grandsons has been infected by the frenzy, joining the butchers and shouting, "Let's shoot Arapka!", the family dog. But Letunov protects Arapka, and he is joined by a few
children who put their arms around the dog to safeguard him.

By inserting this menacing 1973 scene after Asia’s letter and the indictment and before the trial transcript Trifonov provides a hinge between the two. No principles are at stake in 1973, merely callousness and greed. Letunov’s grandson, a modern variant of his own young self in Balashova, is blinded by the "lava"—in essence mob-fever—no less than he was. The modern murderers, unlike those half a century earlier, are motivated more by greed than belief, and can be bought off with a 3-ruble note. The scene, especially the alliance between the weak (the aged and the young) against the strong, conveys the notion that individuals can indeed resist the lava, can take a stand and influence, perhaps change, the course of events. They can protect and defend those more vulnerable and defenseless than themselves, defeating even armed representatives of authority who supposedly speak for the collective. By including the incident with the dog-butchers, Trifonov passes judgment on those who manipulated the Migulin trial, and on Letunov himself, with his protestations of helplessness and repeated references to "the course of events" and the "icy voice" of the Revolution.

Letunov considers it his mission to learn the truth, to piece it together out of the shards of the past. "Writing the truth of

77 The Czech author Milan Kundera includes a similar scene in his novel The Farewell Party: a patrol goes around the town spying out dogs and impounding them. The dogcatchers are spiteful old men who have outlived all other means of exerting control; in a novel about victims and oppressors, they stand for—and with—the latter. It is an effective metaphor, in both books: no one likes dogcatchers.
what happened in history," writes David Malouf, "is a matter of taking the records and then listening hard between the lines for the cries of individual agony and protests. It demands the highest imagination." Letunov explains his motives to a couple of psychiatrists:

No, my dear doctor. I feel guilty not toward him [Migulin], but toward all the rest, including you—yes, guilty... Guilty of not having shared the truth. Of having stashed it away for myself. And it seems to me, my dear Candidate of Medical Sciences, that the truth is precious only when it is for everyone. If you keep it for yourself, under a pillow like Shylock and his gold, then the hell with it, it's not worth spit. That's why I'm torturing myself in my old age, because there's no time left. (p. 251)

It is his need to understand, to share that understanding and to expiate his guilt for having kept the truth to himself that keeps him up all hours poring over old documents and that propels him to Asia's apartment. It is that which makes him admirable, despite his betrayals and compromises. Implied throughout The Old Man is the notion that the Bolsheviks' distortion of the past, their exploitation of history for their own ends, while it may have been to a degree understandable, went hand-in-hand with moral abdication, and provided the underpinnings for the grosser and more calamitous abuse of historical truth and moral decency which occurred during the Stalin years.

Conclusion

Since the inception of the Soviet Union—indeed, during the centuries of tsarist rule in Russia—it has always been the state which determines what is and what is not acceptable in the arts, and especially in literature. The criteria have varied, as has
the rigidity with which they have been applied, but they have always been primarily political. Even before Gorbachev made it official policy, conventional wisdom decreed that the thaw of the Khrushchev years was succeeded by the stagnation of the Brezhnev years, with its abandonment of the destalinization campaign, renewed repression of dissent, and intolerance of the treatment of controversial subjects, which included most of Soviet history. The gloomy picture is generally accurate, and those creative forces unleashed by the thaw, whether pursuing new economic strategies or artistic experimentation, were stifled or found their way into illicit channels. In literature, for instance, the decade and a half following Khrushchev's fall witnessed the astonishing burgeoning of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* writing (unofficially circulating and published abroad, respectively), as well as in the voluntary or forcible emigration of a large number of prominent writers.

Yet even then literature was being written, and published, which defied the apparently inflexible strictures. Trifonov was not the only writer to publish such work: some of the village prose writers, the *derevenshchiki*, were also publishing work about sensitive subjects, though by and large they eschewed all political implications in their often nostalgic recreations of Russian rural traditions. A mutually advantageous if tacit contract seems to have governed the publication of such writers. In some cases their work served as a kind of lightning rod for the regime: critical, but far less dangerous than a Solzhenitsyn or a
Voinovich. Iurii Liubimov was permitted to stage a few controversial productions at the Taganka Theater for the same reason, although each time he had to fight hard, and sometimes permission was rescinded at the last minute. The state was also reluctant to lose to the West any more prominent members of its creative intelligentsia than it could help. Writers, for their part, want to be read. Although the terms were never spelled out, and could be changed without warning, individuals who avoided public expressions of protest, whatever their privately-articulated views, had a little room to maneuver. (Someone like Solzhenitsyn put himself beyond the pale even more by his actions than his writing; so did Mstislav Rostropovich, by inviting Solzhenitsyn to live in his dacha.) Rejecting the option of tamizdat was another way to earn a little professional leeway. Anatoli Rybakov, for instance, turned down many offers to publish *Children of the Arbat* in the West; while it did not help him publish the novel in the Soviet Union until the onset of glasnost', it probably helped him publish *Heavy Sand* in 1978, a novel controversial for its depiction of the destruction of a Jewish ghetto in a Belorussian town during the war. This small but real elbow-room could be exploited, especially if writers were willing to pay occasional dues by criticizing recently-visited Western countries.

Open, systemic criticism was not tolerated in those years. Neither was explicit examination of the Stalin era and its consequences in modern Soviet society, let alone of the relationship
between Leninism and Stalinism. But writers otherwise acceptable alluded to such matters, establishing oblique connections and encouraging attentive readers to draw certain inferences. As Lev Kopelev, himself a dissident ultimately forced to leave the Soviet Union, said about Trifonov in an interview with Craig Whitney in 1977, "He gets everything in. He only doesn't mention things that are specifically forbidden. He assumes the reader already knows what he is alluding to." Such connections and allusions, as well as authorial judgments, might be veiled in Aesopian language--by, for instance, Fazil Iskander--or woven into a network of narrative personae, as Trifonov did (or, in Liubimov's productions, suggested by stage sets or acting). Such stylistic choices may occasionally have hoodwinked the censors; often they provided sympathetic and clever editors with the ambiguity of text helpful in arguing the case for its publication. Since Soviet editors traditionally function as first-line censors, they assume an exceedingly important role, the more so since major literary journals have such large circulations: a novel printed in Novyi mir or Oktiabr', for example, reaches ten times the number of readers than the same text in its (eventually published) book form. During the Brezhnev era editors--Tvardovskyi, consistently, and others more irregularly--who believed that ignorance and lies about Soviet history were dangerous to the Soviet future made efforts to print what they could; the cagier ones occasionally succeeded.

The strategists and theoreticians of glasnost did not come from nowhere. Most of them are of the generation born in the 1920s and 1930s; they came of age during the Khrushchev era. Now, when economists like Nikolai Shmelev and sociologists like Tat'iana Zaslavskaya, literary critics like Vladimir Lakshin and poets like Evgenii Rein are publishing their work openly in the leading newspapers and magazines of the Soviet Union, when films made 15 and 20 years ago are being widely distributed, when leading historians are rewriting the textbooks of Soviet history, it is clear that even during the Brezhnev years these people were working, thinking, waiting, even if most of them could not go public with their work.

Writers like Iurii Trifonov met the response they did because in some sense they spoke for millions of their countrymen. Even in the Brezhnev years Trifonov was not unique in finding a way to manipulate into his fiction both the stuff of Soviet history and his own views about its meaning for the present. But he united a gravity of moral purpose with unusual artistic subtlety, a combination which helps explain both his success and his significance.