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Edited by Maurizia Calusio, Anna De Ponti and Anna Krasnikova

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INTRODUCTION

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This special issue of *L'Analisi linguistica e letteraria* is devoted to Vasily Grossman's literary and philosophical legacy. The articles presented here originated from the papers delivered at the Fourth International Grossman Conference, held on November 9–10, 2023, at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, organized in collaboration with the “Study Center Vasily Grossman”. This issue showcases a variety of approaches to Grossman's work, combining archival research, literary analysis, and philosophical inquiry.

The first article by Julia Volokhova and Anna Krasnikova, *Vasily Grossman's Correspondence: New Findings*, presents recent discoveries from the Grossman-Guber family archive. The authors examine newly uncovered letters between Grossman, his father, and his wife Olga Guber – a significant addition that enriches the corpus presented at the conference. These letters provide fresh insights into Grossman's personal relationships, wartime experiences, and the challenges he faced in publishing his novel *Stalingrad*.

Olga Rosenblum's contribution, *Between the State's Devilish Temptation and the Possibility of Repentance: Cains and Judases in Vasily Grossman's Novel Everything Flows* examines Grossman's reflections on guilt, repentance, and civic survival in the Soviet context. According to Rosenblum, Grossman engages here in a polemic with Veniamin Kaverin and employs the symbolic figures of Cain and Judas to classify the guilt of those who preserved their civic lives at the expense of those who endured years in labor camps.

Giovanni Maddalena's article, *Different Interpretations of Grossman's Philosophy in Early Western Reception: Lévinas, Todorov, Giussani*, explores the philosophical dimensions of Grossman's work. The author analyzes how thinkers such as Emmanuel Lévinas, Tzvetan Todorov, and Luigi Giussani interpreted Grossman's writing. These interpretations highlight Grossman's role in advancing ethics beyond metaphysics, developing a new form of Enlightenment humanism, and engaging with religious reasoning. The article proposes new perspectives on Grossman's realism, which could be defined as metaphysical.

Anna De Ponti's article, *Updating the Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center: New Translations and the Spanish Case Study* provides an overview of the evolution of the Grossman Documentation Center (available for consultation on the website of the Study Center Vasily Grossman) over the past decade. De Ponti discusses recent updates to the

platform, created to promote the knowledge of Grossman's work and the accessibility of critical studies dedicated to him, new translations of Grossman's major works, and the growing interest in Grossman's reception, especially in Spain.

The present issue concludes with essays by two prominent translators of Grossman's works: Robert Chandler and Claudia Zonghetti. Their reflections provide valuable insights into the complexities of translating Grossman's literary voice and ensuring his legacy reaches contemporary audiences.

Taken together, these contributions offer a rich and multifaceted exploration of Vasily Grossman's work, reaffirming his significance as a major literary figure and a profound thinker. At the same time, parts of his legacy remain unpublished in archives (and their rediscovery is eagerly anticipated), and many facets of his work still require critical investigation. Future research will undoubtedly continue to shed new light on Grossman's oeuvre and its broader significance.

КОРРЕСПОНДЕНЦИЯ ВАСИЛИЯ ГРОССМАНА: НОВЫЕ НАХОДКИ

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The paper explores newly uncovered letters by Vasily Grossman, focusing on his correspondence with his father and wife Olga Guber. Recent discoveries in the Grossman-Guber family archive have revealed previously unknown letters, leading to new insights into the writer's personal and professional life. These letters illuminate Grossman's deep relationships, his experiences during pivotal moments, and his reflections on historical events, including the lengthy and challenging path to publishing his novel *Stalingrad* and the repercussions that followed. Additionally, wartime letters exchanged with Olga Guber offer a rare look into Grossman's life as a war correspondent and the complex circumstances surrounding his writing. Through these insights, the article enriches our understanding of Grossman's life, the era's cultural and political atmosphere, and the personal struggles that shaped his work.

Keywords: Vasily Grossman, Correspondence, Archival Research

1. Введение¹

Эта статья, посвященная эпистолярному наследию Василия Гроссмана, – продолжение и дополнение публикации, вышедшей в третьем номере журнала *L'Analisi linguistica e letteraria* за 2023 год (Krasnikova, Volokhova 2023). В ней мы рассказывали о трех коллекциях писем, которые мы обнаружили в государственных и частных архивах и подготовили к печати: письмах Гроссмана к отцу Соломону Иосифовичу (Семену Осиповичу), его переписке с женой Ольгой Губер и его письмах к последней любви, Екатерине Заболоцкой. Кроме того, мы анонсировали выход книги с этими тремя коллекциями – книги, которая станет первой крупной публикацией корреспонденции Гроссмана. Однако первая половина 2024 года принесла нам новые находки в семейном архиве писателя, собрания писем значительно пополнились, и выпуск книги был отсрочен. В настоящей статье мы представляем общее описание и результаты первичного анализа документов из корреспонденции Гроссмана с отцом и Ольгой Губер, обнаруженных в 2024 году (переписки с Заболоцкой, по очевидным причинам, в семейном архиве не содержится).

¹ Эта статья – совместная работа, осуществленная в тесном сотрудничестве двух авторов, при этом параграф 2 является областью особой ответственности Юлии Волоховой, а параграф 3 – Анны Красниковой.

Говоря о конкретной коллекции, прежде чем перейти к находкам 2024 года, мы будем кратко описывать отношения корреспондентов, состав корпуса в конце 2023 года, и уже затем указывать, что к нему добавилось в последующие месяцы.

Мы очень благодарны внучке Василия Гроссмана Елене Федоровне Кожичкиной (Губер), которая позволила нам работать в семейном архиве Гроссмана-Губер.

2. *Письма к отцу*

Гроссмана связывали с отцом Семеном Осиповичем (1873–1956) тесные отношения на протяжении всей его жизни. Как рассказывала дочь писателя Екатерина Короткова-Гроссман, Василий Семенович “родителей очень уважал, обожал, и это было широко известно всему Союзу писателей, потому что он всюду со своим папашей ходил” (Волохова 2020).

Родители Василия Гроссмана разошлись вскоре после рождения сына, но остались друзьями. Выросший с матерью, в начале 1920-х годов Гроссман жил в Киеве, откуда затем уехал в Москву. Первое известное нам письмо к Семену Осиповичу датируется 1925-м годом: двадцатилетний Гроссман учится в Московском университете, а отец, недавно поступивший на службу в Донецкий областной институт патологии и гигиены труда, содержит сына-студента.

2.1 РГАЛИ

Основной корпус писем Гроссмана к отцу находится в Российском государственном архиве литературы и искусства (РГАЛИ). Удивительную историю обнаружения этого собрания Екатериной Заболоцкой мы подробно изложили в предыдущей статье, здесь же ограничимся более сжатым рассказом. Весной 1963 года перед операцией по удалению почки Гроссман передал Екатерине Васильевне бумажный сверток, сообщив, что это письма от его матери к его отцу, и попросил уничтожить документы после его смерти. Екатерина Васильевна хранила долгие годы этот пакет, не открывая, а когда в 1990-м году решилась, наконец, выполнить обещание, то, по совету Семена Липкина, посмотрела, что в нем находится, и оказалось, что это действительно письма к Семену Осиповичу, но их автор не мать, а сам Василий Гроссман. Заболоцкая не смогла их сжечь и передала в ЦГАЛИ (теперь РГАЛИ: Ф. 1710. Оп. 3. Ед. хр. 62–75).

С середины 1990-х это эпистолярное собрание использовалось всеми биографами писателя (Garrard, Garrard 1996; Anissimov 2012; Бит-Юнан, Фельдман 2016; Poroff 2019). Более того, иногда оно оказывалось единственным источником информации, позволявшим с той или иной степенью точности реконструировать некоторые события жизни Гроссмана в определенные периоды: например, в студенческие годы, во время работы в Донбассе или же в самом начале его писательской карьеры, определить круг его общения, от близких друзей и родственников до коллег и знакомых.

Заболоцкая сообщает в преамбуле, сопровождающей корпус писем к отцу, что в пачке находилось 200 писем без конвертов, 180 датированных и 20 недатированных, написанных с 1925 по 1956 год, и к тому же одно письмо Семена Липкина и

одно – Екатерины Коротковой-Гроссман. Екатерина Васильевна немного ошиблась в подсчетах, атрибуции и датировке писем. В корпусе содержится 206 документов: 196 посланий Гроссмана отцу (в основном это письма, а также несколько записок и одна телеграмма) и письма Липкина и Коротковой-Гроссман, о которых писала Заболоцкая – и, кроме того, два письма Гроссмана к матери от 9 мая 1928 года и 20 февраля 1929 года, два его письма к жене отца Ольге Семеновне Роданевич, от 12 февраля 1927 года и 11 июня 1933 года, два письма к Женни Генриховне Генрихсон (Гендриксон) от 1941 года и 5 октября 1942 года, доверенность на имя отца от 1943 года и краткая недатированная и неатрибутированная записка, написанная женщиной. Последнее письмо Гроссмана отцу из этого корпуса датируется 15 августа 1950 года.

Учитывая, что Семена Осиповича не стало в мае 1956 года и что отец и сын десятилетиями вели регулярную переписку, нам представлялось очень вероятным, что письма первой половины 1950-х годов существовали – но неизвестно было, сохранились ли они и, если сохранились, где находятся.

2.2 Семейный архив

В 2024 году мы получили доступ к архиву Гроссмана-Губер и обнаружили в нем новые письма Гроссмана к отцу и одно письмо отца к Гроссману – документы, ранее нигде не цитировавшиеся и не упоминавшиеся.

25 писем Василия Гроссмана датируются 1950-ми годами: самое раннее – 29 июля 1951 года, самое позднее – 17 октября 1955 года. Кроме того, было найдено окончание письма от 21 декабря 1933 года, первая часть которого находится в РГАЛИ и до сих пор была не датирована. Возможно, в 1950-м или начале 1951 года, Семен Осипович упаковал письма, полученные от сына в 1925–1950 годах, – и именно эту пачку Гроссман затем передал Заболоцкой, а те, что получал позже, в пакет не добавлял. Фрагмент письма 1933 года – исключение; предположительно, он мог затеряться, и поэтому не был присоединен к остальным, когда Гроссман-старший упорядочивал свою корреспонденцию.

Все письма Гроссмана отцу разрозненно хранились в семейном архиве и не были как-то специально систематизированы. Все они хорошо сохранились, и их расшифровка была проведена без особых затруднений.

В этих письмах мы получаем свидетельства самого Гроссмана о событиях первой половины 1950-х годов. Это тем более ценно, что из корреспонденции писателя с его близкими в 1950–1954 годы ранее было известно лишь о сохранившихся письмах Семену Липкину (Гроссман 2016). Письма Ольге Губер 1949–1954 годов, к примеру, не сохранились или пока не найдены.

Один из ключевых сюжетов недавно найденных писем к отцу – переживание Гроссманом истории с прохождением в печать романа *Сталинград* (*За правое дело*), а также травля после публикации романа.

Гроссман отправляет *Сталинград* в редакцию *Нового мира* в августе 1949 года, после чего роман переживет несколько итераций редактуры и правок, цензурных проверок и подгонок под требования идеологии и будет опубликован лишь в 1952

году. В *Дневнике прохождения рукописи*², который Гроссман вел все эти три года, есть записи, описывающие ситуацию лета 1951 года. От 30 июня:

Позвонил Фадеев³. Сообщил, что накануне говорил с Сусловым. Суслов сказал, что вопрос согласован, существует общее мнение о публикации романа. Остается лишь согласовать вопрос с Хрущевым в отношении мест книги, в которых речь идет о нем. (Цит. по: Бочаров 1990, 170)

И от 11 июля:

Написал письмо Фадееву с просьбой передать товарищам, решающим судьбу *Сталинграда*, дать мне любой, лишь бы окончательный ответ. Нет сил больше. (Там же)

О томительном ожидании ответа из редакции *Нового мира* Гроссман пишет отцу в четырех письмах. 29 июня 1951 из дома отдыха в Малеевке:

К сожалению, есть в этой идиллии проруха – и ничего нового на фронте этой моей прорухи нет. Ждать, правда, здесь легче, чем в Москве – по крайней мере нет телефона.

12 августа, сразу после возвращения из санатория в Москву, он сообщает отцу, который в этот момент находится в Молдове:

Москва встретила нас духотой и жарой, а также полным отсутствием новостей. Правда, сегодня воскресенье, так что в редакцию я позвоню лишь завтра, но уж, конечно, были бы новости, я бы их и в Малеевке узнал. Ну, ладно, ждали много, подождем еще – мы привычные.

Ожидание решения о *Сталинграде* становится канвой жизни Гроссмана. 17 августа он пишет:

У меня жизнь идет уж по московскому: работаю, гуляю, жду решения. Это мои главные занятия.

Ожидание стало настолько привычным, что часть напряжения спала. 1 сентября он сообщает отцу:

У меня жизнь идет по-старому, новостей у меня по-прежнему нет, но это уж стало привычно, и я более или менее спокойно их ожидаю. Работаю ежедневно

² Оригинал *Дневника прохождения рукописи* хранится в РГАЛИ: Ф. 1710. Оп. 2. Ед. хр. 1.

³ Александр Фадеев в 1946–1954 годах был генеральным секретарем и председателем правления Союза писателей СССР.

над второй частью книги [*романом* Жизнь и судьба. – Ю.В., А.К.], дело понемногу движется, и это меня тешит.

Фадеев обсудил с Гроссманом роман лишь в октябре и ноябре 1951 года, и лишь весной 1952 года лед тронулся (см. об этом: Бочаров 1990, 171). Роман был издан в 7–10 номерах “Нового мира” за 1952 год (Гроссман 1952) под заглавием *За правое дело*.

Ранее нам было доступно единственное эпистолярное свидетельство Гроссмана о том, как проходило печатание романа летом и осенью и что при этом чувствовал писатель. В августе 1952 года он пишет Семену Липкину:

В Москве в *Новом Мире* проходит сейчас 3-й кусок, верстка. Завтра начнут мне раньше срока, – чтобы мог в Коктебель поехать, – давать гранки последнего четвертого куска. Разговоров много – пока без шипов, но по закону ботаники должны быть и они. А ты что слышишь? Но что ж! Ты ведь знаешь мое чувство: *главное* [выделение автора. – Ю.В., А.К.] свершается. И я, знаешь, по-прежнему остро и кажется глубоко чувствую и понимаю это. Ощущение такое же, как при напечатании первого рассказа *В городе Бердичеве*. А, пожалуй, даже сильнее. (Гроссман 2016)

Теперь же к этому добавляются и сведения из двух писем отцу. Здесь мы также видим, что Гроссман доволен тем, что работа идет и что на книгу уже начинает приходить множество отзывов. 20 июля, после выхода первой части романа в *Новом мире*, он пишет: “В редакции все идет благополучно пока. Очень много отзывов.”

Однако параллельно он говорит и о том, что нервы его по-прежнему расшатаны – расшатаны, очевидно, трехлетней историей с публикацией романа. В сентябре 1952 года, впервые приехав на отдых в Коктебель, он сообщает отцу:

Уезжая из Москвы, я успел прочесть верстку 10-го номера и все согласовал, так что на душе спокойно. Но, видимо, нервы свои так издергал, что даже и здесь нахожу почву для неврастения и раздражительности, – уж очень много здесь людей, а люди бывают разные. Но это так, минутные пустяки. В общем я очень доволен.

Еще один сюжет из биографии Гроссмана, о котором мы узнаем больше благодаря письмам к отцу из семейного архива, – его пребывание на даче у Семена Липкина в марте 1953 во время травли писателя после публикации романа *За правое дело*. В своей книге *Жизнь и судьба Василия Гроссмана* Липкин так пишет об этом времени:

... мучительный, страшный, долгий путь романа *За правое дело*, когда мы с Василием Семеновичем затаились у меня на даче в Ильинском и каждый ночной порыв ветра, стук ставен, шаги в безлюдной улице пугали: “Они пришли.” (Липкин 1990, 19)

В другом отрывке из книги Семен Израилевич добавляет и бытовых деталей:

Мы с Гроссманом решили это смутное время пережить, вернее, укрыться на моей даче в Ильинском по Казанской железной дороге. Жили мы так. Я закупал в закрытом городке Жуковском провизию (тогда это было просто), мыл посуду, а Гроссман готовил обед, каждый день один и тот же наваристый суп. (Там же, 32)

Из свидетельств самого Гроссмана до сих пор были известны лишь строки из его письма к Липкину от 22 июля 1954 года. Гроссман вспоминает не об ужасах травли, а, ностальгически, о том хорошем, что было в их дачном затворничестве:

Вспомнилось мне Ильинское, дачная идиллия – печь, игра в дурака, суп из макарон, прогулки на станцию, оттепель, гремющая ведрами Маня. (Гроссман 2016)

Нами найдено два письма к отцу, написанных из Ильинского в марте 1953 года. Их настроение соответствует тому, что мы наблюдаем в письме Липкину от 1954 года: тон ровный, а речь идет не о мучительном ожидании ареста, а о радостях загородной жизни с верным другом – и о том самом супе, которым писатель явно гордился. В первом письме, отправленном в начале-середине марта, Гроссман, в частности, сообщает:

Дорогой папа, пишу несколько слов, – живу на даче, чувствую себя хорошо – много гуляю, читаю. Тут очень пустынно, тихо, спокойно. Воздух свежий, чистый. Ночью среди высоких сосен видны звезды. Дом здесь теплый, сам топлю печь углем и дровами. Живет тут и мой любезный дачевладелец Семен Из[раилевич] – мы с ним отлично хозяйничаем. Скажу откровенно, что супы у нас получаются получше того, которым ты меня угощал, зато такого жаркого, какие ты зажарил, мне пока еще не создать. Однако я не теряю надежды поднять свою кулинарную квалификацию.

Прошла уж неделя, как я живу на даче. Думаю побыть здесь еще, – так как мне спокойней и приятней жить здесь, да и для здоровья хорошо подышать воздухом. В дневные часы солнышко светит и греет чуток по-весеннему.

Второе письмо, от 18 марта, передает то же, чуть ли не безмятежное настроение:

Продолжаю свое дачное житье, оно мне так нравится, что жалко с ним расставаться. Думаю, что пробуду здесь до 25–26-го. Как только переберусь в город, позвоню тебе.

Пришла весна. Дни чудесные, солнце светит и греет, небо легкое, весеннее, в дневные часы с крыш со звоном и сверканьем падают капли. Я давно уж мечтал встретить весну за городом, да из года в год мешали обстоятельства. Вот, наконец, в этом году удалось, правда при не самых благоприятных обстоятельствах. Но вот так случилось, что именно эти неблагоприятные обстоятельства помогли мне увидеть всю прелесть ранней весны, первых весенних дней.

Здоровье мое и хозяйство домашнее в порядке.

Письма к отцу 1950-х годов проливают свет на отношения Гроссмана и его близких людей, например, старшей двоюродной сестры Надежды Моисеевны Алмаз (1897 – не позже 1961), которая сыграла важнейшую роль в становлении Гроссмана как писателя. Мы знаем об их дружбе, о реакции Гроссмана на аресты Надежды Моисеевны, первый из которых произошел в 1933 году, именно из писем к отцу 1920-х и 1930-х годов. О судьбе Алмаз в 1950-е годы ранее было известно мало, в основном из писем Гроссмана к Ольге Губер. Сейчас же, благодаря недавним находкам, мы знаем, что она жила в Москве у общих с Гроссманом родственников: их двоюродного брата Виктора Шеренциса и его жены Клары, – пыталась получить отдельную комнату, болела, и что происходящее с ней заботило Гроссмана.

В письме от 22 октября 1953 года, Гроссман пишет отцу из Коктебеля:

Ты пишешь, что Надя переселилась этажом выше. Я этому очень порадовался – ведь будет удобней и душевно легче и ей, и Кларе с семейством. А в смысле комфорта, мне кажется, разницы почти никакой, поскольку она весь день будет проводить у Клары. Однако, я почти одновременно получил от Нади письмо и чувствуется, что она этим переселением не довольна, тон письма нервный. Все ее надежды на то, что Моссовет предоставит ей комнату.

Год спустя Гроссман снова в Коктебеле и снова пишет отцу о Надежде Алмаз, на этот раз о ее болезни:

Надины новости меня тоже очень порадовали, о них я узнал из ее письма; она пишет, что и со здоровьем у нее как будто пошло на лад, температура уже не так скачет и сердце врачи находят в значительно лучшем состоянии. (Письмо от 7 октября 1954 года)

Надя по-прежнему в больнице, пишет, что чувствует себя лучше несколько, но все время продолжает терять в весе, – что уж ей терять. (Письмо от 22 октября 1954 года)

Еще один человек, о котором Гроссман пишет регулярно в своих письмах – его дочь Катя (Екатерина Васильевна Короткова-Гроссман, 1930–2020): в начале 1950-х годов она живет в Харькове, учится в университете, а после выпуска никак не может найти подходящую работу. В письме от 12 августа 1951 года Гроссман рассказывает отцу о ее каникулах:

Получил от Кати письмо. Ей продлили путевку еще на месяц, так что она останется в Коктебеле до конца августа, почти до самого дня начала занятий. Письмо прислала веселое, радостное – очень довольна, нравится природа, люди, хорошо проводит время в прогулках, подружилась с Чуковскими и с дочкой Усиевич – очень милой девушкой.

В этом отрывке, предположительно, идет речь о Николае Корнеевиче Чуковском (1904–1965) и его жене Марине Николаевне (1905–1993), а возможно, и об их детях: Наталье (р. 1925), Николае (1933–1922), Дмитрие (р. 1943). Дочь литературного критика Елены Феликсовны Усиевич (1893–1968) – Искра-Марина (1926–2004).

17 августа 1951 года Гроссман снова пишет об отдыхе Кати:

От Кати имел вчера письмо. Она осталась в Коктебеле на второй срок, а после истечения второго срока проживет еще в деревне (под Коктебелем) шесть-семь дней. Вернется в Харьков к самому началу занятий. Письмо ее меня порадовало своей теплотой, а главное тем, что пишет о прекрасном самочувствии, о том, что отлично поправилась, довольна, счастлива, весела. Я от души всему этому рад – такие счастливые летние дни, знаю это по себе, запоминаются на всю жизнь и согревают человека в тяжелую, зимнюю пору. Хорошо, что у Кати будут такие дни.

Осенью 1954 года Гроссман по дороге в Коктебель видится в Харькове не только с дочерью, но и со своей первой женой – Анной Петровной Мацук (Галей). Он с беспокойством пишет отцу о Катиных трудностях с поиском работы:

В Харькове видел Катю и Гаю. Галя необычайно располнела, я ее не сразу узнал, можешь представить себе, – весит она 92 кило. У Кати до сих пор нет хороших новостей, все ищет работу, обещают, а потом не берут. У нее есть план поступления в заочную аспирантуру, но и для его осуществления необходимо быть на работе.

Гаю очень беспокоит пустота в ее личной жизни, – нет знакомых, нет увлечений. (20 сентября 1954, Коктебель)

Получил сегодня письмо от Кати, у нее появилась новая перспектива устроиться на работу, в Харьковском пригороде, в Институте Ветеринарном при кафедре английского языка. Вопрос этот, к сожалению, решится не сейчас, а в первых числах ноября. (7 октября 1954, Коктебель)

Из корреспонденции с отцом 1950-х годов узнаем мы и о встречах и общении Гроссмана не только с родственниками и близкими друзьями. Так, 21 февраля 1955 года он пишет из дома творчества писателей в Дубутках о знакомстве с Николаем Евгеньевичем Бурениным (1874–1962) – революционером, музыкантом, сопровождавшим Горького в его поездке в США и в качестве связного РСДРП(б), некоторое время жившим у Горького и в Италии.

Со мной за столом сидит приехавший несколько дней назад из Ленинграда старик, друг Горького, спутствовавший ему во всех путешествиях, в Италии и пр. Старику 80 лет, приемному сыну его 62 год[а]. Приехал он довольно бойкий, на вид ему не больше 60–65. Но сегодня ночью уборщица, желая потрогать деду натопила печь так, что температура поднялась до 30°, и у бедного деда сделался сердечный припадок. Он расстроился и собрался ехать в Ленинград,

но его перевели в другую комнату, успокоили, и все вошло в норму. Он очень интересно рассказывает о всяких знаменитых людях, которых ему пришлось повидать, даже о Марк Твене.

Важнейшей находкой нам представляется и единственное обнаруженное на сегодня – и, возможно, единственное сохранившееся – письмо отца к Василию Гроссману. Написанное 20 сентября 1945 года, оно проливает свет на отношения Семена Осиповича с матерью Гроссмана Екатериной Савельевной. До настоящего момента было известно лишь, что после развода они остались друзьями и поддерживали переписку. В этом же откровенном письме Семен Осипович пишет сыну, что и после расставания продолжал любить Екатерину Савельевну, глубоко раскаивается в том, что не провел последние годы вместе с ней; пишет, что хотел бы погибнуть вместе с ней в Бердичеве. Приведем здесь лишь один фрагмент из этого трагического письма:

Кроме тебя у меня, ты знаешь, никого нет, с кем бы я мог говорить, что называется “на духу,” и вот скажу тебе, что, если можно говорить о греховности, то у меня в отношении мамы великий грех. Это я осознал еще до войны, и она постаралась ответить мне шуточным письмом, когда я писал ей, простит ли она мне все зло, что я учинил против нее, и согласится ли она жить со мной вместе, как со своим старым другом, если я добьюсь этой возможности. Теперь, сейчас я понял, что не так мне надо было поступить – я должен был поехать к ней и вымолить у нее для себя прощение за все содеянное. Мне нужно было при приближении того страшного времени, когда она осталась совершенно одна, сделать все, чтобы быть с ней вместе и погибнуть вместе с ней. Дорогой мой, как мне тяжело и горько сейчас – просыпаюсь ли ночью, стою ли я на берегу и гляжу на взбурдаженное море – меня мысль о маме не оставляет ни на одну минуту. Порой мне хочется плакать обильными слезами и никогда я не чувствовал так сильно ее утрату, как сейчас.

За всю жизнь я раза два собирался рассказать тебе все, чтобы ты знал, как все произошло, но мой рассказ всегда прерывался, и я не доходил до момента, когда вопрос касался моего к ней отношения и произошел разрыв между нами.

2.3 Записки из Литературного музея

К корпусу писем отцу мы добавили еще две не публиковавшиеся записки от 1935 года, хранящиеся в архиве Государственного музея истории российской литературы имени В.И. Даля (ГЛМ ОР. Ф. 76. Оп. 1. Ед. хр. 9. Л. 1–2). Они были переданы в коллекцию музея в 2001 году Кукоевым Дмитрием Юрьевичем и позволяют более точно датировать перемещения Гроссмана между Москвой и Донбассом в 1935 году, а также свидетельствуют об общении Гроссмана с Борисом Губером. Пока нам неизвестно, каким образом эти две записки оказались у Дмитрия Кукоева, но надеемся в будущем найти ответ и на этот вопрос.

3. Переписка с Ольгой Губер

С Ольгой Губер, женой писателя Бориса Губера, Гроссман познакомился, когда завел дружбу с перевальцами в первой половине 1930-х. В октябре 1935 года Ольга Михайловна ушла к Гроссману, оставив мужу двух сыновей, Мишу и Федю, официально же новые отношения были оформлены 28 мая 1936 года. За почти 30 лет брака пара прошла через многое. В 1937 году арестовали и расстреляли Бориса Губера, вслед за ним в феврале 1938 арестовали и Ольгу; Гроссман забрал к себе Мишу и Федю и сумел высвободить из-под ареста жену. В 1942 году в эвакуации в Чистополе погиб 16-летний Миша. Серьезным испытанием для обоих стал роман Василия Гроссмана с Екатериной Заболоцкой, начавшийся в 1956 году. И, наконец, болезнь Гроссмана, которая дала о себе знать в 1962-м. Все эти годы, когда один из супругов находился в отъезде, между ними велась переписка – привычка, не нарушенная даже в те годы, когда Гроссман жил с Заболоцкой.

О том, что эта корреспонденция существует, уже было известно, в первую очередь из публикаций эпистолярного наследия, которые Федор Губер выпускал с конца 1980-х годов (Губер 1988; Губер 1989; Губер 1990; Губер 1996; Гроссман 1997; Губер 1998; Губер 2005). Конечным результатом этой работы стала книга *Память и письма. Книга о Василии Гроссмане*, вышедшая в 2007 году (Губер 2007). В этих публикациях, несомненно, было использовано множество ценнейших материалов из семейного архива, однако они имеют, скорее, мемуарный, чем научный характер. Эдиционные принципы здесь не всегда ясны, архивные источники не описаны и в основном цитируются выборочно, а не целиком; тексты не установлены критически, некоторые датированы неверно, регулярно нарушается их хронологический порядок.

Переписка Гроссмана с женой хранится в семейном архиве и до недавнего времени была недоступна исследователям. Мы познакомились с этими документами в два этапа.

На первом, описанном в нашей статье “Letters to father, wife and last love: Vasilii Grossman’s epistolary legacy” (Krasnikova, Volokhova 2023), в мае 2023 Елена Федоровна Кожичкина передала нам для ознакомления три папки, в которых находились письма, конверты, открытки и телеграммы Гроссмана и Губер, собранные и систематизированные Федором Борисовичем. Документы в папках были рассортированы по конвертам формата С5, на которых стояли чернильные или карандашные пометки, сделанные Федором Губером. Эти пометки отражают его работу по датировке корреспонденции и упорядочиванию корпуса по хронологии – работу, которая не была доведена до конца. Хотя большинство датировок соответствуют действительности, одни материалы остались недатированными, другие были датированы неверно. В некоторых конвертах письма лежали в хронологическом порядке, в некоторых – нет. В папках были найдены 189 писем и открыток от Гроссмана к жене, 55 писем и открыток от Ольги Михайловны к мужу.

На следующем этапе, получив разрешение самостоятельно работать в архиве, мы обнаружили и другие письма обоих супругов. Они хранились разрозненно, иногда в неожиданных частях архива и не были систематизированы. В некоторых случаях мы находили отдельные страницы в разных местах и затем уже соединяли фрагмен-

ты. Один из примеров – письмо Ольги Губер мужу, написанное между 5 и 9 августа 1942 года: первый его отрывок хранился в папках, переданных Еленой Федоровной Кожичкиной на начальном этапе, а два других были найдены позднее в разных частях семейного архива.

На втором этапе нами было обнаружено более 70 писем и открыток Василия Гроссмана к жене, несколько сотен писем и почтовых карточек Ольги Михайловны к мужу. Этот корпус состоит из писем военного времени и писем, которые супруги отправляли друг другу, когда один из них находился в Москве, а другой в отъезде. Многие из обнаруженных на втором этапе писем были написаны Ольгой Губер из Коктебеля – с середины 1950-х по начало 1960-х годов она ездила туда отдыхать два раза в год. Некоторые фрагменты корреспонденции, с которой мы работали на втором этапе, цитировались Федором Губером в его книге *Память и письма* и были использованы в его публикациях в периодике, однако не публиковались полностью.

Самое раннее из писем, обнаруженных на этом этапе, датируется 14 сентября 1937 года и было отправлено Гроссманом из Одессы. В нем он сообщает жене, что его огорчила одна из рецензий на роман *Степан Кольчугин*. Из довоенных писем было также найдено два письма, отправленных Гроссманом во время круиза по Волге в июле 1940 года, который он совершал с отцом и друзьями, и два письма, отправленных в феврале и марте 1941 года из Риги и Вильянди во время совместной поездки с Александром Твардовским в страны Балтии.

К корреспонденции военного периода на втором этапе добавилось еще 49 писем и открыток Гроссмана, адресованных жене, и 20 посланий, написанных Ольгой Губер. Таким образом, корпус переписки супругов в годы войны в общей сложности включает в себя 164 документа и на данный момент является самым крупным документальным источником, относящимся к этому периоду биографии Гроссмана (для сравнения, военных писем к отцу сохранилось всего 35). Письма 1941–1945 годов содержат множество сведений об обстоятельствах работы Гроссмана военным корреспондентом, условиях создания и публикации повести *Народ бессмертен* и военных очерков.

Если о публицистике Гроссмана, выходившей на страницах *Красной звезды*, было известно и прежде, то сейчас переписка с женой проливает свет на сотрудничество писателя и с другими периодическими изданиями. Обнаруженные письма позволили нам установить некоторые публикации Гроссмана военных лет, которые ранее не попадали в поле зрения исследователей. Так, например, 19 июля 1942 года Гроссман писал Ольге Губер:

Возможно, что мое пребывание в Москве продлится еще на месяц – мне предложили написать брошюру о Гастелло и дадут на месяц освобождение от корреспондентской работы.

Хотя Гроссман не получил освобождения от работы и не написал брошюру о военном летчике Николае Гастелло (1907–1941), благодаря этому упоминанию мы установили, что в 1941 году в журнале *Красноармеец* вышел один из первых военных очерков Гроссмана “Капитан Гастелло” (Гроссман 1941).

Выяснилось также, что ранние очерки, написанные Гроссманом во время его нахождения на южном фронте (“Дружба,” “Слово о шахтерских полках,” “Риск”), не были приняты *Красной звездой*, но их опубликовал журнал *Знамя* в двоекном номере за май-июнь 1942 года (Гроссман 1942). Эти очерки также никогда прежде не анализировались исследователями.

Корреспонденция содержит и множество других неизвестных или малоизвестных фактов о писательской работе Гроссмана. Например, о его участии в создании документального фильма *Сталинград* (1943, реж. Леонид Варламов): после возвращения из Сталинграда в Москву в начале 1943 года Гроссман начал писать дикторский текст к фильму, в кадре этот текст был прочитан Юрием Левитаном. 14 февраля Гроссман пишет жене:

Милая моя Люсенька, пишу тебе все еще из Москвы, мой отъезд задержался на неделю, сперва из-за работы над фильмом *Сталинград*, а теперь из-за отсутствия летной погоды. Вероятно, улечу завтра или послезавтра. Над фильмом работал, как бешеный, день и ночь – это хроникальный фильм, получился интересно, обязательно посмотри, если будут его показывать в Чистополе.

Участие в этом проекте, как свидетельствует корреспонденция, было важно для Гроссмана еще и потому, что в конечном счете позволило организовать переезд семьи из Чистополя в Москву. В письме Ольге Губер от 17 февраля мы читаем:

С фильмом моим уже всю работу кончил, писал уже тебе об этом. Фильм уже озвучен и “ошумлен” страшной пальбой. Это “не Рембрант,” но интересно смотрится. Ты обязательно его посмотри.

Денег мне еще не заплатили, переведут недели через две на сберкнижку (10.000 р[ублей]). Это нам пойдет на молодоженное устройство наше в Москве, когда приедешь.

Корпус переписки с женой военного периода позволяет многое узнать и о людях, с которыми Гроссман находился на фронте, и о взаимоотношениях с ними. В корреспонденции супругов запечатлена драма семьи, разделенной войной. По письмам к отцу уже было известно, что Гроссман постоянно думал о судьбе матери, оставшейся в Бердичеве и расстрелянной 15 сентября 1941 года (о чем родные узнали, конечно же, значительно позже). В письмах же к Ольге Губер мы видим, что Гроссман крайне тревожился и за своего отца, который находился в эвакуации сначала в Ташкенте, а затем в Самарканде. Он не только регулярно отправлял ему деньги, но и всеми силами стремился вернуть его в Москву. 29 июня 1942 Гроссман пишет жене:

От папы много писем, он в очень тяжелом положении, болеет, было у него что-то вроде гангрены, он долго лежал один без всякого ухода. Не знаю, удастся ли получить для него визу на возвращение в Москву. Попробую, во всяком случае.

В письме от 6 июля продолжает звучать беспокойство об отце и его здоровье:

Беспокоит меня папино здоровье. Я тебе уже писал, что он тяжело заболел. А тут как на зло писем нет от него – я уже послал ему телеграмму.

В Ташкент также эвакуировалась первая жена Гроссмана. Мы узнаем, что он состоял с ней в переписке и получал от нее сведения об их дочери Кате. 5 октября 1942 он пишет Ольге Губер из Сталинграда:

Получил две открытки от Гали, ее муж [*Виктор Георгиевич Баранов*. – Ю.В., А.К.] сейчас в Ташкенте – получил инвалидность на три месяца. Катюша вернулась из детского лагеря поправившейся, но по приезду заболела тропической малярией и, конечно, сразу все спустила.

Письма Ольги Губер к мужу запечатлели ее жизнь в Чистополе, взаимоотношения с мужем, трагическую историю гибели старшего сына – Миши Губера. Ценны они и как свидетельство о жизни других писательских семей, оказавшихся в эвакуации в Чистополе: Твардовских, Асеевых, Гехтов и многих других. Письма изобилуют бытовыми и житейскими подробностями, создают объемную картину жизни в тылу и показывают будничное, непарадное лицо войны.

Из послевоенной корреспонденции, как уже упоминалось выше, мы добавили в подборку, готовящуюся к публикации, все найденные письма Гроссмана: их 20, датируются они 1957–1963 годами. Из множества обнаруженных нами писем Ольги Михайловны было добавлено лишь несколько, отправленных в 1955–1959 годах.

Здесь мы остановимся на некоторых документах из этой части корреспонденции и содержащихся в них фактах.

Если ранее нам были известны письма Гроссмана, отправленные жене из дома творчества писателей в Дубултах в феврале 1955 года, и благодаря им мы могли составить представление о его работе, знакомствах, занятиях в латвийской поездке, то, обнаружив письма Ольги Михайловны в Дубулты, мы можем реконструировать некоторые обстоятельства московской жизни писателя этого времени.

Так, мы узнаем некоторые подробности о дружбе семейств Гроссманов и Заболоцких. 10 февраля 1955 года Ольга Губер пишет:

Звонила Екатерина Васильевна вчера, рассказывала, что сердце у Николая Алексеевича продолжает болеть, но завтра они будут уже в Москве, продлевать путевки не будут.

Судя по всему, две семьи действительно много общались в первой половине 1950-х годов. Ольга Михайловна упоминает о Заболоцких регулярно, уже в следующем по хронологии письме, от 14 февраля, она сообщает:

Вчера заходила к нам Екатерина Васильевна. Она поздоровела и посвежела, говорит, что Н[иколай] А[лексеевич] чувствует себя лучше, но спазмы по ночам продолжают. Каждый день они ходят гулять – вижу их в окно.

Среди друзей и знакомых, о которых также пишет Ольга Михайловна в феврале 1955 года: Вячеслав Ковалевский, Виктор Некрасов, Екатерина Строгова, Корней Иванович, Мария Борисовна и Николай Чуковские, Фаина Школьниковна, и другие.

Если говорить о круге общения Гроссмана, его письмо от 13 мая 1957 года, найденное в семейном архиве, содержит ранее неизвестную информацию о том, что Гроссман поддерживал контакты с семьей Александра Воронского:

Дорогая Люся, пишу тебе после совещания, которое закончилось лишь к 7 часам вечера. Поэтому оба мои визитера пришли в мое отсутствие, – и муж Гали Воронской, и молдавский писатель.

Лидер литературной группы *Перевал* был репрессирован и расстрелян в 1937 году, вскоре была арестована и его дочь Галина Воронская (1914–1991), в 1959 году вместе с семьей она вернулась с Колымы в Москву. Ее муж Иван Степанович Исаев (1907–1990) также был осужден в 1937 году на пять лет лагерей и реабилитирован в 1955 году, он дружил с Варламом Шаламовым и, как показывает обнаруженное письмо, наносил визиты Гроссману.

На втором этапе нашей работы с архивом к переписке во время поездки Гроссмана в Ялту в марте 1959 года добавилось 12 писем Ольги Губер, из которых, среди прочего, мы узнаем о том, что в этот период дочь Гроссмана Катя живет в Москве в семье Виктора Шеренциса, двоюродного брата писателя, и пытается организовать приезд в столицу своей матери.

Вчера звонила я Шеренцисам, чтобы узнали здоровье Кати [*sic!* – Ю.В., А.К.]. Подошел к телефону Витя, который сказал, что Катя в 2 часа ушла на работу, – я спросила, как ее здоровье, – он сказал, что она здорова, только киснет. (6–7 марта 1959)

В субботу звонила Катя, она здорова, сказала, что получила от тебя письмо. Все никак не найдет комнаты, куда бы могла приехать ее мать. (16 марта 1959)

Эти письма также содержат информацию о готовящихся изданиях Гроссмана и редакционных делах. Например, в письме от 26 марта 1959 года Ольга Губер сообщает мужу о том, что рассказ *Тиргартен* так и не был помещен в журнале *Знамя*.

Звонила [Мариам] Черневич [*подруга Гроссмана и Губер, переводчица с французского.* – Ю.В., А.К.] – знакомая ее сказала ей, что в журнале “Знамя” напечатан твой рассказ, “Тиргартен” – она просмотрела последний журнал и не нашла. Спрашивала меня, что это значит.

Как выяснится позже, рассказ не был допущен к публикации цензурой и снят из номера в последний момент. Об этом, среди прочего, свидетельствует донесение, отправленное в ЦК 25 февраля 1960 года руководителем Главлита Павлом Романовым, в котором, в частности говорилось: “Редколлегия журнала *Знамя* упорно отстаивала

это идейно неполноценное произведение, всячески добиваясь его опубликования. Указанное произведение по рекомендации Отдела культуры ЦК КПСС не было помещено в журнале.” (От редакции 1996, 291–292)

На втором этапе работы с архивом также были найдены четыре письма Гроссмана Ольге Губер, отправленные из Москвы в Коктебель в сентябре и октябре 1961 года, в которых Гроссман, начав работу над переводом романа Рачия Кочара *Дети большого дома* в Москве, регулярно пишет о своем беспокойстве из-за длительного молчания автора и издательства. Как, например, в письме от 4 октября 1961 года:

Я продолжаю работать над переводом, но меня, конечно, нервирует молчание автора и издательства, хотя Сема и уверяет меня, что это обычная суета и топтание, сопутствующее подобным переводческим делам.

6 октября Гроссман вспоминает день сдачи рукописи *Жизни и судьбы* в редакцию, а также вновь делится с женой своей тревогой из-за того, что работает над литературной обработкой подстрочного перевода романа без договора, аванса или каких-либо гарантий со стороны издательства.

Сегодня год, как я сдал рукопись в редакцию, – печальная годовщина. Много мыслей вызывает она.

Из Еревана по-прежнему ничего нет. Вчера послал Кочару телеграмму, очень спокойную, но с просьбой объяснить длительное молчание.

Работа сильно продвинулась вперед, заканчиваю через неделю перевод 1-го тома, это будет половина работы. Думаю, что есть основания тревожиться по поводу упорного молчания автора и толстой Асмик [Таронян] [*переводчица с армянского, сделавшая подстрочник с романа Кочара*. – Ю.В., А.К.].

Ведь по условию я уж должен был к началу октября выезжать в Армению, а мне ни слова не написали, да и денег не присылают, и договор не оформили.

И только 10 октября, уже проделав около половины работы, он с облегчением сообщает о получении известий из Еревана:

Милая Люся, наконец получил телеграмму из Еревана. Телеграмма очень сердечная, Кочар пишет, что дом творчества закрыт на ремонт, откроется во второй половине октября, что деньги переведут мне в районе 15-го октября. Одновременно пришла телеграмма от издательства, что договор утвержден, и деньги будут высланы, – в ней смешная фраза: “ближайшее время пригласим” – так бедным родственникам пишут.

В общем, с этим делом пока все в порядке.

Следующие десять писем Гроссмана, обнаруженных на втором этапе нашей работы, были отправлены им из Москвы во время поездки Ольги Губер в Коктебель в мае–июне и в октябре 1962 года.

Из них мы узнаем о публикации рассказа *Дорога*, о попытках напечатать в журнале *Москва* рассказ *Лось*, о работе над путевыми заметками *Добро вам!* и попытках опубликовать их в *Новом мире*.

Кроме того, было найдено еще пять писем, которые хронологически завершают корпус переписки Василия Гроссмана и Ольги Губер. Это письма, которые Гроссман в сентябре и октябре 1963 года отправлял жене, отдыхавшей в Коктебеле, из санатория в Архангельском, а потом, после выписки, из Москвы, из их квартиры на Беговой. В последнем из них, от 6 октября 1963 года, в день возвращения домой он пишет:

У меня бодрое, рабочее настроение, и меня это очень удивляет – откуда оно берется? Кажется, давно уж должны были опуститься руки, а они, глупые, все тянутся к работе.

4. Корреспонденция, не вошедшая в сборник

К настоящему моменту в семейном архиве мы обнаружили еще ряд писем, которые, хотя и представляют большую ценность, не войдут в готовящийся к публикации том: прежде всего, это письма матери Гроссмана Екатерины Савельевны к его отцу Семену Осиповичу и самому Гроссману; письма Гроссмана к матери, написанные им после ее смерти; письма Ольги Губер, о которых мы уже упоминали выше; письма Гроссмана к пасынкам Михаилу и Федору Губерам и письма пасынков к нему; отдельные письма Михаила Зощенко, Бориса Пастернака, Рувима Фраермана, Виктора Некрасова, Бориса Ямпольского и других писателей; корреспонденция друзей и родственников (Николая Сочевца, Семена Тумаркина и др.), письма читателей, официальные письма из организаций. Работая с уже найденной корреспонденцией, мы также продолжаем работу в архивах и надеемся, что нас ждут новые находки.

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BETWEEN THE STATE'S DEVILISH TEMPTATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE: CAINS AND JUDASES IN VASILY GROSSMAN'S NOVEL *EVERYTHING FLOWS*

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The paper is structured as a slow reading (commentary) in chronological order of those chapter excerpts of Vasily Grossman's last novel, *Everything Flows*, which are devoted to the protagonist's return from the labor camp and his conversations with those outside (chapters 1–14). Over the course of this slow reading, I identify keywords concerning the opposition between soul and body, repentance and penance. Another area of analysis is Grossman's polemic with other Soviet writers who published works about informers and Gulag prisoners. In the first part of the paper, I show that in this polemic, Veniamin Kaverin emerges as a particularly important opponent for Grossman. Reconstructing first the allusions to Kaverin's prose in *Everything Flows* and then the images of the Judases-informers, I suggest that on the level of images, the novel contrasts the informers Cain and Judas and proposes a classification of the guilt of those who preserved their civic lives over those who spent years in the labor camps.

Keywords: Grossman, *Everything Flows*, Coping with the past, Judas and Cain, Perpetrators

Vasily Grossman began working on his novel *Everything Flows* in 1955, at a time when the return of people from the Soviet labor camps was the most visible sign of change in public life. Only several months later, journals would begin printing poems on the reunion of the returnees and those who had remained, and Anna Akhmatova would utter her (then unpublished but later very famous) statement that “now the prisoners will return, and the two Russias will look each other in the face: the one that put away and the one that was put away” (Chukovskaya 1997, 190). In both cases, opposed to one another though they may be, society was divided into two (and only two) parts and the moment of reunion was problematized in physical and metaphorical terms. Both of these core aspects became the focus of *Everything Flows*¹ and will be examined in this article.

¹ Grossman dated the typescript of *Everything Flows* to 1955–1963 (on Zabolotskaya Manuscript 1963, see: Garrard 1994; Ghini 2016, 363–364; Krasnikova 2021; Calusio 2023), but also worked on the novel in 1964 (Berzer 1990, 249, 259). Hereafter, references to this document are given as: ZM 1963. By page numbers, I

In this paper, I will analyze *Everything Flows* as a means for Grossman to engage in contemporary discourse surrounding the labor camps. This analysis is rooted in two observations: on the one hand, the novel's deliberate reflection of other literary works such as Veniamin Kaverin's *The Two Captains* (*Dva kapitana*) or Alexander Tvardovsky's *Distance after Distance* (*Za dal'yu dal'*), and on the other, the novel's symbolic evocations of biblical archetypes of Judas and Cain. I conclude that through these two motifs, *Everything Flows* proposes a categorization of personal guilt that may be either borne or rejected by the 'remainers' – the group of those who had preserved their civic lives at the cost of their soul, and as part of which Grossman may have also counted himself.

1. *A Return to Nowhere*

The novel begins with the return of the main character, Ivan Grigor'evich, to Moscow after "three long decades" of exile and labor camps:

В Москву хабаровский поезд приходил к девяти часам утра. [...] А поезд уже вошел в зеленый подмосковный пояс. [...] И человек, который *за три долгих десятилетия* ни разу не вспомнил, что на свете существуют кусты сирени, анютины глазки, садовые дорожки, посыпанные песком, тележки с газированной водой, – тяжело вздохнул, убедившись еще раз, по-новому, что жизнь и без него шла, продолжалась. (Grossman 1970, 5, 10. *Emphasis in all the quotes is mine – O.R.*)²

But this man, who spent a week on the train from Khabarovsk, does not stay in Moscow even for one night: as their ensuing conversation fails so too, does the return to Moscow, the city containing at once the protagonist's former life and his last surviving relative from 30 years ago. The same is true in Leningrad: the protagonist approaches the house where the woman he loved – the woman who ceased writing letters to him because she had gotten married – lives to this day, only to leave without telling her of his return.

By choosing "three long decades," Grossman evokes the entire period of un-freedom spanning from the death of Lenin to the death of Stalin. Furthermore, by sentencing his protagonist to a term that exceeded even the longest known, Grossman entered into a dispute with his contemporaries who wrote of "seventeen years" and thus began count-

do not mean those from the typescript, where the numbering was rearranged when sheets were added, but as an electronic page, which is available at the following link: <https://grossmanweb.eu/doc/garrard-collection/GROSSMAN_VSE-TECHET_Manuscript_HD.pdf>.

² In this paper, quotations from *Everything Flows* are given in Russian. As shown by Grossman's textualists (Calusio 2021; Krasnikova 2021), Grossman was very deliberate and specific in his word choices. Thus, even using the highly accurate translation by Robert and Elisabeth Chandler (Grossman 2009) would have required pointing to the original Russian word each time. See, for example: "[...] with all my heart" instead of "soul" in chapter 6, particularly since analyzing the implication of the corresponding word *dusha* is crucial for this paper, or "Who was guilty [...]" in chapter 7, which transposes the original "kto vinovat" into the past tense, as if the guilt was no longer present (Grossman 1972, 67–68). For consistency, block quotations from other works are also given in Russian.

ing un-freedom only from 1937 onwards³. Indeed, one such return after 17 years of labor camps can be found in Alexander Tvardovsky's *Childhood Friend* (*Drug detstva*), a chapter from his poem *Distance After Distance*, printed in the first issue of *Literaturnaya Moskva* (which was published specifically for the XX Congress of the Party): the narrator, a famous poet, gets off the train to Vladivostok at the Tayshet station. There, he encounters an old friend outside of a train headed in the opposite direction, from Vladivostok to Moscow. Several parallels exist between the *Childhood Friend* and Grossman's novel: nobody expects the character's return – neither the woman he was once involved with (and who has married someone else in the meantime), nor his mother (who did not survive the years of his imprisonment – Tvardovsky 1956, 502) – but he mentions that he has documents confirming his right to travel there (this cliché can be seen also in: Gulia 1962). However, there is a key difference: in the *Childhood Friend*, as well as in subsequent publications of 1956 (Berggol'ts 1956; Aliger 1956), the main desire of those who remained was to welcome their homecoming loved ones and to restore the correct (Ėrenburg 1956, 34) and even the original state of things (Gulia 1962, 12–15, 106).

I suggest that it was to this template, broadcasting an obvious falsehood, that Grossman responded in *Everything Flows*: according to him, those who had kept their civic lives, did not necessarily support the returnees. Making up for the lost years was anything but easy – it was impossible.

2. *A Return from Nonexistence: The Resurrection of Abel*

An additional possible decoding of the number 'thirty' ("three long decades"), can be deduced from the second chapter, which is devoted to the reaction of the main character's cousin to the news of his return. The chapter begins as follows:

Прочтя телеграмму, Николай Андреевич пожалел о часевых, данных почтальону, – телеграмма, очевидно, предназначалась не ему, и вдруг он вспомнил, ахнул: телеграмма была от двоюродного брата Ивана. (Grossman 1970, 11)

Nikolay Andreevich is not expecting his cousin at this time, despite the changes in society that he thinks about (see chapter 3). His cousin returns as if from nonexistence, from another world – it is a resurrection from the dead.

It is worth paying attention to the names that Grossman gave his characters: the name of Nikolay Andreevich's wife is Maria (Maria Pavlovna), while the main character's, his cousin's, name is Ivan (Ivan Grigor'evich). A parallel can be observed in *The Two Captains*, Veniamin Kaverin's most famous novel, completed in 1944, where there were two cousins, Nikolay and Ivan. Ivan was a captain, and an explorer who led a doomed polar expedition along the North Sea Route. Motivated by his attraction to Ivan's wife Maria (Maria

³ On the much shorter period of exile (not imprisonment) of the protagonist prototype, see Popoff 2019, 282–283. Two alternative return dates for the protagonist are given one close to the other, 1954 and 1955 (Grossman 1970, 31, 35).

Vasil'evna), Nikolay had deliberately supplied his cousin's expedition so poorly that his cousin's (and rival's) chance of return was as good as zero. Thus, Nikolay caused the death of his cousin. In the penultimate chapter of Kaverin's novel, the number "thirty years" is pronounced by the protagonist, Sanya Grigor'ev, in his lecture at the Geographical Society in Moscow, where he talked "about an old-time expedition that ended about thirty years ago" and emphasized that these thirty years should not be considered as long-forgotten and irrelevant past (Kaverin 1946, 551).

Several arguments point to the fact that this combination of the characters' names and the number "thirty years" is not a coincidence but an allusion, a technique deliberately used by Grossman. The first of them is Zaozersky, a rather high-ranking biologist in *Everything Flows*, whom Nikolay Andreevich mentions in chapter 4 (Grossman 1970, 42). Just such a scientist – once again with the same name – appears in the last part of Kaverin's trilogy *The Open Book* (*Otkrytaya kniga*). It is noteworthy that while Kaverin frequently featured scientists as characters, and particularly biologists, in his work, this is not typical of Grossman's work. Thus, the inclusion of the figure of Zaozersky would have been a deliberate choice on Grossman's end; not an inclusion of a regular archetype, but a reflection on and response to the work of his long-time colleague⁴. Therefore, the collaboration between the two authors forms the second reason in favor of Grossman's allusion to Kaverin's work.

The third argument concerns the theme of informers, which appears in both books. It is likely that Grossman turned to *The Two Captains* because he needed an allusion that would allow him to reflect simultaneously on fratricide⁵, denunciation, and repentance; the Soviet author who published on repression more than others was Veniamin Kaverin. In his work, the theme of repression was primarily addressed through denunciations. *The Two Captains*, focusing on the late 1930s and also featuring two cousins (two brothers of the second degree), one of whom ends up murdering the other, features the most famous denunciation in Kaverin's prose.

The denunciation in *The Two Captains* is that of Sanya Grigor'ev, written by Nikolay (Antonovich) and his protégé Romashov:

– ... Письма пишут, – однажды сообщила старушка. – Все летчик Г., летчик Г. Донос, поди! И этот [Romashov] просто из себя выходит – попович-то! А Николай Антонович молчит. (Kaverin 1946, 369–370)

By describing this denunciation (the corresponding word "donos" appears in *The Two Captains* several times), Kaverin claimed the appropriate authorities did not act upon unjust denunciations, but fair reports. As a result of Nikolay Antonovich and Romashov's denunciation, Sanya's planned expedition and his talk at the Geographical Society were

⁴ Note also the timeline of publication: the third part of *The Open Book* was published at the end of 1956 in the second issue of the almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva* (Kaverin 1956, 81–82). Thus, Grossman would have had ample opportunity to change Zaozersky's name in his own draft in the following years – yet he did not.

⁵ In Russian, the words for 'brother' and 'cousin' are expressed with the word 'brat', with the addition of the adjective "dvoyurodny" (i.e., "second-degree") in the case of cousin. This enhances the theme of fratricide more than in other languages or translations.

canceled. But Sanya himself does not get arrested, which is apparently due to a thorough investigation into the denunciation, which includes the help of witnesses. Several years later, after a failed attempt on Sanya's life, Sanya returns to Moscow and records Romashov's confession about this denunciation. This leads to Romashov's arrest, followed by an in-depth investigation (Kaverin 1946, 477–478, 545).

At the very same Geographical Society, Sanya publicly accuses Nikolay Antonovich by reading out the papers of Nikolay's cousin Ivan Tatarinov, thus declaring not only to the investigating authorities but also to the public that Nikolay Antonovich bears the blame for the death of his cousin:

Он [Nikolay Antonovich] шел в полной пустоте – и там, где он проходил, долго была еще пустота, как будто никто не хотел идти там, где он только что прошел, стуча своей палкой. (Kaverin 1946, 555)

It is not said whether the investigation will punish Nikolay Antonovich, but he is obviously punished by society: people turn away from the brother who killed his kin, evoking the biblical motif of Cain becoming a social pariah. Society restores justice in agreement with the state, and the men who attempted to denounce an honest Soviet man are revealed to be a pre-revolutionary hustler and a "popovich," i.e., the son of a priest, who have not been exposed in the wake of the Revolution. Kaverin thus reproduced a commonplace of Soviet ideology: Soviet society does not produce informers, but instead exposes those produced by pre-revolutionary society. Investigation and Soviet society work in harmony, and their work turns out to be accurate – this point was reproduced in mass circulation in Kaverin's adventure novel, well-loved by its readers⁶.

In *Searches and Hopes* (*Poiski i nadezhdy*), the third part of *The Open Book*, Kaverin again presents a denunciation, once more written by a member of the older generation. This time, the denouncement is not kept to a mere mention, but described in great detail (Kaverin 1956, 251–252). It leads to the arrest of the main character's husband, Andrey L'vov, who returns from the labor camp only after Stalin's death: more than ten years after *The Two Captains*, after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's report on his cult of personality, Kaverin reproduced the same template, albeit with some variations – justice is restored, and it is restored by the state. Society, as a previously important actor in the restoration of justice, is no longer present here. The third actor of the restoration of justice and the (moral) punishment of the informer – private persons, the family – remains relevant. As in *The Two Captains*, where Nikolay Antonovich's wife (formerly Ivan's wife) did it, in *Searches and Hopes* the informer's wife commits suicide⁷.

The juxtaposition of *Everything Flows* with *The Two Captains* allowed Grossman to respond to this cliché of a just society: in *Everything Flows*, neither the informer nor any

⁶ On the circulation and translation of the novel, see Tatarinova 2019; Kutuzova 2019.

⁷ This motif can be seen in Shalamov's story *The Secondhand Book Dealer* (also 1956), in which the wife of a former NKVD investigator dies suddenly, having previously said that she would "hang herself, drown herself" if her husband returned to his former job (Shalamov 1998, 350, 347).

other guilty parties are punished by society or the state – instead, society consists of people usurping their moral or intellectual superiors in the wake of the latter's arrest (Grossman 1970, 33–34)⁸. It is impossible to restore the original fair social situation, Grossman proposes, not only because the past is irreversible but also because neither the state nor society nor even those closest to the repressed seek to restore justice.

The juxtaposition of Grossman's Nikolay Andreevich with Kaverin's antagonist Nikolay Antonovich implies that Nikolay Andreevich is guilty of sending Ivan to the labor camp. But in *Everything Flows*, a separate informer is featured. Nikolay Andreevich, meanwhile, never wrote a denunciation (see chapter 3) and, in fact, had no self-interest in getting rid of his cousin. Why, then, would Grossman present his readers with such a call-back? Is there a different type of guilt, or blame, that Nikolay Andreevich can be accused of?

3. *Unrepentant Cain*

Grossman is interested in the soul, which Kaverin did not write about: what happens to the soul of the guilty when the innocent returns? As previously mentioned, the themes of fratricide – thanks to the semantic proximity between the words 'cousin' and 'brothers' in Russian – and guilt evoke the biblical motif of Cain and Abel. Could Grossman be referring to Cain and Abel? Could he be using this reference to pose the question: "Once Abel has returned from the other world – what will Cain do?"?

The third chapter of the novel is devoted to Nikolay Andreevich's inner preparation for the arrival of his cousin. The very first sentence introduces the word "*pokayat'sya*" ("to repent," "to be penitent") phonetically linked in Russian to the name Cain (the word "*pokayat'sya*" – a significant substitution! – replaced the word "*rasskazat*" in the typescript; ZM 1963, 10):

Николай Андреевич, ожидая двоюродного брата, думал о своей жизни и *готовился покаяться в ней Ивану*. Он представлял себе, как будет показывать Ивану дом. Вот в столовой текинский ковер, черт, посмотри, красиво ведь? У Маши хороший вкус, не секрет от Ивана, кем был ее отец, а в старом Петербурге, слава богу, понимали толк в жизни.

Как говорить с Иваном? Ведь прошли десятилетия, жизнь прошла. Нет, о том и будет разговор, – не прошла жизнь! Только теперь начинается она!

Да, это будет встреча! Иван приезжает в удивительное время, сколько после смерти Сталина перемен. Они коснулись всех. И рабочих, и крестьян. Ведь хлеб

⁸ See the fragment about how Nikolay envied the scientists Mandel'shtam and Radionov, who then lost their jobs among "cosmopolites" and "weismannists" (Grossman 1970, 16–17). It is likely that the reference to *The Two Captains*, in which Romashov confesses his envy of Sanya (chapter "The Shadow"), originally implied Grossman's idea of envy as the motivation that drives the informer. Grossman also removed the words of Nikolay's wife, who compared her husband to Mozart and Ivan to Salieri (ZM 1963, 53). It can be assumed that Grossman darkened the literary connotations of envy he had introduced into the novel, leaving Cain and Abel. According to the Jewish religious texts, Abel was much stronger than Cain, just as Ivan was stronger than Nikolay.

появился! И вот Иван вернулся из лагеря. И не он один. И в жизни Николая Андреевича произошел многое определивший перелом. (Grossman 1970, 15)

Whose speech is the one in this excerpt, which opens the chapter? It is not an inner monologue: the third-person narrator reports that Nikolay Andreevich (*hereafter in the paper – Nikolay*) wants to repent, but Nikolay keeps switching the subject of his thoughts to the carpet and interior design of his flat. Ivan is “arriv[ing] at an amazing time” – this is apparently Nikolay’s agitated assessment, but the last sentence of the passage quoted above returns to an outsider’s view of him. The voices of the narrator and the character are thus intermingled to the point that the reader cannot always distinguish between them.

Though the narrator has introduced the theme of repentance for which Nikolay has been preparing, no repentance is present in Nikolay’s own thoughts – there is, instead, vanity: thoughts about Ivan are replaced in Nikolay by thoughts about himself, an occurrence that happens not once, but twice in the first three paragraphs of this chapter alone. Just as Nikolay has taken someone else’s position in the workplace and achieved status and prosperity solely due to the arrest of his betters, Nikolay’s thoughts about himself take the place of his thoughts about Ivan.

Usurping another’s place in society, usurping another’s place in one’s own thoughts, allowing oneself to think and feel what one seemingly does not believe in – what is described here is the intrusion of the external world into the internal world, and, since Grossman conceptualizes the state with the agency of a single actor which a person allows into their inner world, into their soul, it reflects the inner bond between a person and the state.

The following excerpt shows only the state (and not Nikolay) in the process of penance, though “a repentant, agonizing feeling” “struggles” in the soul of Nikolay:

Пятого апреля Николай Андреевич разбудил утром жену, отчаянно крикнул:

– Маша! Врачи *не виноваты!* Маша, их пытали!

Государство признало свою страшную вину, – признало, что к заключенным врачам применялись недозволенные методы на допросах.

После первой минуты счастья, светлой душевной легкости, Николай Андреевич неожиданно ощутил какое-то незнакомое, *впервые в жизни пришедшее, мутное, томящее чувство*.

Это было новое, странное и особое чувство вины за свою душевную слабость, за свое выступление на митинге, за свою подпись под коллективным письмом, клеймящим врачей-извергов, за свою готовность согласиться с заведомой неправдой, за то, что это согласие рождалось в нем *добровольно, из глубины души*.

Правильно ли он жил? Действительно, как все вокруг считают, был он честен?

В душе силилось, росло покаянное, томящее чувство.

В тот час, как божественное непогрешимое государство покалось в своем преступлении, Николай Андреевич почувствовал его *смертную земную плоть*, – у государства, как и у Сталина, были сердечные перебои, *белок в моче*. (Grossman 1970, 28–29)

But what does the word “*pokayalos*” mean in this excerpt? Did the state truly repent? Or is this act of penance merely performative?

The choice of words seems odd: why does Grossman not follow the already established tradition of blaming ‘officials,’ those ‘bureaucrats’ portrayed by Il’ya Ėrenburg (*Thaw*, 1954) and Vladimir Dudintsev (*Not by Bread Alone*, 1956) as responsible for the repression enacted at the levels under their command? Why does he describe the ‘state’ – something that is so multi-faceted, so multi-subjected – as a singular subject? I propose that in order for him to describe a person’s *moral dependence on the state*, the state *had* to be whole – to be a subject.

Applying the word *pokayat’sya* to the state is also noteworthy. The Russian word *pokayat’sya* does not necessitate a differentiation between internal (repentance) and public (penance) acknowledgment of one’s own guilt. However, the article on the doctors’ release (The Doctors’ Plot) that Nikolay reads in the country’s leading newspaper *Pravda* (Soobshchenie ministerstva... 1953) does not allow the word *pokayat’sya*, as applied to the state, to be understood as ‘repenting’: it describes an institution, which was dissolved on the day of Stalin’s death (the Ministry of State Security) and not liquidated at all, but rather subsumed by another (the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Lavrenty Beriya), having conducted the investigation with “the use of unauthorized [...] techniques.” At that time, reports exposing saboteurs were common, as they signaled a restoration of the norm (justice). No repentance as such, nor repentance from the state exactly is implied – only penance in public.

I suggest that Grossman’s focus is on the “soul” – on what a person such as Nikolay is to do, if he “voluntarily, from the depths of the soul,” supports the state and loves his brother, who also “meant” much “to his soul”? (Grossman 1970, 11). If so, the question Grossman poses in the chapters centered on Nikolay can be decoded as follows: what can a person do when a murdered brother returns and the state has publicly acknowledged its guilt, even if only once and not in its entirety? What can a person do whose soul is bound to both the returning brother and the state? What can a person do if they have let the state into their soul and allowed it to replace their brother? Will they repent?

4. *Temptation by the State. Open Letters as One of Its Means*

A recurring motif can be observed in *Everything Flows*: the guilty characters talk about their souls instead of the body, though their behavior and actions are markedly influenced by the latter, not the former. What is referred to by their high-sounding words is, in truth, not only physical but shameful. This applies to both Nikolay and the “divine infallible state” which turns out to be made up of “earthly flesh” containing “urine,” which in turn contains “protein clots:” not only is the state not a real God, it is also capable of sin (Grossman 1970, 29). Nikolay is revealed to have followed the rules of a false god instead of true divine commandments:

Ох, и неприятным оказалось это саморазглядывание: неимоверно паскудным был мерзостный список.

В него вписались и общие собрания, и заседания Ученого Совета, и торжественные праздничные заседания, и лабораторные летучки, и статейки, и две книги, и банкеты, и хождение в гости к плохим и важным, и голосования, и застольные шутки, разговоры с заведомыми кадрами, и *подписи под письмами*, и прием у министра.

Но в свитке его жизни было немало и иных писем: тех, что не были написаны, хотя Бог велел их написать. *Было молчание там, где Бог велел сказать слово*, был телефон, по которому обязательно надо было позвонить, и *не было позволено*, имелись посещения, которые *грех было не совершить* и которые *не были совершены*, были *непосланные деньги, телеграммы*. Многого, многого не было в списке его жизни.

И нелепо было теперь, голому, гордиться тем, чем он всегда гордился, — *что никогда не донес*, что, вызванный на Лубянку, отказался давать компрометирующие сведения об арестованном сослуживце, что, столкнувшись на улице с женой высланного товарища, он не отвернулся, а пожал ей руку, спросил о здоровье детей. (Grossman 1970, 30)

At a later point, Ivan refuses to take Nikolay's "suits," which he has offered "from the bottom of his soul" (Grossman 1970, 41) – the very soul that Nikolay has let the 'state' into. On a typed version of the same page, Grossman made two significant edits: first, he added *otvetstvennost'* (ZM 1963, 28), once more harkening back to the central theme, and second, he replaced the enumeration of "jacket" (*pidzhak*) and "pants" (*bryuki*) with the word "suit" (*kostyum*, costume). It is for this reason that Ivan refuses to accept that which covers up Nikolay's connection to the state. The word "depravity" (*nepotrebstvo*), which appears as the last word of chapter 7, refers to this image of a naked man. In biblical terms, this depravity does not mean an exceptional indecent act of an otherwise righteous person (Noah), but the constant behavior of someone who has let the corrupting state into their soul. Moreover, this depravity is shared by many: it's "*our* human depravity," "*nashe* chelovecheskoe nepotrebstvo," that Grossman refers to (Grossman 1970, 71).

What Nikolay is guilty of is not only what he has done but also what he had in mind, yet has not done in spite of God's will, which Nikolay could and should have recognized. The image of such a person, together with the word "sin," evokes the biblical serpent who tempted Eve and, once more, her son Cain, to whom God said: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). Just as Eve and Cain had agency over their moral actions, so too did Nikolay, who instead of "ruling over" the sin, allowed the state-serpent into his soul and contributed to the state's deeds.

The letters to his arrested cousin that remained unwritten (Grossman 1970, 30) were ordered into existence by God, and it is this order that Nikolay defied. But there is one letter that bears Nikolay's signature: it is through letters that the novel juxtaposes the guilt of those who wrote denunciations, i.e. also letters (of which Nikolay was not guilty), and those who signed open letters (of which he was guilty). It is exactly that signature on an

open letter that Ivan will ask about in the next chapter, and it is Nikolay's answer to that question that will cause Ivan to refuse to spend the night at his cousin's⁹:

А Иван Григорьевич, уже зная, что не облегчение, а новую тяжесть принес ему приход к брату, хмуро спросил:

– Скажи-ка, ты подписал то письмо, осуждающее врачей-убийц? Я об этом письме слышал в лагерях от тех, кого все же успели сменить.

– Милый чужак ты наш... – сказал Николай Андреевич и запнулся, замолчал. Внутри у него все похолодело от тоски и одновременно он чувствовал, что вспотел, покраснел, щеки его горели.

Но он не упал на колени, он сказал:

– Дружочек ты мой, дружочек ты мой, ведь и нам нелегко жилось, не только вам, там в лагерях.

– Да Боже избави, – поспешно сказал Иван Григорьевич, – я не судья тебе, да и всем вам. Какой уж судья, что ты, что ты. Наоборот даже... (Grossman 1970, 44–45)

In anticipation of his cousin's arrival, Nikolay has been preparing to "confess to Ivan all the torments of conscience" (Grossman 1970, 39), but when a person with the right to ask what Nikolay had done in those years broaches the subject, Nikolay does not find it in himself to either repent or, at the very least, answer the question directly.

A similar motif can be seen in another novel by Grossman, *Life and Fate*. The storyline of Viktor Shtrum, one of that novel's main characters, to whom Grossman has attributed some of his own life circumstances, ends with his signature on a letter of protest to the English scholars who claimed that the USSR had "repressed thousands upon thousands of people for political crimes" (Grossman 1990–2, 335). Letters frame the story of Shtrum: after signing this dishonored open letter, he thinks of his mother's farewell letter to him, written before the ghetto shooting that kills her, and laments his lack of strength compared to hers. The recurrent theme of signing open letters explains why the writer Grossman – who claimed to be writing an epic on the scale of Leo Tolstoy and reflected on the Bible with thoughts on what sin and repentance are – nonetheless referred his readers to a social-realist adventure novel: after all, Kaverin (and also Ėrenburg) did not sign the letter demanding punishment for the arrested doctors and suggesting the deportation of Soviet Jews to the Far East – but Grossman did (Kaverin 2002, 325–330, on p. 329, the person who suggested signing this letter is called "Judas;" Thun-Hohenstein 2010, 237).

Everything Flows thus served a dual purpose: on the one hand, Grossman denied Kaverin's statements that the denunciations were properly evaluated by the investigators, that justice was truly restored by the very joint efforts of the investigation, society, and family members, no less. On the other hand, addressing Kaverin in the context of this theme of

⁹ The theme of refusing to share food and drink as refusing to receive communion with evil is also present in Shalamov's above-mentioned short story, *The Secondhand Book Dealer*. The theme of refusal to "take the Buffalo sacrament" is central to Heinrich Böll's novel *Billiard at Half-Past Ten* (1959), published in the USSR in 1961 (Böll 1961).

signed open letters, Grossman acknowledged – as publicly as it was possible at the moment, and also for his future readers – that in another situation of moral choice, and even in more dangerous one, Kaverin's choice was more decent than his own.

5. *Unrepentant Judas, Repentant Cain*

"Who is to blame, who will bear responsibility..." (*Kto vinovat, kto otvetit...*): this is the beginning of chapter seven, the chapter on the four Judases (Grossman 1970, 59). Both questions are answered in the chapter, which is framed by two chapters on the informer Pinegin – the only one of Ivan Grigor'evich's old acquaintances he encounters in Leningrad after his departure from his cousin in Moscow.

Within Grossman's classification, Pinegin is unambiguously one of the Judases – he has performed an act of denouncing. There is a passage in the novel that highlights Pinegin's resemblance to Nikolay, who, as previously established, may be equivocated with Cain: both attempt to buy their way out of their guilt to Ivan with material gifts – suits in the case of Nikolay and money in the case of Pinegin. Both claim that their gift comes "from their (whole) soul." Equally from the bottom of their souls, the "SekSots [*sekrentnye sotrudniki*, i.e., secret agents] and informers," i.e., Judases, ask about the reasons for their "weakness" in chapter 7. However, Pinegin is much further from repentance than Nikolay – whereas Nikolay had a "tormenting sensation" (*tomyashchee chuvstvo*) when he thought about the sins of the state and his own nudity, Pinegin's torment occurs in the restaurant after his encounter with Ivan, when he is faced with the agonizing decision between ordering "domestic meat or game" (*zatomilsya mezhdru myasom i dich'yu*). The "split" within Pinegin that the waiter discovers by chance has nothing to do with his soul; his "shame" emerges not from the act of denunciation itself, but from his fear of his act being known to Ivan (Grossman 1970, 68, 29, 74, 58). The images of these two men, Nikolay and Pinegin, correspond to the biblical idea of the availability of repentance for Cain and Judas: Judas, having realized his guilt, accepts his fate and punishment (rather, punishes himself), thus excluding the possibility of doing any work to change his "direction of movement," of metanoia, which is a necessary precondition for repentance. Cain, according to the Christian understanding, is not clearly described as having successfully walked the path of repentance; rather, according to the Jewish understanding, if he was killed by a descendant, then his sins would be forgiven, which probably implies his repentance. Similarly, just as Pinegin has not made any attempt to change his "direction of movement," Nikolay has, at the very least, made an attempt to do so.

At the same time, Grossman's characterizations of Judases and Cains at times go beyond their Old and New Testament equivalents: the degree to which their deeds are voluntary (Cain/Nikolay signs what is offered to him – a collective letter; Judas/Pinegin writes a letter himself – a denunciation) is what they are differentiated by; what they share, is being spared from biblical punishment. There is no condemnation from others to send the Soviet Cain out into the world to roam endlessly, and there is no inner feeling within the

Soviet Judases that causes them to realize the extent of their guilt and, like in the case of Judas Iscariot, hang themselves.

Neither Nikolay nor Pinegin repents or at least owns up to their guilt, and neither do the four Judases whose imaginary trial is described in chapter 7. The only admission of guilt found within this chapter belongs to the narrator and explicitly refers to the real-life author, not to a character, not to a first-person narrator:

Да, да, они не виноваты, их толкали угрюмые, свинцовые силы, на них давили триллионы пудов, нет среди живых невиновных. Все виновны, и ты, подсудимый, и ты, прокурор, и я, думающий о подсудимом, прокуроре и судьбе.

Но почему так больно, так стыдно за наше человеческое непотребство?
(Grossman 1970, 71)

The shameful things Nikolay attributes to himself (banquets, published books, signatures on letters, etc., as cited above) can be attributed to the real-life author Grossman, too. To some extent, Nikolay is his alter ego. But if this is the case, then the question arises: whose voices sounded in Nikolay's soul and mingled in the third chapter? These were the voice of the third-person omniscient narrator and the voice of the character, but the voice of the devil who tempted Nikolay must also be present in Nikolay's soul. Is it possible that the voice of the third-person omniscient narrator was the voice of the devil? Or that the third-person omniscient narrator spoke to the devil in Nikolay's soul? Or that the devil also resounded in the soul of the real-life author? In any case, the literary device of chapter 3 is repeated in chapter 7: the voices are intertwined, and Nikolay's alter ego, who is apparently also Cain, not Judas, comes out to repent in public.

This public aspect of repentance is crucial, for, in Judaism, a person who has committed a sin does not confess to a rabbi, but repents to those he has harmed. This is exactly what Grossman shows in the novel: the two people who had caused harm to Ivan spoke to him and did not repent. They spoke to him in the fall (Grossman 1970, 5), which may even be a reference to the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when one must repent in order for God to forgive the sin. Nikolay and Pinegin did not take this chance. But if this is a Jewish tradition, why is the repentance I have called "real-life author's repentance" done publicly? It can be interpreted in the following manner: because the sin of the signer of the open letters – the sin of the writer whose books have been published in large numbers – can only be absolved by repenting before the readers of his open letters and novels. In a situation where everyone is guilty and there is no earthly authority to judge, the only possible path is voluntary repentance in front of the whole world. If everyone is guilty, it means that everyone is capable of bearing responsibility. As Abel returns from the labor camp, Cain is capable of reflecting on what he has been doing during Abel's absence and writing a novel about this reflection, exploring the mechanisms behind his own conformity in detail.

6. *Christ or Abel? Pure or Sinful, Divine or Human?*

Two sets of images are alongside each other in the novel: Abel / Cain and Christ / Judas.

While the question of which authority has the right to judge and pronounce verdicts was already hinted at in the novel's earlier chapters, it becomes the main focus in chapter seven, which describes an imaginary trial in which the "informers and SekSots" refuse to admit their guilt, claiming that their "freedom of choice is putative," that "people were eliminated using a statistical method" (Grossman 1970, 67). There is a "defense" and a "prosecutor" at the trial, but there is no judge, and this bench corresponds to what the accused say:

Почему же вы, *соучастники*, должны судить нас, соучастников, определять нашу вину? Понимаете, в чем сложность? Может быть, мы и виноваты, но *нет судьи, имеющего моральное право* поставить *вопрос о нашей виновности*. Помните, у Льва Николаевича: нет в мире виноватых! А в нашем государстве новая формула – *все, миром, виноваты, и нет в мире ни одного невиновного*. (Grossman 1970, 69)

The four Judases (informers) claim that only the dead could judge them (Grossman 1970, 69) – does this imply that Ivan Grigor'evich could fulfill that role, whom the Judas Piningin (much like the Cain Nikolay), considered dead ("*Perevod iz mertvykh dush v zhivye!*", Grossman 1970, 57) and whom Anna Sergeevna, in her penance (see further analysis of chapter 14), compares to Christ resurrected? Nikolay, who prepared to repent, also acknowledged his cousin's right to judge (Grossman 1970, 39).

Yet, Ivan Grigor'evich refuses the right to judge his cousin ("I am not a judge of you, nor of all of you," chapter 4), evoking Christ's sermon "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matthew 7:1). This allusion, suggesting that the same measure for moral requirements should be applied to oneself as to others, can be interpreted as Ivan Grigor'evich's refusal to recognize himself as Christ-like because he does not consider himself to have experienced the full measure of suffering. More was experienced in the labor camp by the women and the dead, most of all by the women who died. It may well be for the sake of this very statement that the 13th chapter on Mashen'ka Lyubimova ends with the words "And Ivan Grigor'evich thought that in the Kolyma penal colony a man is not equal to a woman – after all, a man's fate is easier" (Grossman 1970, 114).

But the very chapter on Mashen'ka (chapter 13) suggests Ivan's omniscience, which further weighs in favor of a comparison between him and Christ: he thinks of Mashen'ka, a prisoner in the women's camp, whose fate should by all means be fully obscured to him. In the next chapter, Ivan's comparison with Christ becomes even stronger: it is expressed by Anna Sergeevna.

Christ or Abel? Both connotations are present in the novel. The figure of Abel appears in another work by Grossman, namely, his short story *The Sixth of August* (*Shestoe avgusta*) about American pilots dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This story, written in 1953, was published in 1956 in the first issue of the almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva* without the crucial part of the title, *Abel*. A "twenty-two-year-old bombardier," Joseph Connor

(Grossman 1956, 507), who presses the button and thus destroys Hiroshima, claims in a conversation with other crew members the next day that Abel (equivocated with himself) was not much better than the Cain he killed (equivocated with those who lived in Hiroshima). Moreover, it is Abel who turns out to be the murderer:

- Авель, Авель, где брат твой Каин?
- Каин обычный паренек, не многим хуже Авеля, и город был полон людей вроде нас. Разница в том, что мы есть, а они были. Верно, Блек? Вель ты сам говорил: пора подумать обо всем. (Grossman 1956, 522)

Given that the creation periods of *The Sixth of August* partially overlap with that of *Everything Flows*, it is undeniable that the motif of Cain and Abel was present in Grossman's mind. Yet, when he needed the image of the brothers in *Everything Flows*, Grossman found it necessary to refer his readers to *The Two Captains*, rather than reinforce the Cain-and-Abel-comparison present in his own prose. I suggest that he did this because the image of a guilty Abel was inappropriate for his novel about former prisoners. In *Everything Flows*, Abel, who returned from the labor camp, is not a murderer, he is not guilty of what he was accused of by the investigators (Grossman 1970, 77). The characters of *Life and Fate*, Krymov and Abarchuk, continue their inner search in the labor camp, but they are by no means sinless in contrast to Ivan Grigor'evich. Is it possible that by showing a man returning from the labor camp, Grossman has shown a man who has been purified there? This would be in keeping with the Jewish tradition, according to which a soul that has gone to hell is purified in 12 months – much less than the 30 years of Ivan Grigor'evich's prisons and labor camps.

Regardless, if there is no innocent judge in the trial of the Judases, if even a man who has passed through the camp, who has been purified there, refuses his right to judge, is there any punishment for Judas and Cain? This is what Anna Sergeevna says, repeating the words of Ivan Grigor'evich:

Я спросила, как немцы могли у евреев детей в камерах душить, как они после этого могли жить, неужели ни от людей, ни от бога так и нет им суда? А ты сказал: суд над палачом один — он на жертву свою смотрит не как на человека и сам перестает быть человеком, в себе самом человека казнит, он самому себе палач, а загубленный остается человеком на век, как его ни убивай. (Grossman 1970, 118)¹⁰

The Judases and, apparently, the Cains, having let in the state which tempts like the devil, have lost within themselves the very humanity that the camp prisoners, shrouded from the state's temptation, preserved or perhaps regained through the path of purification. This

¹⁰ Here, Grossman also responds to Yuri Pilyar's books, where this theme means that even the arrested must be treated as human beings (Pilyar 1956, 3–4) and that remaining human means resisting in the underground (Pilyar 1963).

image does not contradict Ivan's comparison with Christ, but only confirms it: Christ was at once a perfect God and a perfect man.

But the ones who have executed their humanity can resurrect it within themselves. Anna Sergeevna describes how she was "bewitched" (*okoldovany*) while in the "asset" (*aktiv*): she stopped viewing the kulaks, i.e. peasants who did not want to be a part of kolkhoz, as human beings, thus becoming like the Germans in the Third Reich who killed the Jews, whom she mentions in the same conversation. Then, she describes her transformation back into a person (*raskoldovalas'*): she "saw people" and chose a vocation more removed from the influence of the 'state' (left the kolkhoz chair to become a cook; Grossman 1970, 118–119). Her repentance is the second one; the first belongs to the novel's "real-life author." According to the classifications of repentants in the novel, these two repentants are not equal: the first repentant (chapter 7, "real-life author") is Cain-like, and the second (chapter 14, Anna Sergeevna), as I will show in the next section, is Judas. Ultimately, then, even Judas has the opportunity to repent, although in the Gospel he does not.

7. The "Judases" among the "Pack Leaders," "Comrades" and "Activists"

The belonging of Anna Sergeevna to the "Judases" can be seen by comparing chapter 14 with her repentance and chapter 7 with the four Judases (on the comparison of Anna Sergeevna with Pinegin and Nikolay see: Calusio 2013, 62).

The number 'four' is no coincidence: in Grossman's later prose (*Life and Fate, Everything Flows*), the classification of four appears from time to time, but at least three times in the context of perpetrators – those who have committed an act whose degree of reprehensibility and, thus, blame, still needs to be examined¹¹. The absence of such a neutral concept in Russian provokes a search either for words that already imply a definite evaluation of the deed (such as 'criminal') or, in Grossman's case, for metaphors (such as "Judas"). The three words Grossman initially chose for his classifications of those whose degree of guilt is precisely at issue were also neutral (the one chronologically first, to a lesser extent) and contained a characterization of their social status: "pack leader" (*vozhak*), "comrade" (*tovarishch*), and "activist" (or, more precisely, a member of the "*aktiv*").

"Judases" replaced "comrades" (ZM 1963, 72, 73, 74, 77): a very significant substitution, suggesting that the Christian connotations that seem to be at the core of the novel were not present in its original conception, nor at the beginning of the active period of work on it after the 1961 search of Grossman's apartment by KGB. By the time the "comrades" became "Judases," they had already been described in detail: the one who denounced under torture; the cynic from whom "no testimony was extracted, he himself showed ingenuity"; the one who denounced on principle; the one who denounced for the sake of gain (Grossman 1970, 59–66).

¹¹ See the 4 types of queues in starving Ukraine in Anna Sergeevna's story: Grossman 1970, 129; see on 4 levels of freedom: Maddalena 2018.

These four types are partly – but not entirely! – repeated in Anna Sergeevna's description of the members of "aktiv":

И я в активе стала. А в активе всего было: и такие, что верили и паразитов ненавидели, и за беднейшее крестьянство, и были, что свои дела обделывали, а больше всего, что приказ выполняли — такие и отца с матерью забывают, только бы исполнить по инструкции. (Grossman 1970, 118)

Both classifications, especially the one in chapter seven, which explicitly employs the term "Judases" and is more visible for the reader, with a clearer differentiation between the types, call back to a classification Grossman proposed in *Life and Fate*. The four types of "comrades" ("Judases") present here, however, do not quite coincide with the four "characters" of "pack leaders" of National Socialism who "led the people's breath, the motherly feeling, the range of reading, the plants" (Grossman 1990–1, 458) in *Life and Fate*.

The pack leaders of the first type are "integral natures," "devoid of mental acuity," "earnestly" catching "slogans" "from the newspapers" and from those above like Hitler and Goebbels; they are modest, they are at the very bottom of the party hierarchy. "At the highest rungs" of it are the pack leaders of the second type: "intelligent cynics" who "laughed at the leader and at high ideals." The pack leaders of the third type are "cheerful masters," and from the point of view of Sturmbannführer Liss, Hitler, the one above those "at the very top," combines the characteristics of the first and third types, and Adolf Eichmann, who at first seemed to Liss to be of the first type, seemed to him to be Hitler's equal after he told him exactly how many Jews were murdered. The fourth type of pack leaders – executors, indifferent to the idea but interested in dachas, dinner sets, and jewelry – bears an obvious parallel to the fourth Judas, who is also interested in goods (Grossman 1990–1, 458–459).

Does the number "four" have any other function than to refer to *Life and Fate*? Do these four perpetrators refer to the four people in the train compartment in the first chapter of *Everything Flows* on the train from Khabarovsk to Moscow? Do they refer to the Haggadah with four verses from Deuteronomy, four sons, four glasses of wine read at Seder, the Passover meal (which would also become the Last Supper)? Is a reference to the four Gospels possible? Is it possible that Grossman knew Karl Jaspers' *The Question of German Guilt*, in which Jaspers distinguished 4 types of guilt attributable to the Germans according to the consequences of their actions and instances thereof (see quoted above: "*vopros o nashej vinovnosti*," "the question of our guilt," Grossman 1970, 69)?

Some of these assumptions seem possible, but not entirely convincing. One of the four passengers in the compartment is Ivan, who is neither a pack leader, nor a Judas, nor an activist; the typescript in which Grossman changes "comrades" to "Judases" already contains four types of activists in Anna Sergeevna's memoirs, so it is likely that this "typologization" originally had no Christian connotations; hypothetically, Grossman could have known Karl Jaspers' book, published in 1946, i.e. when the Nuremberg Trials were underway with representatives of the USSR there, including Grossman's co-editor of *The Black Book*, Il'ya Èrenburg. A correlation with the classification proposed by Jaspers can be seen in *Everything*

Flows (4 types of guilt: legal, moral, political, and metaphysical, i.e. the guilt towards God), but I have found no conclusive data about Grossman's acquaintance with Jaspers' work.

What I can assume with great certainty is that Grossman, like anyone of his generation who grew up in a Jewish place, no matter how religious the family, was familiar from childhood with the Haggadah, which tells of the miracle of deliverance from slavery, and it is to the theme of freedom and slavery that a considerable part of the chapters of *Everything Flows* is devoted. My ultimate proposal is that the typology of four that Grossman identified in *Life and Fate* and repeated in *Everything Flows* originally symbolized certain integrity for him, a system that he saw first through the prism of Judaism and later (also) through the prism of the Gospels, of which there are also four.

8. Conclusions

I suggest that the four figures of perpetrators were Grossman's way of showing to the potential future reader of his two latest novels that after *Life and Fate*, in his further reflection on the responsibility of a perpetrator, he shifted the focus from 'the state' to 'society', asking a new question about how exactly the Judases, the Cains, and society as a whole were related to the 'state'. To the scholarly dispute over whether Grossman absolves his Judases of responsibility by shifting it to the state (see the polemic with Tzvetan Todorov by Guillaume and Finney: Guillaume, Finney 2013), I would like to add that in *Everything Flows*, Grossman suggests a gradation of individual guilt (primarily through the contrast between the guilt of Cain and that of Judas) and points out that both the individual and society as composed of individuals have a space within which they can make choices; for the decision made within this space – to commit or not to commit an act? To allow the state to tempt or not? To repent or not to repent? – he puts the responsibility on the individual. Grossman's reflections on responsibility (state, society, and individual) can also be seen as continuing his polemic with Kaverin.

Continuing *Life and Fate*'s theme of signatures on open letters allowed Grossman to shift another focus – from the inner torment and remorse of the signatory of a dishonorable letter who cannot find the strength to admit to those closest to him what he has done (Shtrum) to the long path of repentance (Nikolay) that yet can be passed till the public penance. It was no coincidence that Grossman, as the real-life author, gave both Shtrum and Nikolay some of the biographical traits of his own life.

The theme of (un)repentance, like the theme of brothers and fratricide, refers to Cain and Abel, although (unlike the names of Christ and Judas) these names are not explicitly stated in the novel itself, but in a short story Grossman wrote at the same time he began working on the novel. As with the four perpetrators and the recurring theme of a signature to an open letter, Grossman's motif of the two brothers helped him to refer his future readers to his earlier prose and to the third shift in focus: this time from the murdered Cain, who avoids the long road of repentance (*Sixth of August*), to the Cain who has the opportunity to walk it (*Everything Flows*).

The religious connotations of the novel, which come not only from Christianity but also from the Tanakh and Jewish prayers, are not always precise. This is why I wish to suggest that Grossman, like some other contemporaries of his reflecting on the crimes of Stalinism and Nazism, regardless of their religion and even if they were religious, used these connotations as a language, a horizon, a system of images that he lacked for this theme¹².

Some other points in *Everything Flows* are reminiscent of the Western cultural discourse, which Grossman could not have known about at all, or at least not in detail – discourses on collective guilt and denial thereof (Jaspers 1946; Adorno 1954); on studies of conformity, which intensified with the Second World War (Fromm 1941; Milgram 1965); on the question of the banality of evil (Arendt 1963).

The third context in which Grossman's novel is set alongside Western contemporary and religious contexts is Soviet literature from the 1940s to the 1960s. In *Everything Flows*, Grossman identified and responded to some clichés of published Soviet literary works about repression: he described the perpetrator's (informer's) unrepentance, instead of his moral defeat, at his encounter with those returned from the labor camp (Kaverin, Gulia, D'yakov); the preservation in a labor camp of freedom and humanity, instead of happiness (Gulia) and willingness to fight underground (Pilyar); the perpetrator's envy of the former prisoner, who was free in the labor camp from the temptations of the diabolical state, instead of envy of the perpetrator as the reason for his denunciation (Kaverin).

The camp returnees can return to themselves, i.e., to the person they were before¹³, since they have preserved themselves. Those tempted by the devilish state also have the opportunity to return to themselves – but only if they repent and free their souls from the state. In this case, the possibility of reuniting those who spent years in labor camps and those who kept their civic lives exists, but it is near to nonexistent: Grossman, perhaps understanding his diagnosis, did not give a life after repentance to Anna Sergeevna, the second repentant present in the novel after Grossman, the “real-life author,” as the first. Whatever the repentants could hope for, Grossman seems to have found no other way out for society than an attempt at repentance by the few who might be willing¹⁴.

¹² See Primo Levi on Cain in the “Shame” chapter; see the motif of communion in Shalamov and Böll, whose works Grossman may have known.

¹³ On the ending of the novel, its title, and the image of the “prodigal son,” see Ghini 2018.

¹⁴ I owe a great deal to several interlocutors who have made crucial contributions to my understanding of sin, temptation, and repentance in Judaism and Christianity. I am very grateful to the participants in the discussion of this paper at Georgetown University, and especially to Olga Meerson, who suggested distinguishing between the concepts of repentance (personal, not public, a long journey that is a prerequisite for metanoia) and penance (public, including insincere: confession of guilt by the state or by prisoners in public trials). I am especially grateful to Quill Kukuj for thoughtful proofreading that, at various stages of drafting this paper, revealed not only its linguistic shortcomings but also some of its substantive ones.

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DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF GROSSMAN'S PHILOSOPHY IN EARLY WESTERN RECEPTION: LÉVINAS, TODOROV, GIUSSANI

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Vasily Grossman's early reception in Western countries (1980–2005) includes essential philosophical interpretations. Among them, we find the celebrated insights of Tzvetan Todorov (1996) and Emmanuel Lévinas (1988, 1991). Lévinas interprets Grossman within his vision of an ethics that transcends all metaphysics, while Todorov makes him a champion of a new humanism with an Enlightenment tone. The first wave of Western interpreters also includes Luigi Giussani, who inserts Grossman within his conception of religious sense and reasoning (1980) as a mechanism for asking totalizing questions that identify God as the only possible partner of human rationality. The article focuses on these three authors and then hints at proposing an in-depth view of metaphysical realism derived from the most recent studies on the Russian author. This kind of realism also accounts for the three positions mentioned.

Keywords: Lévinas, Todorov, Giussani, Realism, Metaphysics

0. Introduction

Many scholars have underlined the Western intelligentsia's peculiar reception of Grossman. This singular treatment was marked by difficulties in accepting Grossman's unusual characteristics. Grossman was neither an "official" author nor an "official" dissident. Seen from the West's point of view, he was known for being a famous Soviet journalist whose report about the Treblinka extermination camp had been used during the Nuremberg trial. In the seventies, the publication of *Everything Flows* (Grossman 2010a)¹ was acknowledged by only a few commentators. Even fewer knew about the manuscript of *Life and Fate* (Grossman 2006a), which arrived in the West in 1978 after many attempts. As the owner and director of the publishing house *L'Age d'homme*, Vladimir Dimitrievich, recalled at the 2006 International Conference in Turin, many publishers were uninterested because it seemed that everything about the gulag had already been said. On the one hand, the Communist intelligentsia in both Italy and France, the nations with the two largest Western Communist parties, did not want to endure additional scandals arising from the inhuman practices that took place in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the adversaries of com-

¹ See also Ellis 2018.

munism and the Soviet regime in the West wanted something politically more substantial that could be used against the regime rather than cultural commentary and novels.

Therefore, few intellectuals acknowledged its importance when *Life and Fate* was published in France (1980) and then in Italy (1984).² However, among those few, some inserted Grossman's work and thought into their philosophical frameworks. Here, I will recall perspectives on Grossman from three commentators: E. Lévinas, T. Todorov, and L. Giussani.

Beyond the speculative side of their observations, these founding fathers of philosophical scholarship focused on Grossman also engendered a small but continuous stream of readers that eventually resulted in Grossman's rising fame, particularly after the 2006 foundation of the Study Center Vasily Grossman in Turin (Italy), new translations of the author into many languages,³ and a BBC radio drama.⁴ From then on, the story of Grossman reception has completely changed, with the continuous flow of Grossman scholarship leading to a deeper study of the philosophical topics initially tackled by the founding fathers of Grossman scholarship.

Investigations into Grossman's philosophy usually focus on his politics: his description of totalitarianism, the comparisons to Hannah Arendt, and the legitimacy of the parallels between Nazism and Communism described in Grossman's pages. The other common approach is to focus on his moral teaching: Grossman is the author advocating for the "small goodness" and "senseless kindness" versus the implacable conclusions of formidable ethical doctrines, free choice versus the deterministic fate preached by various ideologies, and love of life versus the temptation to embrace death. The three approaches taken by Lévinas, Todorov, and Giussani put these crucial topics within more comprehensive theoretical frameworks. Each of these approaches captures essential aspects of Grossman's work, and each, in its own way, advances our understanding of the Russian author.

This paper attempts to recall those fundamental early readings and put them within a qualified realism's theoretical framework. Grossman's realism changed over the years, deepening its metaphysical, cosmological, and epistemic character. In the end, it can be called "metaphysical realism," I believe the three readings discussed here can find a familiar and complementary background in this realism.

² See the introduction of Calusio, Krasnikova, Tosco 2016. See Calusio 2017 for Grossman's reception in Italy.

³ As for the English language, after the announcement of the Turin conference, the translator Robert Chandler revised his own translation of *Life and Fate* (1985), republishing it in 2006. The first part of the saga, published in Russian under the title *За правое дело* (1952), was published by Chandler himself in 2019 under the title *Stalingrad*, with particular editorial choices expressed in the introduction. In 2000, *Pour une juste cause* was published in French (*Pour une juste cause*, Lausanne). Tzvetan Todorov edited Grossman's *Oeuvres* in 2006 and *La paix soit avec vous: notes de voyage en Arménie* in 2007. In Italy, during the same years, readers welcomed a new version of *Vita e destino* (2008), which was followed by translations of *L'inferno di Treblinka* (2010) and the short stories of *Il bene sia con voi!* (2011). In Spain, the first translation of *Vida y destino* (2007) was a literary event and was followed by a Catalan version (*Vida i destí*, 2008) and then by translations of *Todo fluye* (2008), *Por una causa justa* (2011), and *Años de guerra* (2009). War notebooks have appeared in English (*A Writer at War*, 2005), French (*Carnets de Guerre de Moscou a Berlin 1941–1945*, 2008), Spanish (*Un escritor en guerra: Vasili Grossman en el Ejército Rojo, 1941–1945*, 2006), and Italian (*Uno scrittore in guerra*, 2015).

⁴ *Life and Fate*, BBC, London 2011.

1. *Lévinas and transcendental ethics*

Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995) read Grossman at a time when his thought had already become settled (Anckaert 2021). In Grossman, the French philosopher finds confirmation of his central argument: ethics precedes and surpasses metaphysics. Following Heidegger's insights, Lévinas draws a parallel between metaphysics and an objectification of Being that accompanies its loss of meaning. The more you focus on Being as an object, the more you objectify it in language, doctrine, and technique, and the more you restrict it to a measure that Lévinas calls "totality." The error of Western metaphysics has been to confound totality with infinity; that is, with the meaning of Being, of its possibility of revealing itself (Lévinas 1961). Beyond Heidegger, Lévinas maintains that this possibility is not a new form of truth, not even in the form of new interpretations and understandings. Instead, it is something completely different that goes beyond any measure: it is an absolute, ethical call to responsibility. This importance of ethics as a personal call to commitment cannot but resonate with Grossman's small goodness, the gist of Ikonnikov's manuscript presented in *Life and Fate*, possibly the only theoretical manifesto in Grossman's works. As it is well known, in that passage, Grossman advocates for gestures of small goodness and senseless kindness as opposed to ethical theories of the Good. The latter tend to become ideological and violent.

People began to realize how much blood had been split in the name of a petty, doubtful good, in the name of the struggle of this petty good against what it believed to be evil. Sometimes, the concept of good became a scourge, a greater evil than evil itself. [...] There is a deep and undeniable sadness in all this: whenever we see the dawn of an eternal good that will never be overcome by evil [...] whenever we see this dawn, the blood of old people and children is always shed. Not only men, but even God himself is powerless to lessen this evil. (Grossman 2006a, 404–406)

Grossman observes the same tendency in the natural realm and makes a supreme generalization:

Once, when I lived in the Northern forests, I thought that good was to be found neither in man, nor in the predatory world of insects, but in the silent kingdom of the trees. Far from it! I saw the forest's slow movement, the treacherous way it battled against grass and bushes for each inch of soil [...] Only the blind conceive of the kingdom of trees and grass as the world of good [...] Is it that life itself is evil? (Grossman 2006a, 407)

The opposite of this theoretical Good is only the senseless kindness.

Yes, as well as this terrible Good with a capital 'G', there is everyday human kindness [...] The private kindness of one individual towards another; a petty, thoughtless kindness; an unwitnessed kindness. Something we can call senseless kindness. A kindness outside any system of social or religious good. (Grossman 2006a, 407–408)

Lévinas's philosophical considerations based on anthropology and religion acknowledge the perennial validity of this law:⁵

Vassily Grossman, dans *Vie et Destin* – livre si impressionnant au lendemain des crises majeures de notre siècle – va plus loin encore. Il pense que la petite bonté allant d'un homme à son prochain, se perd et se déforme dès qu'elle se cherche organisation et universalité et système, dès qu'elle se veut doctrine, traité de politique et de théologie. Parti, État et même Église. Elle resterait pourtant le seul refuge du bien dans l'Être. Invancue, elle subit la violence du Mal que, petite bonté, elle ne saurait ni vaincre, ni chasser. Petite bonté n'allant que d'homme à homme, sans traverser les lieux et les espaces où se déroulent événements et forces! Remarquable utopie du Bien ou le secret de son au-delà. (Lévinas 1991, 242)⁶

As much as this picture of life and the fate of the universe and human beings is congenial to Lévinas's thought, Anckaert notices a crucial point of distinction.⁷ Lévinas builds up a theory of justice that derives from this ethical primacy. Justice is the call to responsibility that does not exhaust its meaning in the dangerous and always manipulable I-Thou relationship. The call to responsibility is also the call to consider the third presence, the mute face who is present in the I-Thou relationship without being an overt character. This thirdness implies that responsibility becomes justice, which can be administered not directly but through institutions.

Grossman's radical, senseless kindness questions Lévinas's structure of justice. Small gestures cannot become institutions without losing their goodness, novelty, and absolute gratuity. The call of the other is absolute, as Lévinas notes in reference to a particular scene in *Life and Fate* in which this call is not even the face but the back of the head of the other.

Grossman raconte dans *Vie et Destin* comment à la Loubianka, à Moscou, devant le fameux guichet où l'on pouvait transmettre lettres ou colis aux parents et amis arrêtés pour "délits politiques" ou prendre de leurs nouvelles, les personnes faisaient la queue – en lisant chacun sur la nuque de la personne qui le précédait, les sentiments et les espoirs de sa misère. [...] le visage peut prendre sens sur ce qui est le "contraire" du visage! (Lévinas 1991, 244)⁸

⁵ For the Lévinas-Grossman comparison, see also Blumenkranc 2011.

⁶ "Vassily Grossman, in *Life and Fate*—such an impressive book, coming right after the major rises of our century—goes even further. He thinks that the "small goodness" from one person to his fellowman is lost and deformed as soon as it seeks organization and universality and system, as soon as it opts for doctrine, a treatise of politics and theology, a party, a state, and even a church. Yet, it remains the sole refuge of the good in being. Unbeaten, it undergoes the violence of evil, which, as small goodness, it can neither vanquish nor drive out. A little kindness going only from man to man, not crossing distances to get to the places where events and forces unfold! A remarkable Utopia of the good or the secret of its beyond." (Lévinas 1998, 230)

⁷ Anckaert does a good job reading the relationship between Lévinas and Grossman but needs to correct his reading of Grossman as atheistic or without hope. Grossman's scholarship agrees in considering Grossman a bearer of a mysterious positivity towards being. Many readers read this positivity in a religious way, sometimes referring to his Jewish origins, and sometimes to his understanding of religion beyond any confession or creed.

⁸ "In *Life and Fate*, Grossman tells how in Lubyanka, in Moscow, before the infamous gate where one could convey letters or packages to friends and relatives arrested for 'political crimes' or get news of them, people

Lévinas thus integrates Grossman's view into his own by affirming that this radicalism of otherness is the dialectical contestation of the plan of justice that we have already settled. Small goodness is a call to revise institutional justice and to keep it away from ideology and violence.

2. *Todorov and the humanist cosmos*

The I-Thou relationship, the critical turn in Lévinas's reading of Grossman, is also fundamental to Todorov's reading. Tzvetan Todorov (1939–2017) inserts Grossman into his book *Mémoire du mal, tentation du bien: enquête sur le siècle* (2000). He confronts totalitarianism's extreme political and moral evil with the example of lives that resist this evil and find a path towards freedom and democracy. The memory of all of these people fosters humanity, in contrast to the cruel animality that seems to be the fate of human beings in such extraordinary circumstances. Loyal to this vision, Todorov sees Grossman as a character of this resistance, which is centered on the conception that other human beings are the aim of human beings. They find their realization in the gestures of goodness they make for one another. Light within the moral darkness of totalitarianism comes from this naturalistic and humanist view. The moral stance also becomes political because this view cannot but go towards the possibility of engaging in free gestures, which leads to democracy.

Todorov posits a continuity between humanism, the Enlightenment, and this form of liberalism. Beyond the famous parallel between Communism and Nazism that Todorov tackles in a long chapter of his book, he sees Grossman as a moral philosopher who, within the horror of totalitarianism, sees a higher order, a sense, that of humanity not wanting to succumb to chaos. This sense is needed to explain the trauma of his mother's death at the hands of the Nazis (Todorov 2000, 76). Grossman is, in this sense, an ancient philosopher or, in Todorov's words, a humanist who places freedom and goodness at the center of his philosophy as the outcome of the biological impulse of the human being, which must be embodied in individual gestures.

La pensée de Grossman ne s'arrête pas à l'analyse critique du phénomène totalitaire, même si elle y trouve son assise. De ce qu'il voit comme source du mal totalitaire – la soumission et la dégradation de l'individu – il déduit sa propre valeur suprême : l'éloge de l'individu à la fois comme source de l'action (autonomie du je) et comme son destinataire (finalité du tu), incarnation simultanée de la liberté et de la bonté. (Todorov 2000, 77)⁹

Que l'élan vers la liberté fasse partie de la vocation biologique de l'espèce humaine peut apparaître comme rassurant : cela suggère que les régimes qui reposent sur une sup-

formed a line, each reading on the nape of the person in front of him the feelings and hopes of his misery [...] the face can assume meaning on what is the 'opposite' of the face!" (Lévinas 1998, 232)

⁹ "Grossman offers more than a critical analysis of totalitarianism, although that is the underlying thread of his writing. He sees the enslavement and degradation of the individual as the source of the evil in totalitarianism; this leads him to see the individual as his own guiding value. By 'individual,' Grossman means both a source of action (the autonomous self) and a target of action (the finality of the other). To put it in other words, Grossman's values are freedom and kindness". (Todorov 2003, 69)

pression systématique des libertés individuelles sont condamnés à plus ou moins brève échéance. [...] Mais cela ne peut suffire pour nous rassurer : même si tel est le sens de l'évolution biologique rien ne prouve que tel soit aussi le sens de l'histoire humaine. (Todorov 2000, 78–79)¹⁰

Certainly, Todorov's conception of individuals has a different tone than Grossman's. That is why Todorov has to integrate individual freedom with goodness as if they were two separate steps.¹¹

La liberté est la première valeur humaniste, la bonté est la seconde. En effet, l'homme seul n'est pas l'homme entier, l'individualisme n'est pas l'humanité, les hommes deviennent le but de leur action, et non seulement sa source. Or le sommet de la relation à autrui, c'est l'apparition de la simple bonté, le geste qui fait que, par nos soins, une autre personne devienne heureuse. (Todorov 2000, 79)¹²

Grossman is understood in terms of one of his essential cultural roots, the Enlightenment. Indeed, Grossman, as a good Marxist of his time, took the Enlightenment as a crucial step towards Marxism and communism. It is no wonder we find many pages in Grossman that invoke the order and universalism of reason as the opposite of violence. Above all, Grossman frequently condemns Fascism as something against human beings. For example, take the preface to the *Black Book*:¹³

The pure heart of the people was deeply shaken by seeing rivers of innocent blood spilled. Old peasant women and young kolkhozniks, workers, teachers, doctors, professors, and clergy did everything in their power to save the condemned, [...] often putting their own lives and those of their loved ones at risk. [...] Through the dark clouds of racial madness, in the disgusting fog of hatred toward mankind, the eternal, inextinguishable stars of reason, good and humanitarianism continued to shine, announcing the imminent decline of the horrible empire of darkness and the approach of a new dawn. Though they sought to drown them in a sea of blood, the Fascists were unable to subdue the forces of good and of reason lying dormant in the soul of the people. (Ehrenburg, Grossman 2003, 8)

However, Todorov is also correct when he describes Grossman's search for a humanist sense that somehow puts human beings at the top of the universe, conscious of that transcendental stance that is their unique Self. In the end, trust in this transcendental but naturalistic

¹⁰ "It should be comforting to know that the instinct for freedom is part of humanity's biological nature, for that would suggest that political regimes based on the systematic suppression of individual liberty cannot last very long [...]. But that is only half comforting. The trend of biological evolution does not necessarily determine the history of humankind." (Todorov 2003, 69)

¹¹ I thank the anonymous reviewer for underlining this difference of nuances. See also Grossman 2006a, 281–282.

¹² "Freedom is the first humanist value; kindness is the second. A single person is not a whole person: 'individualism is not the same as humanity', for people then become the sole targets of their own actions and not just their source. The highest form of the relationship with another is simple kindness, an act or token by which we make another person happy." (Todorov 2003, 70)

¹³ For an exhaustive account of the complicated history of the *Black Book*, see Boschiero 2015.

and humanist order seems to constitute the kernel of Grossman's thought. It is a kind of objective-idealist reading that we find in one of the most famous scenes in Grossman's pages, the death of Sof'ja Osipovna:

When a person dies, they cross over from the realm of freedom to the realm of slavery. Life is freedom, and dying is a gradual denial of freedom. [...] What constitutes the freedom, the soul of an individual life, is its uniqueness. The reflection of the universe in someone's consciousness is the foundation of his or her power, but life only becomes happiness, is only endowed with freedom and meaning when someone exists as a whole world that has never been repeated in all eternity. (Grossman 2006a, 555)

3. Giussani and epistemic realism

Fr. Luigi Giussani (1922–2005) is at the center of the Italian reception of Grossman. Giussani was a professor of theology at the Catholic University of Milan and the founder of a Catholic movement called Communion and Liberation. His philosophical stance is a traditional Thomism filtered through the pragmatist idea of “experience” he derived from his studies of Niebuhr and American theology (Giussani 2003). Dedicated to the education of youth and the promoter of many charities and cultural activities, he was also a consultant and friend of Fr. Scalfi, the founder of Russia Cristiana, one of the hubs of dissident literature in Europe. Giussani read *Life and Fate* when it was published in Italy by Jaca Book in 1984. From then on, he recommended the book in every year of his teaching with vivid words, underlining Grossman's realism. As we shall see below, realism is one of the crucial keys to reading Grossman. Giussani focuses on the epistemic value of this philosophical position: realism means accepting reality in its richness. For Giussani, realism is the antidote to ideology because it places the importance of the object of thought above our subjective ways of understanding.

Grossman è diventato un grande scrittore non perché era figlio del ceto medio dell'epoca rossa, è diventato grande — così come voi non diventerete se non mi seguite nel leggere certe cose, come per esempio *Vita e destino*, il romanzo «Panta rei», *Tutto scorre...*, che è la sintesi dell'altro — perché ha accettato di impattarsi con le cose come succedevano, col cuore liscio e aperto come una scheda di macchina fotografica; non ha detto una sola bugia in quelle quattrocento pagine. (Giussani 1996, 546–547)¹⁴

For Giussani, realism implies that the reality that affects our senses or minds (ideas and ideals are also real) acquires meaning when they touch the level of affection, which he considers the root of reason and reasonableness.

¹⁴ “Grossman became a great writer [...], great as you will not become if you do not follow me in reading certain things, such as *Life and Fate* or the novel *Everything Flows...*, which is the synthesis of the first, because he accepted the impact on himself of things as they happened, with a heart as smooth and open as a camera card; he did not tell a single lie in those four hundred pages.” My translation.

La conoscenza non è mai tale se non termina in un'affezione. Questa affezione può essere diversa. A seconda di questa affezione, viene motivato l'atteggiamento di un altro fattore, che sta dietro le quinte, dietro questo fenomeno della conoscenza, che si chiama libertà. La libertà è come un coltello che sta lì ed entra tentando di tagliare il nesso tra l'impatto della conoscenza e l'*affectus* che produce. Fa sentire così astratta la cosa, poiché rimane solo la conoscenza (idea astratta) e arresta all'istintività l'atto, se rimane solo l'*affectus*. E né l'una cosa, né l'altra sono giuste. Invece non si può tagliare in due il fenomeno della conoscenza: la conoscenza è registrazione di una cosa in quanto c'è secondo uno shock, un *affectus* che ti produce; e in base a questo c'è poi tutto il gioco della libertà. (Giussani 1996, 232)¹⁵

From this epistemic pattern follows a moral stance: accepting and adhering to reality as it happens. Here, Grossman enters Giussani's theoretical landscape.

Non vi hanno fatto certamente leggere il romanzo *Vita e destino*. Nessuno di voi l'ha letto, prendetevelo e in tre anni lo leggerete! È descritta la vita del popolo russo sotto Stalin, è un libro storico, terribile, bellissimo: è un libro degno di Dostoevskij. Sono vite tutte massacrate e pestate, eppure o era giusto che si suicidassero, o era giusto che vivessero: era giusto che vivessero, perché vivendo accettavano, senza saperlo, la strada che conduceva al loro destino. È ragionevole vivere; altrimenti, quando le cose non vanno, sarebbe ragionevole soltanto spararsi nella tempia: eh, no! (Giussani 1994, 100)¹⁶

Even in this colloquial form, you see the bulk of Giussani's philosophical reading. Grossman's realism is an emotional registration of what happens. This realism implies the role of freedom, called to accept or deny the value of experience. As in classic Thomism, true freedom is only the acceptance of truth, good, and being. Therefore, Grossman's realism is powerful insofar as it introduces us to this conception of freedom.

The three crucial authors of Vasily Grossman's first wave of reception tackled relevant points that hint at a more complete theoretical framework. Lévinas introduces the transcendental level in Grossman's work. There is something, a call that asks for the exercise of responsibility, that comes from a level that is not within the historical realm or any ideological

¹⁵ "Knowledge is never such unless it ends in an affection. This affection can be different. This affection motivates the attitude of another factor behind the scenes, behind this phenomenon of knowledge, which is called freedom. Freedom is like a knife that stands there and enters. Sometimes, freedom tries to cut the nexus between the impact of knowledge and the *affectus* it produces. If only knowledge remains, the thing feels abstract (idea); if only *affectus* remains, it becomes instinct. Both are wrong. Instead, one cannot cut the phenomenon of knowledge: knowledge is the registration of a thing insofar as there is, according to a shock, an *affectus* that it produces in you. This kind of knowledge then starts the whole game of freedom." My translation.

¹⁶ "I am sure they did not have you read *Life and Fate*. Not one of you has read it. Get it, and in three years, you will finish it! In it, the life of the Russian people under Stalin is described; it is a historic, dramatic, and terrific book: it is a book worthy of Dostoevsky. Their lives are all massacred and crushed, yet it was either right for them to commit suicide or right for them to live. It was right for them to live because in living, they were accepting, without knowing, the path that led to their destiny. To live is reasonable; otherwise, when things go badly, it would only be reasonable to shoot yourself in the temple: no way!" (Giussani 2008, 85–86)

pattern. It does not come from the Self itself. It is transcendent. Todorov, who would not agree with absolute transcendence, agrees with the identification of a cosmos, an order of universal values that allow strength and human hope against a century of totalitarianism. Giussani underlines the epistemic value of Grossman realism. These characteristics, singled out by the three authors, guide us towards a new depth in the study of Grossman's theoretical philosophy. I will denote this new step by employing the expression "metaphysical realism."

4. *Metaphysical realism*

As many authors have acknowledged, from the beginning to the end of his work, Grossman's central concern is telling the truth by describing the correspondence between what is real and what the pen puts down on paper.¹⁷ Analysis of the texts shows that Grossman's conception of this reality changed profoundly over the years. His initial realism was materialist, imbued with a certain classical humanism; Gorky did not overlook this when he invited young Grossman to consider that realism is not describing the reality that you see – the reality of poor, suffering people – but writing about a reality that ideology will create.¹⁸

Biographical evolution and philosophical maturation expanded Grossman's initial humanitarian realism. The reality to be described is not only that of the "little people" and their sorrows but began to encompass the enormous stage of nature and world history as they came to play out decisively during the battle of Stalingrad, as well as moral themes of goodness and evil, the necessity of telling the truth, the ultimate meaning of life, the possibility of eternity, the existence of the soul and God. It is thus an enlargement in scope and intent, taking Grossman's realism from a physical to a metaphysical plane. Reality includes the physical, material, social, and political but also the good, the true, the beautiful, and the just (with their opposites resulting from their absence). Reality is thus also full of what medieval philosophy called the transcendentals, the fundamental properties found everywhere in being at every degree, level, and realization.

Significantly, Grossman adds life and freedom to these traditional transcendentals. Freedom and life form a hendiadys that Grossman employs in all his novels and short stories of the second part of his life. Perhaps the most iconic affirmation is his language at the end of the short story *The Sistine Madonna*.

What can we, people of the epoch of Fascism, say before the court of the past and the future? Nothing can vindicate us. We will say, "There has been no time crueler than ours, yet we did not allow what is human in man to perish." Seeing The Sistine Madonna go on her way, we preserve our faith that life and freedom are one, that there is nothing higher than what is human in man. This will live forever and triumph. (Grossman 2010a, 192)

¹⁷ Dell'Asta 2007, Sarnov 2007, Strada 2007, Tosco 2012.

¹⁸ On this exchange with Gorky, which Grossman recalls many times in his novels, see all of the major biographies, for example Garrad, Garrard 1996, Popoff 2019.

The contemporary view of Grossman's work completes the classical picture: truth, goodness, beauty, but also life and freedom, *inter se convertuntur*. A separate discourse could be made for "motherhood," whose power is such in Grossman that it could be included among the transcendentals, were it not that it perhaps coincides *tout court* with life.¹⁹ In any case, reality is no longer what we see, touch, and feel with our senses but also includes all ideas, feelings, abstractions, and ideals that constitute the uniqueness of every human individual. Grossman is not a philosopher and does not analyze this belief in order to establish whether it is explicitly religious. He is not interested in this consequence, but his openness to religion in a broad sense, to his Jewish roots, to a sense of forgiveness, is apparent, as Suslov himself recognized in the notorious dialogue that took place after the seizure of the manuscript of *Life and Fate*.²⁰

The broadening of realism to encompass transcendentals has a counterpart in the theory of truth. The initial truth of Grossman's works is reduced to a correspondence with what happens or has happened, hence the egalitarian or humanitarian impulse. Metaphysical realism from *Life and Fate* onwards is a recognition of transcendentals and an openness, which does not find fulfillment, to their unfolding in the world and in history without, however, doing so according to any dialectic, which would bring Grossman back into the sphere of idealism. His theory of truth becomes similar to that proposed by the pragmatist Charles S. Peirce: it is the embodiment and unfolding of effects over the long course of history. The correspondence between reality and its description takes time to appear. Still, it occurs in a gradual unraveling that coincides with a growth of awareness on the part of human beings. A famous line of William C. Bryant, often quoted by Peirce, which is steeped in ancient Christian wisdom, comes to mind here, perhaps representing Grossman's art and biography: "Truth, crushed to the ground, will rise again."²¹

Truth is not a mere description of states of affairs but is the sure aim of a process that does not invalidate its uniqueness but, rather, expands its possibilities. It will always remain true for Grossman that "truth is one, not two" – his reply to Gorky's theory of duplicitous truth – but the one truth will have to wait to reveal its content entirely. It will take Ivan's years in the concentration camp and loneliness to allow Anna Sergeevna to "confess" to actively participating in the Holodomor (Grossman 2010a, 123–149). It will take Grossman's years and suffering to admit that Lenin was no less guilty than Stalin of the subsequent totalitarian terror (Grossman 2010a, 177–186). It will take years, Grossman seems to say in one of his last stories, to understand the full horror of the atomic bomb (Grossman 2006b, 751–767).

In this expectation of correspondence that will take place in the long run, transcendentals occasionally happen in the flesh, causing people to discover new aspects of their nature.

¹⁹ Maddalena 2023, Sisto 2007.

²⁰ For the transcription of the dialogue with Suslov, see Garrard, Garrard 1996, 357–360. Among Suslov's statements, Grossman recalls: "Your book contains direct comparisons between us and Nazi Germany. [...] You speak favorably in your book about religion, about God, about Catholicism. You defend Trotsky. You often express serious doubts about our Soviet system."

²¹ Bryant 1840.

Indeed, part of Grossmanian realism is the well-known issue surrounding “acts of senseless kindness” or “madness,” the issue of the sudden and gratuitous – and therefore unrepeatable – gestures that appear in human life, not as a consequence of antecedent factors. As we know, Grossman will oppose these gestures to any theoretical conceptualization of the good, the true, the beautiful. These gestures embody transcendentals that form the human in man, the highest level of his freedom, life itself. Transcendental goodness is suddenly manifested in the widow who cures her husband’s murderer (Grossman 2006a, 408–409) or the woman who gives a piece of bread to the German prisoner who was a perpetrator of violence (Grossman 2006a, 805–806).

Truth is embodied in Ikonnikov’s refusal to build a gas chamber and also in the kiss on the hand of the Catholic priest who blesses God’s madman in his “crazy” decision (Grossman 2006a, 304–305). Beauty is embodied entirely in Raphael’s Sistine Madonna, recognized as alive in the streets as she begs for bread in the Ukrainian famine, as she looks down from the stairs at her son kidnapped by the KGB, as she tries to defend her newborn from the clutches of the Nazis at Treblinka. Life, freedom, and motherhood live on in the unique gesture of Sof’ja Osipovna, who dies in a gas chamber, remaining to the last with the little David she has just met. Nature itself becomes a gesture as it happens in *Добро вам!* (The Good be with you!). In the Ararat stone, Grossman sees embodied “the migrations of peoples, paganism, the ideas of Marx and Lenin, the wrath of the Soviet state” (Grossman 2013, 170).

Gestures of senseless kindness are the sublime moments of the embodiment of transcendentals in action. Their strength lies in their sudden and unique appearance, as well as the weakness of their unrepeatable happening as an event, bringing Grossman’s thought closer in this sense to that of Buber than that of Lévinas.²² Grossman’s gestures are not external to metaphysical reality as Lévinas would have said, but are instead – and more classically – expressions of a logos, of a metaphysical order. Grossman does not recognize this position theoretically – emphasizing the difference between this plane of gratuitousness and the rational one – but his realism, which expands metaphysically without yielding to forms of nihilism or pessimism, testifies to a conception of it that to structure itself theoretically would have needed a philosophical training that Grossman did not possess.²³

However, while understood as unrepeatable events, gestures that embody transcendentals show their full extension and intention. They are the beginning of the revelation of the truth that will emerge in the long run. Thus, following Grossman’s characters in his later works, justice, an intrinsic aspect of truth, becomes a necessity for forgiveness; we understand from the Judas chapter of *Everything Flows* (Grossman 2010a, 61–75) and Anna Sergeevna’s confession (Grossman 2010a, 123–149) that goodness becomes gratuitousness as it happens in the many gestures already mentioned of aiding the enemy or, even more emblematically, in the virginal offering Our Lady makes of her Child who will die on the cross (Grossman 2010b, 184–185). Finally, beauty becomes comprehensible only as goodness and truth, as Ivan and Anna Sergeevna say on their night of love, confession, and

²² Buber 1937.

²³ For this acknowledgment see Maddalena 2007, Riconda 2007.

consolation. Speaking the truth means accepting that transcendentals happen and widening our narrow ideological views, leading us to new, unexpected meanings.

Viewed from this perspective, Grossman's philosophical-political position is also better explained. The ideology that prevents one from seeing what happens as the occurrence of transcendentals is and always will be the adversary of every human being. Nazism and communism were striking examples of this because they turned ideologies into the state in the age of society's massification. But in the play *Если верить пифагорейцам* (*If you believe the Pythagoreans*), staged immediately after the war – and not surprisingly much criticized, even though Grossman was at the height of his fame at the time – Grossman portrayed progressives and conservatives as belonging to narrow, ideological circles, just as did the Pythagoreans, who preferred to keep secret, and then erase, the unexpected discovery of irrational numbers, just as the Bolsheviks did with their erasure of the massacres of the kulaks, the purges of '36–'37, and postwar anti-Semitism. One can be ideological in small and large systems, in the family, and in one's group, parish, movement, association, office, party, or union. One can always be ideological because to be ideological is to prevent transcendentals from manifesting themselves or, if one cannot prevent them, to make sure they are silenced. But the truth, even crushed to the ground, will tend to re-emerge, as the events of Grossman's work illustrate in exemplary fashion.

In this light, Grossman's vague adherence to a democratic perspective can be better understood. Democracy is a space in which free events have a better chance of being recognized and affirmed. In fact, in Grossman, the anti-authoritarian perspective emerges primarily and is able to resist the common mindset. The many "no's" characterize the individual's resistance to authority in the name of reality and a larger truth. It is Novikov's "no" to Stalin's order to attack, said in the name of the larger truth of his soldiers' lives (Grossman 2006a, 647–648). It is Ikonnikov's "no" to constructing the gas chamber for the larger truth of non-cooperation with evil (Grossman 2006a, 304–305). It is Ženja's "no" to marriage to Novikov in the name of the larger truth of exercising charity towards her imprisoned ex-husband (Grossman 2006a, 746–753). This force of resistance to the dominant public and state mentality, as well as to a private and perhaps even internalized one, is Grossman's manifesto for democracy.

5. Conclusion

By means of his evolutionary metaphysical realism, Grossman appears to be a classic author of Russian, Jewish, and Christian religious literature. He is not entirely so, but this alone explains the history of his reception. It explains, for example, his having been read and "rescued" mainly by Jewish and Christian scholars like Lévinas and Giussani who, in various ways, recognized a religious aspect in him. Only in this way can it be explained that he was always compared with Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, with the great names of nineteenth-century literature, whose work was pervaded by impelling and imposing metaphysical questions. Finally, this interpretation is the only way to explain the admiration for Grossman in the French philosophical world, which recovered the possibilities of meta-

physics understood as transition, embodiment, and movement in the wake of Bergson. The success of Grossman's thought, contrary to Lévinas's framework, lies in his recovery of metaphysics, but of a metaphysics that must become action, gesture, face, and even politics.

Finally, even in this seemingly classic rediscovery, there remains the very modern quality of a missing ending. Whereas in classical metaphysical realism, the individual, the cosmos, and history seem to find fulfillment and pacification in higher orders, be they religious or historical-ontological, in Grossman's metaphysical realism, the non-repeatable embodiment of transcendentals means that there are only partial developments and that the end of human life and freedom is neither already decided nor already written. It is no accident that *Life and Fate* ends with a series of questions from the grandmother about the destiny – this time understood in the sense of task and fulfillment – of her loved ones (Grossman 2006a, 860–862). Destiny thus conceived is not fate because it is not necessary. The possibility of other incarnations of transcendentals and order is still open. The fact that those ultimate questions and sudden gestural realizations of transcendentals exist is a sign of the possibility of a final and totalizing answer, of a positive and happy outcome for our lives. Still, nothing will happen without our acceptance of what happens and the concomitant sacrifices. Nothing will come to pass without our freedom.

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UPDATING THE VASILY GROSSMAN DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION CENTER: NEW TRANSLATIONS AND THE SPANISH CASE STUDY

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The present paper aims at presenting the Vasily Grossman Documentation Center, from its evolution to its current state, a decade after its official launch in 2014 during the third and last conference organized by the Study Center under the theme “Vasily Grossman’s Heritage: The Originality of a XX Century Classic”. It describes both the outline of the function of the platform, which today aspires to be a benchmark research tool for Grossman studies, and the work of implementing the records, what has already been done and future prospects. As examples of research facilitated by the Documentation Center, an overview of the translations of the major works, *Life and Fate* and *Everything Flows*, into the main European languages is proposed, and the case study of Grossman’s publishing success in Spain is examined.

Keywords: Vasily Grossman, Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center, *Life and Fate*, *Everything Flows*

0. Introduction

The article examines the Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center, tracing the project’s evolution to its current state, its future prospects, and its potential for advancing research in Grossman studies. To illustrate the platform’s updates and its applicability, the article explores the reception and translation of two of Grossman’s works, *Zhizn’ i sud’ba* and *Vse techet*, into major European languages from the late 1980s to 2024. Furthermore, as an example of research enabled by the Documentation Center, it presents a case study on the reception of Grossman’s works in Spain.

The paper is structured into three sections. The first introduces the Digital Documentation Center, a multilingual, searchable platform that catalogues works by and about Grossman. Ongoing updates aim to complete the database, improve usability, and encourage scholarly engagement in expanding its resources. This section provides the foundation for understanding the platform’s functionality and its role in supporting Grossman studies.

The second section demonstrates how the platform enables users to trace the translation history of Grossman’s works into European languages through its available records, focusing on the translations of *Zhizn’ i sud’ba* and *Vse techet*. Initial translations into French, Italian, and English paved the way for successive waves of new editions in various languages.

es, reflecting Grossman's expanding international recognition. From the 2000s onward, renewed interest in Grossman's works has resulted in updated translations and widespread acclaim, establishing him as a central figure in twentieth-century literature.

The final section highlights the Documentation Center's potential to support research on the translation and reception of Grossman's works within specific national contexts. It focuses on the Spanish case, examining the impact of the 2007 edition of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, a landmark publication that sold over 250,000 copies and was celebrated as a significant literary and historical event. This success mirrored both Spain's evolving intellectual climate and the broader global interest in Grossman's work, further cementing his reputation as a literary classic.

1. *The Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center: its aim and state*

The Digital Documentation Center (<https://dc.grossmanweb.eu>) has been created by the members of the Vasily Grossman Study Center with the aim of promoting and facilitating scholarly research. This goal has been pursued by developing a multimedia catalogue that continuously updates the materials collected by the Study Center and available in physical format at its headquarters in Turin. Established in 2008, the Documentation Center marked the beginning of systematic efforts to recover and catalogue these materials. Six years later, on the third and last conference organized by the Study Center under the theme "Vasily Grossman's Heritage: The Originality of a XX Century Classic", it was officially unveiled as the outcome of the initial material digitization effort up to that point. Since then, it has been continuously expanding, with the construction of the database and implementation of the digital user system according to international industry standards being overseen by Heritage srl. Among the many that have collaborated in different ways to the implementation of the platform its creator, Pietro Tosco, must be mentioned along with several young slavists, who contributed through their bibliographic research and the addition of new records.

The digital platform works in three different languages, English, Italian and Russian, and collects materials divided into two sections: works by Grossman, novels, essays and short stories, and works about Grossman. It aims at reflecting as accurately as possible the current state of Grossman studies by recording existing scientific contributions to facilitate mutual knowledge and collaboration between scholars and to provide useful orientation tools for readers and enthusiasts. Information and digital copies of the documents can be accessed, in compliance with copyright laws, through an advanced search system that offers a wide range of search options, allowing users to narrow down their searches by the following parameters: author, title of the work, Grossman's cited work, and subject. The catalogue can also be explored using filters like date ranges and keywords from the Grossman thesaurus.

In addition to the standard bibliographic data on the given publication, the notes provide more specific information, such as the foreword, footnotes, and the complete publication data in case of an extract. Whenever possible, the entry is also linked to a digital copy of the document, either the full volume or corresponding pages in the case of a chapter in a book or an article in a journal. Regarding works about Grossman, each entry is accom-

panied by the abstract, the subjects and a list of keywords in the three languages that make up the thesaurus, allowing users to identify fundamental topics and subjects in Grossman's works following their evolution and critical reception.

Aiming at offering as complete a mapping as possible, the Documentation Center is an ongoing project that must be constantly corrected and updated. To date, the platform contains 824 records: 331 works by Grossman and 493 works about Grossman.

Works by Grossman span the years from 1934, with the [first edition of the novel *Glyukauf*](#), to 2024, with the [Italian](#) and [French](#) translations of *Narod bessmertén*, and the German translation of *Dobro Vam!*. Pietro Tosco has catalogued and added to the platform the works published both in volume and in journals during Grossman's lifetime and posthumously. This includes publications in Soviet Russia and abroad by Russian émigré publishing houses and journals, as well as Russian editions from the first decade of the 2000s and major translations into Italian, English, French, and Spanish up to 2013. Over the past year, the catalogue has been expanded with the addition of 180 records: translations of Grossman's early works that appeared in the 1940s through Moscow's Foreign Languages Publishing House, as well as translations and new editions published in the West up to 2024¹.

As for works on Grossman, the catalogue currently includes texts published from 1934 to 2023, ranging from articles and reviews of his early works published during his lifetime to the most recent articles dedicated to the writer. These encompass articles, memoirs, excerpts from letters, collections of biographical materials, chapters in monographs, and monographs dedicated to Grossman's life and work. They were first published in the Soviet Union and abroad in Russian émigré journals, and later in Russia and the West, accompanying the gradual publication of Grossman's works and marking the advancement of studies related to the writer. Thanks to the extensive work of Pietro Tosco, 304 records have been added, particularly focusing on secondary literature in Russian from the 1930s to the 1990s. This includes the first monographs dedicated to Grossman in Russian ([Bocharov 1970](#); [1990](#); [Lipkin, Berzer 1990](#)) and in English ([Garrard 1996](#)), as well as the volumes of proceedings from the three international conferences dedicated to Grossman ([2007](#); [2011](#); [2016](#)). In recent years, with the contribution of several young slavists, an additional 189 records have been added, 121 of them in the past year. These records comprise articles and monographs published predominantly in the last decade in Russian, English, Italian, French, German, Spanish, and Polish². Although its extension, the work is still not complete, as some bibliographic titles have been identified, but are yet to be included, and the mapping of the editions of Grossman's works and secondary literature could still be expanded.

¹ The work of updating and expanding the Digital Documentation Center over the past year (January-December 2023) is the result of a project funded by a grant from the Vasily Grossman Foundation, in preparation for the fourth Grossman conference held in Milan in November 2023.

² Among the works that have been added it is worth mentioning the two most recent biographies devoted to Grossman, that have complemented the only existing one by John and Carol Garrard (1996), namely the works by Alexandra Popoff ([2019](#)) and Jury Bit-Junan and David Fel'dman ([2016](#)), which have made it possible for non-specialist readers to learn more about the writer.

More specifically, Grossman's works include texts that have appeared in volumes or periodicals, either in Russian or in translation, and for primary literature, the updating of the project covers new translations and editions featuring expanded or revised introductions, thus excluding reprints and unaltered reissues. To facilitate scholarly research, particular attention is paid to the collections of short stories, the index of which is available in the notes and through the citation filters. The sorting of the collections is an ongoing effort, which is expected to be particularly valuable for bibliographical research and for tracking the reception of a given short story. Concerning secondary literature, the search and addition of new contributions encompasses monographs, conference proceedings, articles and reviews published in scientific journals or in the press.

Starting from primary literature, it is essential to note that translations are categorized based on a linguistic criterion, clearly reflected in the call number assigned to each record within the platform.

Translations of Grossman's works have been included in 23 languages – namely Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian – and bibliographic research has been conducted mainly through the catalogues of national libraries. Of course, the platform presents some notable limitations that users must be aware of, since not all languages have yet been covered in the project, and a more comprehensive search is needed, which should encompass works or excerpts from works published in journals as well as potential school editions, currently only considered for the Italian language.

Although the work of collecting and recording the editions is still ongoing, it can already provide some valuable insights. It could help answer questions such as in which languages Grossman's works were translated first, which works were and in which years they appeared, which ones have not yet been translated³. Also, by comparing the recorded translations in the various languages, one may wonder whether it is possible to recognise translation waves concerning individual countries and, more generally, common European trends in the editorial history and reception.

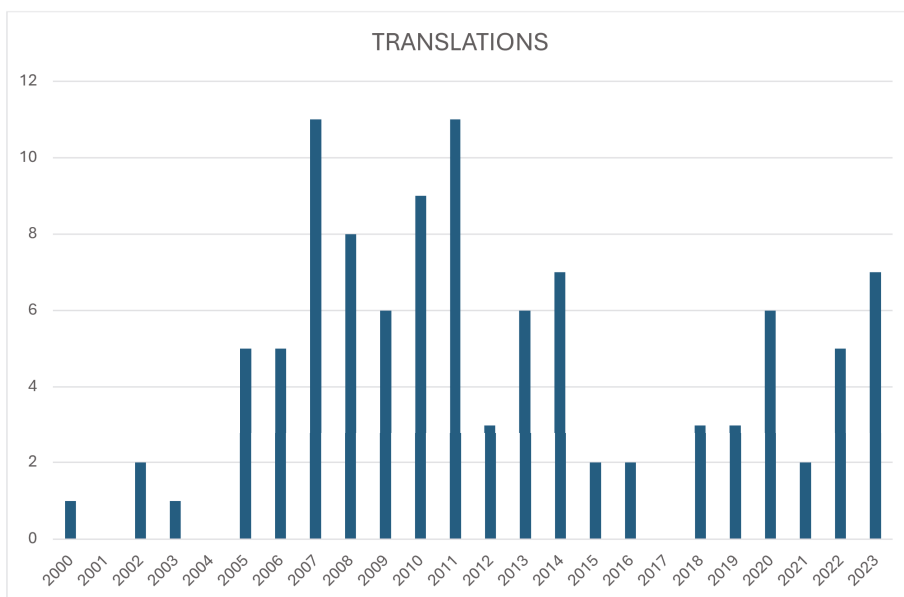
Having outlined the initial goal, development, and current state of the Digital Documentation Center, it seems appropriate to discuss directions for further refinement. Firstly, it is fundamental to complete and enhance the bibliography of works by and about Grossman. On the one hand, it will be necessary to keep the Documentation Center updated with new works as they are progressively published; on the other hand, efforts should be directed towards the bibliography from 1934 to 2024 by filling in any remaining gaps. Secondly, digital copies of the earliest editions should be integrated where possible, and the sorting of the collections of short stories should be finalised. New subsections in the secondary literature should be created to categorize monographs, scientific articles, pro-

³ When representing the total number of translations of all of Grossman's works by country, as currently on the Documentation Center, one should be aware of the fact that the classification allowed by the site is based on linguistic criteria and it does not distinguish the place where the edition was released, which is specified in the given record, but cannot be inferred by the call number or searched through any parameter.

ceedings, press articles, reviews, and PhD theses. Finally, optimizing and standardizing the Grossman Thesaurus with keywords would make digital searching more effective.

Because of its nature and purpose, the Grossman Digital Documentation Center must be constantly expanded and reviewed. Notably, every scholar can contribute to its expansion through bibliographic recommendations, error reports or advice.

Table 1 - *Histogram of the translations of Grossman's works included in the Documentation Center that were published between 2000 and 2023*



<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of translations</i>
2000	1
2001	0
2002	2
2003	1
2004	0
2005	5
2006	5
2007	11
2008	8
2009	6
2010	9

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of translations</i>
2011	11
2012	3
2013	6
2014	7
2015	2
2016	2
2017	0
2018	3
2019	3
2020	6
2021	2
2022	5
2023	7

2. Some preliminary observations on Grossman's publishing history and reception

Focusing on two of the major works by Grossman, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (1950–1960) and *Vse techet* (1955–1963), a simple search on the Documentation Center allows the users to identify which were the first countries to translate them and to gather some initial information about their publishing success. The first versions of Grossman's final testament and novel were published in 1970 in Frankfurt am Main by Posev (Grossman 1970) and in 1980 in Lausanne by L'Âge d'Homme (Grossman 1980), respectively, and were immediately translated into many European languages.

Vse techet was first translated into Italian in 1971 by Pietro Zveteremich (*Tutto scorre*), then, one year later, into French by Jacqueline Lafond (*Tout passe*), English by Thomas P. Whitney (*Forever Flowing*)⁴, and Serbian by Milan Čolić (*Sve teče...*), and in 1977 into Swedish by Lars Erik Blomqvist (*Allt flyter*). Later came the Polish and German translations, respectively in 1984 by Olga Sijanowa (*Wszystko płynie...*) and in 1985 by Nikolai Artemoff, head of the Russian Orthodox parish in Munich (*Alles fließt...*). In Italy the first Mondadori edition was followed by a new translation by Gigliola Venturi for Adelphi that was published in two collections, *Fabula* in 1987 (reissued in 2005), and *Gli Adelphi* in 2010 (with 12 reissues), and in e-book format in 2015. As for English, the 1972 edition was reissued in 1986 (New York: Perennial Library) and in 1997 (Evanston, III: Northwest-

⁴ Reviewing the translation, Gleb Struve comments on the translation of the title as follows: "Mr. Whitney's English version reads well. But it is regrettable that he did not retain the Heraclitean flavor of the Russian title and render it exactly as *Everything Flows*" (Struve 1972).

ern University Press), until in 2009 Robert and Elizabeth Chandler's translation became established with the title *Everything Flows* (New York Review Books). For French readers, Lafond's translation remained a reference and went through several editions all preceded by Efim Etkind's foreword (Juillard-L'Âge d'Homme, 1984; Presses pocket, 1986; Librairie Générale Français, 1993), until the most recent edition published in 2023 for Calmann-Lévy with the notes, chronology and glossary taken from Chandler's translation. On the contrary, new translations came out in German: *Vse techet...* was translated in 1990 by Renate Landa, and twenty years later it was published by Ullstein Verlag in a translation by Annelore Nitschke, with an epilogue by Franziska Thun-Hohenstein (this edition was reissued in 2019). Poland also saw a second edition, six years after the first, thanks to Wiera Bieńkowska, whose translation was republished in 2010 with Chandler's foreword.

Regarding the translations in the other languages recorded in the Documentation Center so far, *Vse techet...* was translated primarily in the early 1990s and in the first decade of the 2000s. Between 1990 and 1999 it appeared in Estonian (*Kõik voolab*, in 1990 by Virve Krimm), Hungarian (*Pantha rhei*, in 1990 by Enyedy György), Finnish (*Kaikki virtaa*, in 1991 by Esa Adrian), Dutch (*Alles stroomt*, first translated by Anne Stoffel in 1993 and reissued in 2009), and Czech (*Panta rhei*, in 1999 by Věra Kružiková).

In other countries, the short novel was translated following the success of *Life and Fate* and Grossman's establishment as one of the major voices in 20th-century Russian literature. In Spain, Marta Rebón translated it in 2008 (*Todo Fluye*) and this edition saw three reissues in 2010, 2017, and 2023. *Vse techet* was published in Croatian by Fikret Cacan in 2010 (*Sve teče*), in Turkish by Ayşe Hacıhasanoğlu in 2013 (*Her şey geçip gider*), in Romanian by Janina Ianoși in 2014 (*Panta rhei*), in Greek by Giōrgos Blánas in 2016 (*Ta pánta rei*), and in Bulgarian by Deian Kiuranov in 2018 (*Vsichko teche*).

On the other hand, the first translations of *Life and Fate* came out in the 1980s. The novel was first translated into French in 1983 by Alexis Berelowitch (*Vie et Destin*, with the collaboration of Anne Coldefy-Faucard and a preface by Efim Etkind), having an "enormous impact" on a whole generation of French readers and being widely admired by the critics⁵. A year later, in 1984, translations appeared in Italian, German, and Finnish, respectively by Cristina Bongiorno (*Vita e destino*), Elisabeth Markstein (*Leben und Schicksal*), and Esa Adrian (*Elämä ja kohtalo*). These were followed in 1985 by Robert Chandler's *Life and Fate*⁶ and Rosa María Bassols's *Vida y destino*, and later by the Serbian two volumes

⁵ "Grossman a eu aussi un impact énorme sur toute une génération de lecteurs français qui n'ont découvert *Vie et Destin* (dont la rédaction débute dès la fin de la guerre) qu'en 1983 aux éditions Juillard/L'Âge d'Homme" (Pachet 2023).

⁶ A second edition was published in 1986 in New York by Harper & Row. "Thanks are due to Robert Chandler for providing a clear account of the novel's history. [...] Mr. Chandler's long labors have made available a work that substantially justifies his own description of it as 'the most complete portrait of Stalinist Russia we have or are ever likely to have.' It is, at very least, a significant addition to the great library of smuggled Russian works by Pasternak and his many successors, works written in the Soviet Union but destined almost exclusively for the un-Kremlinized reader". (Hingley 1986). *Life and Fate* was included in the list of best sellers of 2006 according to NY Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/23/books/best-sellers.html?searchResultPosition=13> (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

version *Život i sudbina*, by Milica Glumac-Radnović and Ivana Sekicki, and the Swedish version by poet and translator Hans Björkegren (*Liv och öde*). These translations were based on the Lausanne edition from 1980, the only one existing until then. After the 1989 Russian unabridged edition, that amended the shortcomings of the earlier, a wave of new translations emerged, although it is worth noting that a significant number of these are still based on the previous version, as the two editions of the translation by Alexis Berelowitch (1995 Editions l'Âge d'Homme), the two reissues of the Italian translation published by Jaca Book (1998; 2005), the Ukrainian from 1991 (*Zhittia i dolia*, by Vasil' Stefak), the first Czech edition from 1993 (*Život a osud*, by Milan Horák and Jiří Honzík).

Indeed, Grossman's widespread international recognition dates to the first decade of the 2000s, when new revised translations appeared in English (authored by Chandler for New York Review Books, NYRB) and French (a revision of the first edition by Berelowitch) in 2006, in German (by Madeleine von Ballestrem, Elisabeth Markstein, Annelore Nitschke und Arkadi Dorfmann)⁷ and Spanish (by Marta Rebón) in 2007, in Italian (by Claudia Zonghetti for Adelphi) and Dutch (*Leven en lot*, by Froukje Slofstra) in 2008, in Polish (*Życie i los*, by Jerzy Czech), Czech and Bulgarian (*Zhivot i sŭdba*, by Zdravka Petrova) in 2009, in Portuguese (*Vida e Destino*, by Nina and Felipe Guerra) and Croatian (*Život i sudbina*, by Fikret Cacan) in 2011, in Turkish (*Yaşam ve yazgı*, translated in three volumes by Ayşe Hacıhasanoğlu) and Hungarian (*Élet és sors*, by András Soproni) in 2012, and in Greek (*Zoē kai peprōméno*, by Giorgos Blánas) in 2013.

The most recent editions include the reissue of Claudia Zonghetti's translation, published by Adelphi in 2022 as 'Nuova edizione ampliata' (New Expanded Edition), which features an index of characters and is also available as an e-book, the French translation by Alexis Berelowitch and Anne Coldefy-Faucard published in 2023 by Calmann-Lévy, that chose to offer five of Grossman's works in a single series (*Pour une juste cause, Vie et Destin, Tout passe, Carnets de guerre 1941–1945, Souvenirs et correspondance*)⁸, and, in the same year, the Turkish reissue of the 2012 edition in one single volume.

From the publishing history and editorial reception of two of Grossman's major works, it can be reasonably inferred that, after being discovered in the late 1970s and early

⁷ From Karl Schlögel's review in "Die Welt", October 2007: "Dass der Roman nun in einer neuen Ausgabe vorliegt, ist ein großes Ereignis, das seine Wirkung über die Literatur hinaus haben wird". A year later, on January 12th 2008, Ulrich M. Schmid remarked on the significance of the reissue of the novel: "Wassili Grossman (1905–1964) gehört nicht zu den bekannten Namen der modernen russischen Literatur. Und doch stammt aus seiner Feder ein atemberaubendes literarisches Werk, das bisher erst unzulänglich wahrgenommen wurde. Mit «Leben und Schicksal» verfasste Grossman in den fünfziger Jahren ein Stalingrad-Epos, das mit schonungsloser Offenheit alle schmerzlichen Themen der sowjetischen Kriegserfahrung anspricht. [...] Die ergänzte und überarbeitete Neuauflage von Grossmans epochalem Roman ermöglicht nun dem deutschsprachigen Leser die Wiederentdeckung eines Autors, der nicht nur über die Verstrickungen der Macht, sondern auch über die moralische Selbstaufklärung des Individuums Gewichtiges zu sagen hat" (Schmid 2008).

⁸ "Parce qu'elles prennent la mesure de l'importance de cet auteur pour comprendre le XXe siècle jusque dans ses répercussions les plus contemporaines, les Editions Calmann-Lévy font le pari de publier cinq volumes de Vassili Grossman d'un seul jet. Une audace rare, qui mérite d'être saluée" (Morard 2023). A sixth volume is being published: *The People Immortal*, announced for September 4th, 2024.

1980s, Grossman's work experienced a second wave of translations in the 1990s, also due to changing historical circumstances, and has garnered significant success in the Western world only from the beginning of the 21st century. A few key dates marked the definitive recognition of Grossman as a major 20th-century writer and a classic of Gulag literature: the first editions of *Life and Fate* according to the 1989 version of the novel (Grossman 1989), the centenary of his birth in 2005, which led to new translations and to the first international conference dedicated to *Life and Fate*⁹. Organised by a group of researchers from the Pier Giorgio Frassati Cultural Center in Turin, the conference marked the establishment of the 'Vasily Grossman Study Center' in January 2006¹⁰.

In 2006, the prestigious volume *Œuvres* was published in France, edited by Tzvetan Todorov and released by Éditions Robert Laffont in the Bouquins collection. It included *Life and fate*, *Everything Flows...*, nine short stories¹¹, Grossman's letters to Khrushchev and to his mother, the notes from the conversation with Mikhail Suslov, and a bibliography of works by and about the writer. This new edition had a significant impact on Grossman's global reception contributing to the emergence of new translations.

In the same year, as previously mentioned, the new edition of *Life and Fate* received immediate attention in the translation by Robert Chandler. Two years later, in 2008, Italian readers enthusiastically welcomed Claudia Zonghetti's new translation of *Life and Fate*, which represented a significant publishing success, with 90,000 copies sold over 10 years (2008–2018) and 22 editions in two collections to date (Calusio 2023). It also paved the way for the translations of *Treblinsky ad (L'inferno di Treblinka)* in 2010, *Dobro Vam! (Il bene sia con voi!)* in 2011, and *Sobaka (La cagnetta)* in 2013.

On the centenary of Grossman's birth, in 2005, the book *A Writer at War*, edited by historian Antony Beevor and researcher Luba Vinogradova, was released, offering a wide selection of the notebooks that Grossman had written as war correspondent during the Second World War while accompanying the Red Army as reporter for the popular newspaper "Krasnaya Zvezda" [Red Star], recovered and shaped into a narrative, enriched with articles and letters by the writer and other contemporary testimonies. Published in London and New York, this edition offers an eye-witness account of "the ruthless truth of war" and

⁹ The conference was preceded by the international exhibition *Life and Fate. The Novel of Freedom and the Battle of Stalingrad*, translated into 5 languages and shown in Europe, New York, Jerusalem, Buenos Aires, and Russia.

¹⁰ In 2009 a second conference was organised, under the title *Vasily Grossman: Between Ideologies and Eternal Questions*. The third took place in Moscow in September 2014, for the 50th anniversary of the writer's death, with the title *Vasily Grossman's Heritage: Originality of a XX Century Classic*. See the Editors' Introduction in *Grossman Studies* (Calusio, Krasnikova, Tosco 2016, XI–XII). The latest conference to date was held at the Catholic University of Milan in November 2023, titled *Fourth International Grossman Conference*.

¹¹ According to the French translation: *Abel; Le six août; Tiergarten; La Madone sixtine; Repos éternel; Maman; La route; Le phosphore; À Kislovodsk*.

played an important role in bringing Grossman to the centre of readers' attention¹², having been translated into eleven languages between 2006 and 2018¹³.

As can be seen from the histogram (Table 1), considering the number of translations per year included in the Documentation Center – excluding unchanged reissues and reprints – there was a steady increase from 2007 to 2014, reflecting a renewed interest in Grossman's work in the Western world¹⁴. This is not an isolated peak, but rather signifies the beginning of Grossman's reception and his establishment among the classics of 20th-century literature.

3. A case study: the Spanish reception of Grossman's *Life and fate*

As can now be easily verified by consulting the Spanish translations recorded in the Documentation Center, Spain represents a real literary case in Grossman's fortune in Europe. Despite an anonymous earlier translation appeared in Moscow in 1946 at the Foreign Languages Publishing House (*Años de guerra [1941–1945]*) and the earliest edition of *Life and Fate* translated from the French by Rosa María Bassols in 1985, Grossman's work went completely unnoticed in Spain until the early 2000s (Montes Doncel 2009).

La novela tuvo una enorme repercusión en Europa, pero pasó sin pena ni gloria en España, donde, como dijo Muñoz Molina, se produce una “posición paradójica, porque en la cultura literaria española este libro es como un Everest que casi nadie ha visto”. (Agencia Efe 2007)

Preceded by the 2006 translation of Beevor and Vinogradova's work (*Un escritor en guerra: Vasili Grossman en el Ejército Rojo, 1941–1945*), a new edition of *Life and Fate* was published in September 2007, marking the beginning of what the Spanish press described as a remarkable literary phenomenon and a “cultural accomplishment”. Coming twenty-two years after the first Spanish version, it turned out to be an unexpected publishing sensation and in less than a year it saw seven reprints and a paperback edition DeBolsillo (Doncel 2009, 41).

¹² “In the west, his reputation has soared in recent years, thanks in part to the 2005 publication of the writer's wartime diaries” (Harding 2010).

¹³ It was translated into: Dutch (*Een Schrijver in oorlog: Vasili Grossman en het Rode Leger, 1941–1945*, 2006), Spanish (*Un escritor en guerra: Vasili Grossman en el Ejército Rojo, 1941–1945*, 2006), French (*Carnets de guerre. De Moscou à Berlin. 1941–1945*, 2007), German (*Ein Schriftsteller im Krieg: Wassili Grossman und die Rote Armee 1941–1945*, 2007), Czech (*Spisovatel ve válce, Vasilij Grossman s Rudou armádou 1941–1945*, 2007), Hungarian (*Író a háborúban. Vaszilij Groszman a Vörös Hadseregben, 1941–1945*, 2007), Greek (*Enas sungraféas ston pólemo: O Vasili Grossman me ton Kókkino Strató 1941–1945*, 2007), Portuguese (*Um escritor na guerra. Vassili Grossman com o exército vermelho 1941–1945*, 2007 and 2008), Turkish (*Savaşta bir yazar: Vasili Grossman Kızıl Ordu'yla 1941–1945*, 2013), Italian (*Uno scrittore in guerra: 1941–1945*, 2015), and Polish (*Pisarz na wojnie: na szlaku bojowym Armii Czerwonej 1941–1945*, 2018).

¹⁴ “*Life and Fate* still seems to me to be a grossly under-read book. [...] The upshot is that *Life and Fate* has never quite had the global readership it deserves. Now, when people are so keen to read about the Second World War – on the basis, I suspect, that it was the last time we in the West felt comprehensively and unequivocally in the right – would be a good moment for that to change” (Lanchester 2007).

The novel, spanning 1,200 pages, was published at the beginning of September by Círculo de Lectores-Galaxia Gutenberg, translated directly from Russian by Marta Rebón. During its presentation, the writers Antonio Muñoz Molina, Luis Mateo Díez, and Xavier Antich described it as a “monumento de ficción” and “la gran novela del sufrimiento humano” (Agencia Efe 2007).

Rebón’s translation – which in March 2009 was awarded the ‘Russian Literature in Spain’ prize, organised by the Boris Yeltsin Foundation – was immediately welcomed by the Spanish press, reflecting the enthusiasm of readers, captivated by the “human and literary quality” of Grossman’s novel¹⁵:

Una obra maestra, sin embargo, casi desconocida en España. En los años ochenta se tradujo del francés y se publicó en Seix Barral, pero pasó inadvertida (en la reseña del libro que se publicó entonces en este diario, Valentí Puig señalaba que Grossman muestra Stalingrado como “el espejo” donde Hitler y Stalin se asemejan). La nueva versión de Marta Rebón que aparece ahora se convierte así en un acontecimiento. (Rojo 2007)

The following day the return of *Life and Fate* to the Spanish publishing scene was defined a long-awaited literary and a historical event: “En el caso de *Vida y destino*, sí se sabe: su publicación ha sido un acontecimiento en otros idiomas, empezando por el propio, y lo es en español. Es un acontecimiento literario y es un acontecimiento histórico” (Vázquez-Rial 2007)¹⁶.

The same day the literary critic Rafael Narbona enthusiastically greeted the Spanish translation of the “monumental novel”, as “a true luxury for the reader who longs to understand the violence of the 20th century and still believes in literature as a form of knowledge and social transformation” (Narbona 2007).

On September 22nd Luis Fernando Moreno Claros introduced Grossman’s life to the readers of *El País*, who could finally delve into the “immense Russian novel” thanks to Rebón’s “magnificent” translation:

Seix Barral ya publicó esta novela en 1985, aunque la versión se hizo del francés en vez del ruso original. Apreciada por un puñado de selectos lectores desde entonces, no traspasó este pequeño círculo. Es ahora cuando esta inmensa ‘novela rusa’ podrá valorarse en todo su esplendor, pues la traducción es magnífica y la edición, superior. (Moreno Claros 2007)

¹⁵ Introduction to the volume *Sobre Vida y destino* on the Galaxia Gutenberg publishing house page: “de una novela cuya calidad humana y literaria ha cautivado a miles de lectores y nos acercan a la aciaga biografía de su autor”. <https://www.galaxiagutenberg.com/producto/sobre-vida-y-destino/> (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

¹⁶ The same day, critic Rafael Narbona wrote in ‘El Español’: “De vez en cuando, la literatura y la historia rescatan a sus protagonistas, revelando que el olvido sólo es un destino provisional. Vasili Grossman no regresó a la actualidad hasta finales de los 80, cuando la URSS comenzó a desintegrarse. Su reaparición no añadió un autor más a las letras rusas, sino que situó en un lugar de excepción *Vida y destino*, una novela monumental, que recobra el papel testimonial de la literatura. [...] Nos encontramos con la primera traducción del texto íntegro en castellano, cuidadosamente editado, un verdadero lujo para el lector que anhela comprender la violencia del siglo XX y aún cree en la literatura como forma de conocimiento y transformación social” (Narbona 2007).

The Spanish translation of *Life and Fate* represented an authentic editorial success, as the digital newspaper El Confidencial noticed in January 2008: “Esta siendo todo un éxito en España. El libro que muchos medios especializados han señalado como uno de los mejores publicados durante el año 2007 sigue su ascenso de ventas imparable: se han vendido 125.000 ejemplares de la misma”.

In only four months, approximately 70,000 copies were acquired in bookstores and an additional 55,000 copies were distributed among Círculo de Lectores members, according to Joan Riambau, the company’s deputy director, who did not hide his astonishment: “Nosotros somos los primeros sorprendidos por el alcance del éxito, porque sabíamos que era una novela esperada en España – dado que aunque había sido publicada por Seix Barral en 1985, en una edición traducida del francés – era prácticamente inencontrable” (Agencia Efe 2008). By March 2009 Rebón’s translation had sold more than 250,000 copies in total to date between its Spanish, Catalan and paperback editions, and was ranked first in the selection of the best books of 2007 by Babelia, the cultural supplement of the newspaper El País¹⁷. In December 2008, on the release of the Spanish translation of *Everything flows...*, Rafael Narbona described *Life and Fate* as a symphonic poem on a par with the great classics and the later novella as chamber music: “Si *Vida y destino* es un poema sinfónico con la altura de los grandes clásicos, *Todo fluye* es una pieza de cámara que anticipa las transformaciones experimentadas por la novela en las últimas décadas” (Narbona 2008). A year later, he ranked Grossman alongside Primo Levi and Albert Camus as essential authors of the 20th century. It was the Barcelona-based Galaxia Gutenberg publishing house that made available most of Grossman’s major works. The 2007 best-seller *Vida y destino* – republished in various formats over the years – was followed by the Catalan version (*Vida i destí*, 2008), and new Spanish editions: *Todo fluye* (2008, reprinted in 2010, 2017 and 2023), *Años de guerra* (2009), *Por una causa justa* (2011), *Eterno reposo y otras narraciones* (2013, the Catalan translation *Repòs etern i altres narracions* appeared in 2014), *El infierno de Treblinka* (2014); *Tiergarten, Berlín 1945* (2018); *Que el bien os acompañe* (2019), *Stalingrado* (2020); *El pueblo es inmortal* (2023)¹⁸. In 2008, the anthological volume entitled *Sobre Vida y destino* was published, which features two articles by Tzvetan Todorov and Efim Etkind, respectively, an article for the given Spanish edition and the preface to the first Russian edition of the novel (Grossman 1980), along with excerpts from Grossman’s correspondence, including the letters to his mother and to Nikita Khrushchev, and the notes from his conversation with the Soviet statesman Mikhail Suslov. With the Spanish translation of Todorov’s French preface the book *Pamjat’ i pis’ma: kniga o Vasilii Grossmane* (*Cartas y recuerdos: un libro sobre Vasili Grossman*) was published in 2019 by Galaxia Gutenberg. Translated by Jorge Ferrer Díaz and Noemí Sobregués, it collects ma-

¹⁷ https://elpais.com/diario/2007/12/29/babelia/1198888753_850215.html (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

¹⁸ The original Spanish edition of this work was published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow in 1946. This edition recovers that revised and corrected translation, as well as an update by Andrei Kozinets that is based on the author’s original manuscript and includes the previously censored and deleted text.

terials about Grossman's life, assembled and commented on by Fedor Guber, the writer's adopted son¹⁹.

Inez Rodrigo was right in 2013, when reviewing the collection *Eterno reposo y otras narraciones*, in predicting that Grossman's fortune would continue to grow, as within 10 years, six more editions of his works would be printed by the same publishing house²⁰. Several factors contributed to Grossman's recently acquired popularity and belated circulation in Spain, where he is now ranked among the classics of the 20th century literature. These include the fact that *Life and Fate* had not been previously translated from the original Russian, but from French; the interest generated by the publication of Beevor and Vinogradova's work in 2006²¹; the promotional efforts of the publisher Galaxia Gutenberg; and the changed ideological climate among Spanish intellectuals, better inclined now than then to the objective reception of a book denouncing Stalinism, as noted by Muñoz Molina (Doncel 2009).

La novela no tuvo la resonancia debida en España “por una razón ideológica: no había voluntad de que ese libro fuera leído, porque en los medios culturales españoles no había debates sobre el totalitarismo. [...] Un difuso estalinismo cultural ha influido profundamente en lo que hemos leído y en los temas sobre los que hemos reflexionado. Eso tiene que hacernos pensar”. (Agencia Efe 2007)

As evidenced by the latest updates to the platform and the examples discussed throughout the article, the Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center is a project designed to reflect the current state of Grossman studies. It serves as a valuable resource for supporting research and fostering collaboration among scholars worldwide. Continuously developing, the platform allows research framed by chronological and linguistic criteria, enabling users to trace the reception of Grossman's works over time and across various languages.

As mentioned earlier, the section dedicated to secondary literature – i.e. studies on Grossman – has been enhanced, with the addition of 189 new records, including articles, conference proceedings, and monographs. Of these, 113 are studies from the past decade (2014–2024). As highlighted by the updates on Grossman's translations and the case of his reception in Spain, this expansion reflects a shift from a predominantly Russian-centric to a more international perspective. It also demonstrates a growing interdisciplinary interest in Grossman's works, with emerging fields such as philosophy, twentieth-century history, and linguistics, underscoring the increasing relevance of his writings across diverse academic disciplines. This growth in secondary literature emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive mapping system, one that is open to contributions in multiple languages and encompasses less-explored research directions.

¹⁹ The collection was published in Polish in 2011 by WAB, edited by Jerzy Czech, and in French in 2023 by Calmann-Lévy, with Todorov's preface and translated by Luba Jurgenson.

²⁰ “Hoy en día, la URSS es historia y la figura de Grossman no para de crecer” (Rodrigo 2013).

²¹ “El reciente libro de Antony Beevor y Luba Vinogradova: *Un escritor en guerra* (Crítica) ha reavivado en España la casi extinta memoria del escritor judeosoviético Vasili Grossman” (Moreno Claros 2007).

Ultimately, the breadth of translations and languages considered, coupled with the expansion of critical literature beyond Russia and the émigré intellectual elite to Europe and the Western world highlights Grossman's rightful place as one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century Russian and world literature, now firmly recognised as a classic.

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TRANSLATORS' TESTIMONIES

ELOQUENT SILENCES

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Throughout his career, Grossman was battling against censorship. But, rather than compromising with the authorities' demands, he proved remarkably adept at turning censorship to his own advantage. This article examined how – in *The People Immortal* and *Stalingrad* – Grossman learned to create silences more eloquent than words.

Keywords: Shoah, Antisemitism, Censorship, Marx, Lenin, Hitler-Stalin Pact, Soviet Collectivization

Grossman is often seen as a plain, straightforward writer, someone who knew how to address a mass readership and who had little sympathy with the hermeticism of most modernists. This view is not without foundation; in his late memoir *An Armenian Sketchbook*, Grossman wrote:

Sometimes I think that the poetry of the twentieth century, for all its brilliance, has less of the universal humanity and passion that imbues the great poetry of the nineteenth century. As if poetry had moved from a bakery to a jeweller's shop and great bakers had been replaced by great jewellers. (Grossman 2013, 31)

Nevertheless, much in Grossman's work is far from transparent. Like Isaak Babel and Andrey Platonov, he knew how to exploit coded language and subtle hints. And when it was clear that a subject was absolutely taboo, he adopted a different strategy. Rather than simply keeping silent, he went out of his way to draw attention to his silence, thus prompting readers to think for themselves, to employ what Andrey Platonov, in his story *Among Animals and Plants* – called their “supplementary imagination” (Platonov 2008, 172).

The People Immortal, the first of Grossman's three war novels, was published in 1942. It includes cogent criticisms of the conduct of the war but, all in all, it is optimistic and morale-boosting – Grossman's contribution to the Soviet war effort. Even here, however, Grossman transgresses the borders of Soviet orthodoxy.

It is evident from the original manuscript that one of the novel's heroes, Commissar Bogariov, was a free-thinking and intellectual Marxist – by no means a loyal Stalinist. Bogariov worked in the Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Institute, an independent institution

dedicated to serious archival research. Viktor Serge, one of Stalin's fiercest critics, greatly admired the institute's director, David Riazanov. Until Riazanov's first arrest in 1931, the institute was a bastion of free thinking. Riazanov's name and the name of his institute had to be deleted from the published version of *The People Immortal*. Nevertheless, Grossman found ways to make it clear that Bogariov was a man who thought for himself.

In the course of the novel, Bogariov takes part in three long conversations. The first – about Lenin's policies in 1917 – is with an old lawyer, who admits to having been critical of Lenin at the time; this conversation was omitted from the published version.

The second conversation is with the usually taciturn Divisional Commander Cherednichenko:

In the company of Bogariov, Cherednichenko was a changed man, anything but taciturn; once he had sat in his office with Bogariov and talked almost the whole night through. Orlovsky had hardly been able to believe it; he had never heard Cherednichenko speak so loudly and animatedly, asking questions, listening and then speaking again. When he went in, they were both looking flushed; it seemed, though, that the two men were not arguing but simply talking about something that really mattered to them. (Grossman 2022, 44–45)

Reading between the lines, we can be sure that Bogariov and Cherednichenko were discussing history and politics and that they were criticizing Stalin. This understanding is confirmed by two of the passages we have reinstated from the manuscript: the account of Bogariov's work at the institute and his exhortation to his men before going into battle. Instead of the customary invocation of Stalin, he concludes, "Within you beats the heart of Lenin!" (Grossman 2022, 193). This is unexpected – and the absence of any mention of Stalin in any version of the novel is truly astonishing. Cherednichenko's mother also has a portrait of Lenin – rather than Stalin – on the wall of her hut.

Grossman tells us equally little about Bogariov's night-time conversation with the collective-farm worker Ignatiev, though he emphasizes its length and importance: "It was Bogariov who spoke and Ignatiev who listened. And Bogariov's words would stay in his memory" (Grossman 2022, 195). Here again, though, a reader can infer that the two men have been speaking about the hardships of peasant life and, above all, about collectivisation and the subsequent famine. This is clear from Ignatiev's last words in this conversation, "We've been through a great deal. There are times we've gone without food. But this is our life. And it's the only life I have" (Grossman 2022, 196).

In *Stalingrad* Grossman employs these eloquent silences to still greater and bolder effect. There are several substantial texts that Grossman tells the reader about but never allows us to see. Among these are Colonel Novikov's wartime notes (present in the manuscript but deleted by Grossman himself, no doubt because they are highly critical of the military leadership); Ivannikov's treatise on "senseless kindness," (which Grossman eventually moved to *Life and Fate*, also changing Ivannikov's name to Ikonnikov); and a long article about Fascism by Maximov, a colleague of Viktor Shtrum who visited German-occupied Czechoslovakia at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact. In the early typescripts, Viktor not

only encourages Maximov to write this article but he also hopes, audaciously, to publish it in the institute bulletin. Maximov writes no less than eighty pages, but Viktor is twice prevented from reading them. One Sunday, his wife interrupts and takes Maximov away to look at dahlias in her dacha garden. Viktor and Maximov agree to meet to discuss the article a week later. But then Hitler invades – and neither Viktor nor Grossman’s readers ever glimpse so much as a word of the article. The irony is many-layered.

The most important of the documents that Grossman never shows us is the letter Viktor Shtrum receives from his mother Anna Semionovna. This letter is as powerful a presence in *Stalingrad* as in *Life and Fate*. We never – in *Stalingrad* – read what Anna has written, but Grossman tells us in detail about the letter’s journey from the Berdichev ghetto to Viktor’s dacha. First, Anna Semionovna hands it through the ghetto fence to an unknown old woman. This woman passes it on to the holy fool Ivannikov. He, in turn, gives it to Gagarov the elderly historian, who gives it to the Old Bolshevik Mostovskoy. The letter then passes through the hands of Tamara Berozkina and Colonel Novikov and into Viktor’s briefcase, where it lies forgotten for several days.

The letter is a sacred object; seven is a sacred number and it is fitting that there are seven stages to the letter’s journey. But the sacred is often experienced as alien and terrifying; the letter is repeatedly seen as an alien object – for one reason or another, everyone concerned seems to wish to have nothing to do with it. Mostovskoy, for example, suggests to Gagarov that it might be better if Ivannikov were to take the letter to the Shaposhnikovs himself; he points out that they are sure to want to ask questions. Gagarov replies:

Yes, of course there will be questions. But Ivannikov says he knows nothing about this envelope. It’s pure chance that it ended up in his hands. He was given it by some woman in Ukraine. He has no idea how it reached her, and he doesn’t know her name or address. And he’d rather not have to go to the Shaposhnikovs. (Grossman 2019, 335)

The letter has been smuggled through a ghetto fence and across the front line. It has come from another world; it has come from beyond the grave. Mostovskoy takes the letter to the Shaposhnikovs’ apartment. When he hands it to Tamara, the young woman who opens the door to him, “she takes the envelope between her thumb and index finger and says in horror, ‘Heavens, what filthy paper – anyone would think it’s been lying in a cellar for the last two years’” (Grossman 2019, 338).

Her reaction is more appropriate than she realizes; it is as if she unconsciously understands that this package contains something terrible. As if to protect herself, she then wraps this threatening package “in a sheet of the thick pink paper people use to make decorations for Christmas trees” (Grossman 2019, 338). Here, her reaction could hardly be more ‘inappropriate’; no wrapping could be less fitting.

Tamara gives the package to Colonel Novikov, who is about to fly to Moscow. Novikov goes to Viktor’s apartment, where he happens to interrupt a romantic tête-à-tête between Viktor and a pretty young neighbour by the name of Nina. Novikov hands over the pack-

age and passes on greetings from Viktor's family. As he does so, "he seemed like an ordinary Red Army soldier, passing on messages to the families of those with whom he had been sharing a dugout" (Grossman 2019, 351). This mention of a dugout is reminiscent of Tamar's remark about the letter looking as if it had been lying in a cellar. It is as if it has come from some underground realm.

Viktor drops the package into his briefcase, then forgets it. Twenty-four hours later, at his dacha, he mistakes it for a bar of chocolate – intended, at least in the early typescripts, as a present for this same Nina. Late in the evening, he opens the package and recognizes his mother's handwriting. It is as if "a calm, clearly audible voice had called to him out of the dark" (Grossman 2019, 358). Viktor at last reads the letter. The morning afterwards, he looks at himself in the mirror, expecting "to see a haggard face with trembling lips" (Grossman 2019, 339). To his surprise, he finds that he looks much the same as he did the day before.

From then on Viktor carries the letter about with him wherever he goes, but he is unable to talk about it even to his own family. He can hardly even talk about it to himself. During the following weeks:

Viktor re-read the letter again and again. Each time he felt the same shock as at the dacha, as if he were reading it for the first time. Perhaps his memory was instinctively resisting, unwilling and unable fully to take in something whose constant presence would make life unbearable. [...] Once, when the pain seemed unbearable, he thought, "If I hide it away somewhere, I might slowly start to calm down. As things are, this letter's like an open grave." But he knew that he would sooner destroy himself than part with this letter that had, by some miracle, managed to find its way to him. (Grossman 2019, 651)

From 1943 to 1946 Grossman had worked for the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee on *The Black Book*, a collection of eyewitness accounts of the Shoah on Soviet and Polish soil; from spring 1945, after the resignation of his colleague Ilya Ehrenburg, he had been head of the editorial board. A Soviet edition of *The Black Book* had been ready for production in 1946 but was never published; the final cancellation of the project was announced on 20 August, 1947. Admitting that Jews constituted the overwhelming majority of those shot at Babi Yar, Berdichev and the many other execution sites might have led people to realize that members of other Soviet nationalities had been accomplices in the genocide. In any case, Stalin had no wish to emphasize Jewish suffering; antisemitism was a force he could exploit in order to bolster support for his regime. What Grossman must have felt when *The Black Book* was aborted after so many years of laborious and agonizing work is hard to imagine.

After the suppression of *The Black Book* – if not long before – Grossman must have been well aware that it was impossible for him to write freely about Viktor's mother's last days. Rather than toning the letter down in an attempt to make it acceptable, he evidently made up his mind to leave a blank space, to replace her letter by an audible silence. He

appears to have taken this decision at an early stage in his work on the novel; there are no notes or drafts for the letter in any of the typescripts.

Anna Semionovna's letter is a gaping hole at the centre of *Stalingrad*. The absence of her own words testifies not only to the severity of late-Stalinist censorship; it testifies, above all, to the difficulty everyone experiences in facing up to so vast a tragedy as the Shoah. It is even possible that Grossman himself – like Viktor – may have needed more time before feeling emotionally strong enough to imagine his mother's last days – as he eventually does with such power in *Life and Fate*.

Grossman not only wrote some of the first accounts of the Shoah to reach a wide audience but he also anticipated people's resistance to such accounts. Primo Levi first published his memoir *If This Be a Man* in 1947, in an edition of 2000 copies; it became well known only in the 1980s. Other first-hand accounts of the Shoah have waited far longer for publication. Anna Semionovna's letter's long and faltering journey to Viktor's dacha anticipates *Life and Fate*'s still longer journey to the reader. It might be no surprise to Grossman that *Life and Fate* only began to win real international recognition nearly fifty years after its completion.

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BENE E MALE SU UNA CORDA DA FUNAMBOLI: DIARIO DI UNA TRADUZIONE

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The contribution is a translation diary that outlines the author's approach to translating the works of Vasily Grossman, with particular attention to the writer's lexical, syntactic, and stylistic characteristics, as well as the choices made to bring him to the Italian readers. The analysis begins with a conscious effort to preserve and safeguard the author's stylistic repetitions within the text and the precision required even in small details (such as the transliteration of German names). It then gradually moves on to assessing the appropriate rendering of Grossman's concise style and the insertions of Ukrainian words or phrases within the text, evaluating the best translation strategies based on the context.

Keywords: Vasily Grossman, Translation, Repetitions, Language Registers, Awareness

Equilibrio è una parola importante. Mantenerlo non è mai facile.

E mantenerlo con una materia letteraria incandescente come la guerra e la morte è ovviamente ancora più complicato. La scrittura deve essere controllata, frenata, così da non smorzare con l'eccesso quanto non ha bisogno di superlativi.

La guerra ripulisce lo stile, lo scarnifica. Anzi no, scarnificare è troppo. Smagrisce, toglie le fronde in eccesso, asciuga. Un po' come quando la madre di Štrum gli scrive per dirgli addio: "E dunque, *Viktor caro*, anch'io ho radunato le mie cose. Ho preso il cuscino, un po' di biancheria, la tazza che mi avevi regalato tu, un cucchiaino, un coltello, due piatti. Si ha bisogno d'altro, forse?" (Grossman 2008, 75)¹.

Il cuscino, il cucchiaino... Si ha bisogno d'altro? Lo stesso vale per la prosa.

L'attenzione di Grossman per la parola è profonda, ma equilibrata. La sua lingua porge fatti ed emozioni senza compiacimenti, senza scalpore. Le sue pagine danno l'impressione che il magma rovente dei fatti si sia rappreso subito, e il lettore può accoglierlo già freddo, pur se appena eiettato. Raffreddato, ma potente.

¹ "Ну вот, Витенька, собралась и я. Взяла я с собой подушку, немного белья, чашечку, которую ты мне когда-то подарил, ложку, нож, две тарелки. Много ли человеку нужно?" (Grossman 1990, 69).

[Inizio subito con una parentesi: mi sia concessa una minima pausa su quel “Viktor caro”, *Viten’ka* nell’originale di Grossman. I lettori italiani faticano a riconoscere i diminutivi e vezzeggiativi russi, e in un momento topico fortissimo di *Vita e destino* com’è la lettera portentosa della madre di Štrum, la ‘traduzione’ di quel *Viten’ka* esplicitando con “caro” l’affetto che conteneva il diminutivo russo è servito, secondo me, a non distrarre nemmeno per un centesimo di secondo il lettore e a scaldare da subito la temperatura di quanto stava per arrivare. Così come accadeva per il lettore russo. E richiudo la parentesi.]

Grossman, dicevo, sa di dover asciugare la sua scrittura, di doverla affinare e amputare persino, a volte. “Non permettere alla lingua di correre avanti al tuo pensiero” scriveva nel VI secolo a.C. Chilone di Sparta, uno dei sette sapienti greci, e Grossman concorda e provvede.

Ce ne offre un esempio lampante Robert Chandler nei suoi apparati a *Il popolo è immortale*, il romanzo in cui Grossman rischiò inevitabilmente di schiacciare sul pedale del pathos, avendolo scritto *in medias res*, con la guerra ancora in corso:

Quando la sentinella diede una sventagliata di mitra, il soldato era a una quindicina di metri dal fieno. Pur ferito alla mano sinistra, riuscì comunque a lanciare una bottiglia incendiaria contro il più grande dei covoni. Poi scappò via. La sentinella lo inseguì gridando, fra le raffiche. Lo rincorsero anche gli altri tedeschi di guardia, che fino a poco prima erano al riparo dei carri armati. Il soldato rosso si fermò di colpo, urlò a gran voce, allegro, i peggiori impropri russi, lanciò una granata contro i tedeschi e si infilò in un fosso sul ciglio della strada: era pieno di sterpi ed erba impolverata. Da lì prese per il frutteto. E i tedeschi lo persero di vista. Tutto ciò che poterono, fu sparare a caso cercando di intuire dove fosse dai rumori che faceva correndo tra i meli bassi e sfiorandone il fitto fogliame. Il coraggio di quel soldato contribuì non poco al successo della battaglia notturna. (Grossman 2024, 231–232)

Troppo. Se anche fosse vero, e Grossman scriverà più di una volta nelle sue lettere quanto la realtà della guerra sovrastasse, scavalcasse spesso la narrazione letteraria, lo scrittore si rende conto che quelle righe suonano false e ricordano piuttosto l’“Ivan Pupkin che fa fuori cinque tedeschi con un cucchiaino” (come scrisse una volta nei suoi taccuini: Grossman 2024, 218) che tanto aborrisce negli scritti altrui. Dunque Grossman cancella due interi paragrafi e asciuga il suo racconto in un condensato ed efficacissimo: “Quando alla fine sparò una raffica di mitra, il soldato era già a pochi metri dalle cataste, riuscì a gettarci la sua bottiglia incendiaria e si accasciò, morto” (Grossman 2024, 69).

Non è censura, in questo caso, e non è autocensura (quello è un capitolo a parte). È una narrazione controllata, pur se immediata o quasi, che mi ha ricordato quella del generale di un racconto di Jorge Luis Borges. Mentre il generale in questione narra per l’ennesima volta una battaglia leggendaria della sua gioventù, Borges che lo ascolta capisce che nelle sue parole non c’è più il ricordo della battaglia, ma il ricordo delle parole con cui l’ha raccontata. Che nel caso di Grossman, sono anche le parole con cui l’ha sentita raccontare. E che lo scrittore restituisce a chi legge, sorvegliandole per maggior efficacia. Per una necessità ‘estetica’, ‘letteraria’ di asciuttezza e precisione al servizio della verità.

Altrettanta asciuttezza e precisione gli è ovviamente dovuta mentre si traduce.

A partire da quelli che possono sembrare dettagli di poco valore.

Tradurre è lavoro di cavallo e di formica, diceva Natalia Ginzburg, e ha dunque bisogno di precisione (la formica) e muscoli (il cavallo) anche quando il testo che si ha davanti sembra non porre troppe difficoltà. Comincerei da una formica, quindi.

Da *L'inferno di Treblinka*:

Sappiamo della SS [Прейфи], detto "il vecchio", uomo cupo e di poche parole che sembrava uno zingaro. Ammazza la malinconia piazzandosi nella discarica del lager per cogliere in castagna i prigionieri che, di nascosto, andavano a cercare qualche buccia di patata: li costringeva ad aprire la bocca, ci infilava la pistola e sparava. (Grossman 2010, 15)

Da *Stalingrado* (qui e in diversi altri passaggi):

Eppure, per quanto abituato a quei cambiamenti, si stava godendo appieno il momento e ripensava (tranquillamente, però, senza prendersela come suo solito) alla puntigliosa ispezione del comandante di battaglione [Прейфи], e alle difficoltà che aveva con l'SS Lenard, la cui compagnia era stata da poco aggiunta al loro reggimento. (Grossman 2022, 487)

Potrà sembrare uno spreco ozioso di tempo quello di 'stanare' l'esatta traslitterazione tedesca del nome dell'SS in questione, ma la citazione di 'quei' nomi è una sorta di nominazione biblica del male che, perciò, ritenevo indispensabile salvaguardare al suo meglio.

Mentre traducevo *L'inferno di Treblinka* ogni ricerca era risultata vana: i siti dedicati, gli scritti su Treblinka nelle lingue che conosco o leggo, le richieste ad amici polonisti e germanisti non avevano dato altro risultato che il farmi finire (anche) in siti negazionisti che cancellavo freneticamente dalla cronologia delle mie ricerche. E nella traduzione poi pubblicata, il nome era stato semplicemente traslitterato lettera per lettera: Preifi, appunto.

Traducendo *Stalingrado*, il problema si è riproposto, e l'acribia del traduttore ha fatto sì che trovassi, finalmente, il sito in polacco e inglese del museo di Treblinka recentemente e finalmente aggiornato con quanto mi interessava trovare:

The camp crew consisted of several SS-officers and about 100 guards.

The deputy commandant was *Sturmführer Karol Gustaw Preif (Fritz Präfi)*, called "Old", "Grandfather", "Pigeon Fancier" by the prisoners – he was in the habit of whistling. In addition to his duties as deputy commandant, Fritz also took care of the utility compound of the camp².

E dunque Preif o Präfi (questa la variante scelta in *Stalingrado*, per maggiore omofonia con la resa di Grossman) ha trovato il suo nome reale, storico, vivo e può e deve finalmente rispondere di tutta la sua malvagità.

² <https://muzeumtreblinka.eu/en/informacje/staff-1/> (ultima consultazione gennaio 2025).

*

Saliamo ora di un gradino. Le ripetizioni. Un'affermazione dura a morire vuole che l'italiano mal le sopporti e che le ripetizioni vadano evitate come la peste per non appesantire un testo letterario. Questo può essere vero quando la ripetizione non è una scelta stilistica fortemente voluta, soprattutto nel caso di un autore che fa dell'asciuttezza la sua matrice letteraria. Perciò, quando Grossman ricorre a un'insistenza ritmica marcata di una medesima parola nel testo, l'attenzione a mantenerne ogni singola occorrenza deve essere altrettanto assillante. Avremo così, per esempio, ne *Il popolo è immortale*:

Era una notte scura, silenziosa e angosciante. *L'angoscia* era nella luce tremula delle stelle, *l'angoscia* fruscava sommessa sotto i piedi delle sentinelle, *l'angoscia* era le ombre scure tra gli alberi immobili della notte, *l'angoscia* faceva scricchiolare i rami accompagnando i ricognitori e non li abbandonava nemmeno quando, passato l'avamposto di difesa, si avvicinavano allo stato maggiore del reggimento. *L'angoscia* gorgogliava e sciaguattava nell'acqua scura della diga del mulino, *l'angoscia* era ovunque: in cielo, sulla terra, nell'acqua. Ma era soprattutto [attenzione: qua la parola manca, per estremo effetto nella sua assenza. – N.d.T.] nel cuore della gente. (Grossman 2024, 101–102)³

E spero che sentiate anche voi quanto risulti efficace anche in italiano questo martellio costante e inesorabile. Che si ferma nell'ultima frase, tra l'altro, dove non serve ripetere il sostantivo, in un'assenza, un silenzio – per citare di nuovo Robert Chandler – che sottolinea ulteriormente la presenza costante nelle righe precedenti e ottiene un effetto dirompente nel punto focale della narrazione.

Un martellio, quello delle ripetizioni, che toglie addirittura il fiato quando alle ripetizioni si aggiungono gli elenchi spesso interminabili di cui Grossman dissemina le sue pagine e di cui ci offre un esempio quanto mai evidente, per esempio, in un passaggio di *Ucraina senza ebrei* (e qua non sarò breve nel citare, ma proprio per far esplodere lo stile di Grossman):

Niente parole. Silenzio. Un popolo ucciso. *Uccisi* i vecchi artigiani, mastri d'eccezione: sarti, cappellai, ciabattini, stagnai, orafi, imbianchini, pellicciai, rilegatori; *uccisi* gli operai: scaricatori, meccanici, elettricisti, muratori, fumisti, fabbri; *uccisi* i *balagula*, i trattoristi, gli autisti, gli ebanisti; *uccisi* i portatori d'acqua, i mugnai, i fornai, i pasticciieri e i cuochi; *uccisi* i dottori: medici generici, dentisti, chirurghi, ginecologi; *uccisi* gli esperti di biochimica e di batteriologia, i direttori delle cliniche universitarie, gli insegnanti di storia, di algebra e di trigonometria; *uccisi* i docenti senza cattedra e gli assistenti di facoltà, i dottorandi e gli addottorati; *uccisi* gli ingegneri metallurgici, i costruttori di ponti e di locomotive, gli architetti; *uccisi* gli

³ “Ночь была тёмной, тихой и очень тревожной. *Тревога* была в дрожащем свете звёзд, *тревога* тихо шуршала под ногами часовых, *тревога* тёмными тенями стояла среди ночных неподвижных деревьев, *тревога*, поскрипывая сучьями, шла с разведчиками и не оставляла их, когда, пройдя мимо боевого охранения, они подходили к штабу полка. *Тревога* плескала и журчала в тёмной воде у мельничной плотины, *тревога* была всюду — в небе, на земле, на воде. Но больше всего было её в людских сердцах” (Grossman 2025).

esperti di strade e di coltivazioni, gli agronomi e gli agrimensori; *uccisi* i ragionieri, i contabili, i commessi dei negozi, i fornitori, i protocollisti, i segretari, i vigilanti notturni; *uccise* le maestre e le sartine; *uccise* le nonne che facevano la calza, sfornavano torte deliziose e preparavano il brodo di pollo e lo strudel con le mele e le noci, e quelle che tutte queste cose non erano capaci di farle e sapevano solo amare figli e nipoti; *uccise* le donne fedeli ai mariti e quelle di più facili costumi; *uccise* le belle ragazze, le brave studentesse e le scolarette garrule; *uccise* le ragazze brutte e sciocche, e quelle con la gobba; *uccise* le cantanti; *uccisi* i ciechi; *uccisi* i sordi; *uccisi* i violinisti e i pianisti; *uccisi* i bambini di due anni e quelli di tre; *uccisi* gli ottantenni con gli occhi torbidi e la cataratta, con le dita diafane e fredde e le voci flebili come carta bianca che fruscia; *uccisi* i neonati che urlavano, bramosamente attaccati ai seni delle madri fino all'ultimo istante. (Grossman 2023, 15–16)⁴

Di nuovo, l'efficacia della pagina anche in italiano viene tutta, credo, dalla conservazione di ogni singola ripetizione nel testo, dal succedersi ossessivo di *uccisi/uccise* (che ho preferito ad “ammazzati”, pur più violento, sia per quella “u” iniziale che rimanda a *убиты* all'attacco di ogni segmento russo (*убиты* — *uccisi*) sia per lo stesso numero di sillabe delle parole nelle due lingue — che quindi mi aiuta a mantenere la scansione del ritmo) unito in questo caso all'elencazione ininterrotta dei mestieri, che a volte ho lasciato rimare impunemente (i trattoristi, gli autisti, gli ebanisti; e ancora: i mugnai, i fornai,) e altre alternatamente: (sarti, cappellai, ciabattini, stagnai, orafi, imbianchini, pellicciai) proprio per ottenere di battere il tempo della frase rafforzando la spirale sonora che avvolge il lettore.

Una spirale avvolgente che Grossman usa, in questo caso sintatticamente (e qua cominciamo a intravedere i muscoli del cavallo), in alcune delle pagine più belle e tragiche di *Vita e destino*, ossia quel capitolo 49 in cui Sof'ja Levinton e David muoiono nella camera a gas e in cui il male estremo e il bene sommo, quello materno che tanto stava a cuore a Grossman,

⁴ “Тишина. Народ *убит*. *Убиты* старые ремесленники, опытные мастера: портные, шапочники, сапожники, медники, ювелиры, маляры, скорняки, переплетчики; *убиты* рабочие — носильщики, механики, электромонтеры, столяры, каменщики, слесари; *убиты* балаголы, трактористы, шоферы, деревообделочники; *убиты* водовозы, мельники, пекари, повара; *убиты* врачи — терапевты, зубные техники, хирурги, гинекологи; *убиты* ученые — бактериологи и биохимики, директора университетских клиник, учителя истории, алгебры и тригонометрии; *убиты* приват-доценты, ассистенты кафедр, кандидаты и доктора всевозможных наук; *убиты* инженеры — металлурги, мостовики, архитекторы, паровозостроители; *убиты* бухгалтеры, счетоводы, торговые работники, агенты снабжения, секретари, ночные сторожа; *убиты* учительницы, швеи; *убиты* бабушки, умевшие вязать чулки и печь вкусное печенье, варить бульон и делать струдель с орехами и яблоками, и *убиты* бабушки, которые не были мастерицами на все руки — они только умели любить своих детей и детей своих детей; *убиты* женщины, которые были преданы своим мужьям, и *убиты* легкомысленные женщины; *убиты* красивые девушки, ученые студентки и веселые школьницы; *убиты* некрасивые и глупые; *убиты* горбатые, *убиты* певицы, *убиты* слепые, *убиты* глухонемые, *убиты* скрипачи и пианисты, *убиты* двухлетние и трехлетние, *убиты* восьмидесятилетние старики с катарактами на глазах, с холодными прозрачными пальцами и тихими голосами, словно шелестящая бумага, и *убиты* кричащие младенцы, жадно сосавшие материнскую грудь до последней своей минуты” (Grossman 1990b).

si avviluppano tragicamente (faccio dei tagli al brano che riporto, perché purtroppo sarebbe troppo lungo da leggere per intero):

Camminava a *passi piccoli* e lenti in una scatola di cemento con il soffitto basso. [...] Era un movimento che aveva poco di *umano*. Un movimento estraneo anche a forme di vita minori. Non aveva senso né scopo, non si doveva alla volontà di un essere vivente. La stanza era la foce di un fiume *umano*, gli ultimi arrivati *spintonavano* quelli già dentro, che a loro volta *spintonavano* il proprio vicino, e da quelle serie di *spinte*, gomitate, spallate, panciate (*di nuovo la rima delle finali*) nasceva un movimento identico a quello delle molecole scoperto da Brown, il botanico.

[...] Non rimasero a lungo accanto al muro, però; se ne staccarono e cominciarono a camminare a *passi minuti*. Lui era *più* veloce di lei, se ne rese conto. La mano di Sof'ja Osipovna stringeva la sua mano, lo teneva vicino a sé. Ma un'altra forza – strana, dolce, lenta – lo attirava lontano, e Sof'ja Osipovna dischiuse le dita... La folla era *sempre più* fitta, i movimenti *sempre più* lenti, i passi *sempre più* corti. Nessuno dirigeva il traffico di quella scatola di cemento. Ai tedeschi non importava se la gente dentro la camera a gas restava immobile o disegnava assurdi zigzag e semicerchi. Anche il ragazzino nudo faceva dei *piccoli passi* [di nuovo – N.d.T.] minuti, insensati. La curva del moto del suo *piccolo* corpo leggero non combaciava più con la curva del moto del corpo grosso e pesante di Sof'ja Osipovna; ormai erano distanti.

[...] Voleva sfuggire a quel ritmo ipnotico di cemento, il suo corpo si dibatteva inutilmente, invano, come un pesce sul tavolo di una cucina. Si zitti subito: si sentì mancare il respiro *anche lui*, e *anche lui* [qua il doppio *затих, задохнулся* l'ho rimarcato con questo doppio “anche lui” – N.d.T.] ricominciò a camminare a *piccoli passi*, a fare quello che facevano tutti. Il disordine che aveva provocato modificò le curve della rotazione, e David si ritrovò di nuovo accanto a Sof'ja Osipovna. Lei lo strinse a sé con la forza che solo chi lavora nei campi di sterminio ha imparato a conoscere e a misurare: chi svuota le camere a gas non cerca mai di staccare due corpi abbracciati. (Grossman 2008, 526–527)⁵

⁵ “Он шел *маленькими*, *небыстрыми шагами* по бетонному ящику с низким потолком. [...] Это было несвойственное *людям* движение. Это было движение, несвойственное и низшим живым существам. В нем не было смысла и цели, в нем не проявлялась воля живущих. *Людской* поток втекал в камеру, вновь входившие *подталкивали* уже вошедших, те *подталкивали* своих соседей, этих бесчисленных маленьких *толчков* локтем, плечом, животом рождалось движение, ничем неотличившееся от молекулярного движения, открытого ботаником Броуном. [...]”

Но они не удержались у стены, отделились от нее и стали двигаться *мелкими шажками*. Давид почувствовал, что он двигается *быстрее*, чем Софья Осиповна. Ее рука сжала его руку, притягивая к себе. А какая-то мягкая, постепенная сила оттягивала Давида, пальцы Софьи Осиповны стали разжиматься. Все *плотнее* становилась толпа в камере, все *медленней* стали движения, все короче *шажки* людей. Никто не руководил движением в бетонном ящике. Немцам стало безразлично, стояли люди в газовой камере неподвижно или совершают бессмысленные зигзаги, полукружия. Иг олый мальчик делал *крошечные* бессмысленные *шажки*. Кривая движения его легкого *маленького* тела перестала совпадать с кривой движения большого итяжего тела Софьи Осиповны, и вот они разделились. [...]”

Он хотел вырваться из гипнотического бетонного ритма, его тело бунтовало, как рыбы тело на кухонном столе, слепо, без мысли. Он вскоре *затих, задохнулся* и стал *семенить ногами*, совершать то, что совершали все.

E così continuano, per altre due pagine, finché David muore e poi, dopo di lui, muore anche Sof'ja Levinton, diventando con ciò madre.

Spero che abbiate sentito il ripetersi costante di alcune parole nel brano (i “piccoli passi”, i “sempre più”, i verbi ripetuti, ma anche una struttura della frase che, fra preposizioni brevi e altre più lunghe crea una sorta di vortice che attira il lettore fino al momento in cui i due personaggi muoiono). E per la morte basterà UNA sola parola.

Insomma, l'equilibrio, la corda da funambolo su cui ci si muove traducendo Grossman dà modo di cimentarsi con una scrittura sorvegliata, ma esteticamente e letterariamente capace di calibrarsi ogni volta fra resoconti crudeli di battaglie (l'attacco alla stazione di Stalingrado), momenti di leggerezza mai fine a sé stessa (il pranzo di compleanno in casa Šapošnikov), intermezzi quasi lirici di sguardi sulla natura (la steppa calmuca, il pero sotto le finestre della madre di Štrum, i fiori nel giardino della dacia di Ljudmila), disquisizioni scientifiche (Čepyžin), momenti quasi pruriginosi (Štrum e la bella vicina di casa), riflessioni ponderosissime sulla storia e i suoi attori (Mostovskoj e Liss)... E a chi traduce spetta ogni volta di trovare la giusta temperatura della lingua, per dirla con Primo Levi, di modo che i due testi, quello di partenza e quello tradotto, possano riconoscersi fra loro. Diceva, infatti, Primo Levi, che nei loro duetti estivi i grilli cantano ognuno con il proprio ritmo e con una propria nota. E qui lo cito:

il maschio chiama, e la femmina, lontana anche duecento metri, e totalmente invisibile, risponde “a tono”. Il duetto, paziente e casto, prosegue per ore e ore, e a mano a mano i due partner lentamente si avvicinano, fino al contatto e all'accoppiamento. Ma è indispensabile che la femmina risponda giusto: una risposta stonata, anche solo di un quarto di tono, interrompe il dialogo, e il maschio va in cerca di un'altra compagna più conforme al suo innato modello. Pare che questa condizione di esatta sintonia acustica sia una garanzia contro gli incroci fra specie diverse, che sarebbero sterili e perciò inutili ai fini del “moltiplicamini”. (Levi 1985, 66–67)

Anche nel caso delle traduzioni, è necessario far sì che i grilli, i due testi, si diano la voce e si riconoscano, mantenendo simili le temperature e i suoni.

Diceva Italo Calvino, non è la voce che comanda la storia, sono le orecchie.

E ci sono pur sparuti momenti, nelle pagine di Grossman, in cui l'orecchio si diverte. Nella ricchezza democratica, čechoviana dei suoi personaggi, raramente Grossman li caratterizza in modo deciso nel loro modo di esprimersi. L'eteroglossia non è cosa su cui si soffermi, tranne in casi minimi che vale dunque la pena non perdere anche in traduzione. Uno dei pochi è quello di Agrippina Petrovna, la governante di Mostovskoj.

От нарушения, которое произвел он, изменились кривые движения, и Давид оказался рядом с Софьей Осиповой.

Она прижала к себе мальчика с той силой, которую открыли и измерили рабочие в лагерях уничтожения, - разгружая камеру, они никогда не пытались отделить тела обнявшихся близких людей” (Grossman 1990, 469–471).

Di solito, la sera, l'anziana donna si scolava un bicchierino *schietto* nella sua stanzetta, senza neanche mangiarci niente, dopo di che scendeva in cortile e si piazzava su una panchina a chiacchierare *con chi le capitava*. E così facendo soddisfaceva la voglia di *fare due parole* [non di “parlare”, abbassiamo un po’ il registro – N.d.T.] che viene a tutti, o quasi, quando si alza un po’ il gomito.

(...) Spettegolare non le piaceva, ma di *fare due parole con chi capitava* [si ripete tale e quale a sopra – N.d.T.] invece, aveva un gran bisogno.

“Perché, *care mie*,” disse quella sera avvicinandosi alla panchina e spolverandola col grembiule prima di sedersi “prima le vecchie lo pensavano *che le chiese le chiudevano i comunisti* [inversione, abbassa il registro – N.d.T.]. Invece...” e alzò gli occhi e la voce verso le finestre aperte del piano terra, così che dentro sentissero bene: “Invece l’Anticristo vero è quel maledetto di Hitler, è lui l’Anticristo, *care mie*, e che gli venisse un *cancero* [non un cancro, abbassiamo il registro, e ‘coloriamo’ – N.d.T.] in questo mondo e in quell’altro. Perché a Saratov il metropolita le fa tutto tranquillo, le sue belle liturgie, e si prega in tutte le chiese. Ci va gente di ogni tipo, *vedrai* [intercalare colloquiale – N.d.T.]: vecchi, giovani, tutti quanti. E tutti quanti ce l’hanno con quel diavolo cornuto di Hitler!”. E qui abbassò di colpo la voce: “Perché, *donne mie*, anche nel *palazzo nostro* [inversione per abbassare il registro – N.d.T.] hanno cominciato a *far fagotto* [e non “fare le valigie” – N.d.T.], anche da noi c’è chi va al mercato a comprare valigie e spago e chi si cuce i sacchi da solo. Michail Sidorovič, per esempio, quanto sta in pena! È sempre scuro in faccia. Oggi è andato da quell’altra vecchia, la Šapošnikova: sarà per mettersi d’accordo per partire, *vedrai*. E *manco* ha mangiato”. (Grossman 2022, 68)⁶

Pochi tocchi, lo avrete sentito, per far sentire il leggero abbassamento di registro di chi parla. Ma pochi tocchi che vanno conservati.

Un altro caso, ancora più stimolante, è quello in cui “la cantilena dell’ucraino”, come la definisce Grossman, colora le frasi dei soldati. A volte viene solo indicata come tale, a suggerire una particolare coloritura del tono di voce, ma senza che lasci tracce nel russo. Ce ne sono altre, però, pochissime, in verità, in cui un soldato ucraino poco istruito parla in una

⁶ “Вечером Агриппина Петровна обычно выпивала у себя в комнатке стопочку и выходила на двор посидеть на скамеечке, *поговорить с людьми*. Этим она удовлетворяла *потребность в беседе*, возникающую после выпивки почти у всякого.

[...] Агриппина Петровна сплетен не любила, но *потребность поговорить с людьми* была в ней действительно сильна.

— Вот, *бабы*, какое дело, — сказала она, подходя к скамейке и сметая фартуком пыль, прежде чем сесть, — вот, *бабы*, раньше старухи думали — коммунисты церкви закрывают... — Она поглядела на открытые окна первого этажа, громко, чтобы слышно было, произнесла: — Ох же и антихрист Гитлер этот проклятый, ох же и антихрист, *чтоб ему на том свете добра не было*. Говорят люди, в Саратове митрополит служит, во всех соборах молебствия идут. И народу, народу, и старые, и какие хотите. Все, как есть, все против него, против Гитлера этого рогатого, все поднялось! — Тут она вдруг понизила голос. — *Да, женщины, и в нашем доме вещи паковать* стали, на базар люди ходят, чемоданы, веревки покупают, мешки шьют. А Михаил Сидорович ох и переживает, с лица даже потемнел, сегодня пошел к старухе Шапошниковой, про отъезд договариваться. И обедать не стал” (Grossman 1959, 58–59).

miscela delle due lingue, ‘russifica’ l’ucraino e ‘ucrainizza’ il russo in una mescolanza che lascia il segno sulla pagina.

Che fare, dunque, in quei casi? Si può rinunciare a provarci, traducendo in italiano normalizzato. Oppure si può scegliere una calata regionale specifica, cosa che personalmente evito sempre, dato che per il mio orecchio non ci sarebbe nulla di più bizzarro di leggere interi passaggi in emiliano, napoletano, bergamasco o romanesco in un romanzo russo. Tra l’altro, meglio che puntualizzi. Se parlo di ‘regionalismi’ per la traduzione non è perché non ritenga l’ucraino una lingua, ci mancherebbe altro.

La questione è un’altra. La vicinanza fra il russo e l’ucraino fa sì che non ci sia bisogno di traduzione per quel passaggio per il lettore russo. L’eventualità di una traslitterazione dell’ucraino (più o meno russificato, o viceversa) nella traduzione italiana creerebbe una divaricazione, un’incomprensione totale che nel testo di partenza non è presente, rallentando quindi la lettura dove non ha bisogno d’essere rallentata e creando perplessità che nel testo originale non ci sono. Mi sia concesso un esempio molto spiccio per gli studenti, soprattutto. Se avessimo un testo italiano con uno spagnolo che mescola le due lingue, ci basterebbe aggiungere qualche “s” qua e là lasciando magari qualche parola spagnola riconoscibile o italianizzata, o ‘scrivere’ le nasali se colui che mescola è, poniamo il caso, francese. E otterremmo così l’effetto desiderato.

Nel caso di Grossman, per mantenere l’immediatezza della scena si potrebbe, magari, scegliere di ricreare un linguaggio popolare (data l’estrazione sociale di chi parla) tinto di regionalismi non immediatamente riconducibili a una specifica, concreta provincia o regione italiana. Per lasciare anche noi, comunque, un segno sulla pagina, un punto di luce diversa. Io ho (spavalamente? – ma la traduzione è comunque un atto temerario, diceva Claude Hagège) azzardato questa terza opzione.

E il risultato (leggermente ritoccato per questa nostra occasione rispetto all’edizione a stampa, perché – altro assioma – una traduzione non è MAI finita) è qualcosa che suona così:

Nei momenti di silenzio, dalle fessure nel soffitto si sentivano le loro voci.

Prima della guerra Lampasov aveva avuto a che fare con l’allevamento dei polli, e con Bunčuk parlava di quanto fossero intelligenti, ma perfide, le galline. Attaccato alla cornetta, invece, Bunčuk cantilenava per riferire tutto d’un fiato: “Pronto pronto... Arriva da Kalač colonna di *tanki* crucchi... tra mezzo c’è un carro armato... I crucchi vengono *per in qua* [questo è Collodi, per inciso – N.d.T.] a piedi, fino al battaglione... In tre posti, oggi ma ieri pure, *ci sta* fumo di cucine e ci stanno i crucchi coi mastelli...”. Certe notizie erano prive di incidenza strategica, erano mere curiosità. Tipo: “Pronto pronto... Un comandante crucco *passeggia* il cane, il cane *nasa* [e non “annusa” – N.d.T.] il tronco, ci pischia, lo vedo bene bene, anzi la vedo bene bene, mi sa che è cagna. L’ufficiale la guarda... Ci stanno anche due *femmine* a spasso coi crucchi, ridono, uno ci ha tirato fuori le sigarette, una femmina ce l’ha presa dalle mani al crucco e butta fuori il fumo, l’altra invece fa no no con la *capa*, ‘non fumo’ pare che ci dice...”

E poi, di colpo, con la stessa cantilena, Bunčuk riferì:

“Pronto pronto... Fanteria in riga sul campo... Un’orchestrina, pure... *Tra mezzo* c’è una roba che pare un palco, anzi no, è una *mucchiata* di legna...” Dopo di che rimase

a lungo in silenzio; poi, con la disperazione nella voce, ma con la medesima cantilena, attaccò: “Pronto pronto, compagno tenente, ci stanno a portare una, ci ha solamente la camicia addosso, strilla... l’orchestrina suona... la legano *in tel* albero, quella donna... compagno tenente, c’è pure un ragazzino, vicino a quella, e ci legano pure lui in tel albero... Compagno tenente, non ci credo a quello che vedo con questi *occhi miei*: due crucchi ci buttano addosso la benzina...”. (Grossman 2008, 230–231)⁷

Con tutte le imprecisioni (e il senno di poi che molto mi farebbe ritoccare), qualcosa abbiamo ottenuto.

Attenzione, però.

In *Stalingrado*, invece, ho fatto l’esatto contrario di quello che ho appena illustrato, a indicare come ogni assioma, in traduzione, può essere prontamente smentito. Perché, come recita il mantra di ogni traduttore che si rispetti, a comandare è il contesto.

Quando nel capitolo 48 la tragedia incombe nerissima, i tedeschi stanno per entrare a Kiev e i collaborazionisti sono già rimbaldanziti, Grossman scrive questo:

Intanto, le truppe che lasciavano Kiev avanzavano nella morsa del silenzio. In quegli attimi tutti sentivano chiaramente, fisicamente che ogni passo verso est delle truppe sovietiche in ritirata avvicinava le colonne tedesche, ancora invisibili. Ogni passo verso il Dnepr avvicinava a Kiev le divisioni di Hitler. E come evocati da quella forza oscura incombente, tra i vicoli e i cortili comparvero uomini sorridenti con gli occhi svelti e cattivi. Il loro sussurro si faceva via via più forte: guardavano a occhi stretti chi se ne andava, pronti ad accogliere chi sarebbe venuto. E proprio in un vicolo Krymov sentì per la prima volta una frase in ucraino che avrebbe sentito spesso, poi: ‘*Ščo buło to bačyly, ščo bude pobačymo*’, ‘Quello che è stato è stato, vediamo cosa sarà’. (Grossman 2022, 248–249)⁸

⁷ “В минуты тишины сверху, через пролом в потолке, бывали слышны их голоса. Лампасов до войны имел отношение к куроводству, беседовал с Бунчуком об уме и вероломных повадках кур. Бунчук, припав к стереотрубе, протяжно, нараспев докладывал: “Ось бачу — с Калача идэ фрыцевська автомобиль-на колонна... идэ середня танка... идуть фрыцы пишки, до батальону... У трех мистах, як и вчора, кухни дымать, идуть фрыцы с котелками...” Некоторые его наблюдения не имели стратегического значения и представляли лишь житейский интерес. Тогда он пел: “Ось бачу... фрыцевський командир гуляє з собачкой, собачка нюхає стовбыка, бажая оправитися, так воно и є, мабуть, сучка, охвицер стоить, чекає; ось дві дівки городськи, балакають с фрыцевськими солдатами, рыгочуть, солдат виймає сигареты, идна дівка бере, пускає дым, друга головою мотая, мабуть, я не куряща...”

И вдруг Бунчук все тем же певучим голосом доложил:

— Ось бачу... на плацу построена полнокровна пихота... Стоить оркестра... На самой середины якась трибуна, ни, це дрова зложены... - потом он надолго замолчал, а затем голосом, полным отчаяния, но все же протяжным, произнес: — Ой, бачу, товарищ лейтенант, ведуть жінчину, в сороци, вона щось крычить... оркестра гра... цю жінчину привязывають до стовба, ой, бачу, товарищ лейтенант, коло неї хлопчик, и его привязують... товарищ лейтенант, очі б мои не дывылись, два фрыца лють бензин с бачков...” (Grossman 1990, 209–210).

⁸ “А войска, покидавшие Киев, шли, окованные молчанием.

В эти минуты все ощущали с телесной очевидностью, что с каждым шагом на восток уходивших советских войск приближаются еще невидимые немецкие колонны. Каждый шаг уходивших к Днепру приближал к Киеву дивизии Гитлера.

Perché l'ho lasciato in ucraino traslitterato? Perché è una specie di formula magica, uno scongiuro alla tragedia che si sta vivendo e che, come si dice nel testo, Krymov avrebbe sentito spesso. E da formula magica, leggerla in una lingua a noi 'lontana' aumenta in questo caso il suo potere su chi legge, credo.

Questi, dunque, alcuni dei miei passi sulla corda da equilibrista sospesa sulle pagine di Grossman. Chi traduce non è trasparente, e credo che lo abbiate notato. Chi traduce osserva, ascolta, studia una scrittura non sua, la lascia passare attraverso le proprie competenze e letture e intuizioni e la restituisce a chi legge con la massima lealtà al testo di partenza e tenendo sempre presente, mia regola di vita, la risposta che Igor' Stravinskij diede al direttore Ernest Ansermet, che in una lettera gli chiedeva di fare un piccolo taglio, 13 battute, a quello *Jeu de Cartes* che avrebbe diretto di lì poco. "Questa non è casa sua, mio caro" gli rispose Stravinskij (Kundera 1994, 231). Le pagine di uno scrittore non sono casa mia. O per lo meno lo sono solo per un certo periodo di tempo.

Quella con Grossman è stata una convivenza vera. Ho vissuto davvero con Štrum e i suoi, con Krymov, con Babad'žanjan, Novikov e i carristi. Con conseguenze al limite del ridicolo. Ai tempi di *Vita e destino*, con i bambini ancora piccoli arrivavo ai giardinetti e annunciavo trionfante che eravamo arrivati (noi!) in Ucraina. E quando Sof'ja e David sono morti nella camera a gas, in diversi hanno notato lo sguardo perso che avevo quel giorno e si sono informati sulla mia salute... Il metodo Stanislavskij vale anche per i traduttori. O per lo meno vale per me: più di una volta ho litigato con Štrum, in sogno.

Tutto questo, però, è aneddotica. L'empatia, l'intuarsi⁹ dantesco può aiutare, ma tradurre è un'altra cosa. Restando all'aneddotica, però, vorrei concludere questo mio intervento con un ricordo che vi dimostrerà quanto, alla fine, la letteratura si faccia vita reale e con la vita si impasti, e perché in conclusione io e altri, qui dentro, facciamo questo mestiere.

E cioè:

Poi conobbi il fuochista Ivan: alto, biondissimo, con un viso all'apparenza duro, i baffi chiari come pure gli occhi.

È giovane, Ivan, forte, a volte brusco, a volte cupo. Ha un viso tondo e grande, bianco e rubizzo insieme, che lo fa sembrare, chissà perché, particolarmente cattivo. Cammina con grande fragore dei suoi stivali alti e pesanti. E parla come cammina, lento, grave, preciso, ogni parola è uno stivale. Ivan è un settario, un molokanin. E siccome è russo, ha occhi e capelli chiari, denti bianchi e colorito roseo, e siccome è un molokanin, ti trovi a pensare che campi a latte e semolino bianco di miglio. Invece Ivan le infrange, le regole religiose dei suoi padri: Ivan beve vodka e fuma. Un giorno che aveva alzato il gomito gli si sciolse la lingua e mi disse che andava sulle montagne a

И, словно вызванные надвигающейся черной силой, в переулках, во дворах появились люди, чьи быстрые, недобрые глаза усмехались, а шепот становился громче; они, прищурившись, смотрели на удививших, готовились к встрече. И здесь, проходя переулком, Крымов впервые услышал потом несколько раз слышанные им слова: 'Шо було, то бачили, шо буде — побачимо' (Grossman 1959, 230).

⁹ "Già non attendere" io tua dimanda, / s'io m'intuassi, come tu t'inmii". Dante Alighieri, *Par.* IX, 80–81.

caccia di caproni e linci, e che una volta aveva anche ammazzato un «pardo», un leopardo. Le sue storie sono tutto meno che credibili, ma Ivan non è un bugiardo; piuttosto, come uno scrittore del romanticismo, è realista per i sognatori e sognatore per i realisti. E io gli piaccio perché gioco male a biliardo. Gli esseri umani sono quasi tutti ambiziosi, ma Ivan lo è in modo particolare, furioso. Se perde con Martirosjan, Ivan si tormenta, soffre, laddove un normale ambizioso si limiterebbe ad arrabbiarsi. «Partita?» mi chiede, e i suoi occhi chiari bramano il sangue dell'agnello. (Grossman 2011, 177–178)¹⁰

Questo era Ivan tra il 1961 e il 1962 in *Dobro vam*.

Nel 2011 due ragazzi emiliani lo hanno incontrato davvero, Ivan, in carne e ossa. Ed era così:

Fig. 1 - *Il fuochista Ivan (foto scattata da Marzia e Mattia e donata all'autrice)*



Marzia e Mattia sono di Bologna. Lei lavorava alla casa della memoria di Montesole, memoriale all'eccidio nazi-fascista di Marzabotto, e insieme a Mattia coltivavano la terra sulle

¹⁰ “Стал я знаком с кочегаром Иваном — он большой, белоголовый, лицо его кажется жестоким, у него светлые усики, светлые глаза. Он молод, силен, иногда угрюм. Лицо у него круглое, большое, белое и румяное и почему-то от этого кажется особенно недобрый. Ходит он, громко ступая большими, тяжёлыми и высокими сапогами. И говорит он, как ходит, медленно, тяжело, четко, каждое слово — как сапог. Оттого, что он русский, светлоглазый, белозубый, румяный, и оттого, что он молоканин, кажется, что он ест лишь молоко с белой пшениной кашей. Но Иван — нарушитель отцовских молоканских законов: пьёт “московскую”, курит. Выпивши, он разговорился; рассказал, как уходит в горы — бьёт козлов, рысь, убил однажды “барсука” — барса. В рассказах его явно отсутствует железо достоверности, но он не врун, а вот как писатель-романтик — реалист для фантазеров, милый выдумщик среди реалистов. Я нравлюсь Ивану тем, что плохо играю на бильярде. Почти все люди честолюбивы, но Иван особо, бешено. Проиграв партию Мартиросяну, Иван мучается, страдает, а обычные честолюбивцы в таких случаях не страдают, а лишь расстраиваются. — Сыграем? — говорит он мне, и в светлых глазах его жажда овечьей крови” (Grossman 1967, 217–218).

colline di Bologna. Insieme, Marzia e Mattia leggevano. Lui zappava i campi mentre lei gli leggeva *Vita e destino*, lei raccoglieva le cipolle con lui che le leggeva i racconti e le memorie del viaggio di Grossman in Armenia, *Dobro vam*, appunto.

Un giorno l'ufficio stampa dell'editore Adelphi mi girò una loro mail in cui mi spiegavano cosa avevano fatto l'estate prima. Avevano amato a tal punto le pagine di Grossman da decidere di ripercorrere passo passo il suo viaggio in Armenia. Con il suo racconto come unica guida, senza conoscere una parola di russo né di armeno, avevano prenotato una stanza a Erevan e di lì avevano preso la via di Diližan, di Cachkadzor, del lago Sevan e delle distese di pietra armena alla ricerca dei settari. E li avevano trovati.

Avevano anche dormito nella Casa dello scrittore dove si era fermato Grossman, avevano trovato la tomba di Andreas il pazzo e avevano trovato anche lui, Ivan.

E per quei personaggi che prendevano carne dopo mezzo secolo avevano preparato una dozzina di uova di tagliatelle. Impastando realtà e letteratura, farina e inchiostro.

Sono venuti a impastarle anche a casa mia, le tagliatelle. Portando la loro farina e le loro uova. Per il sugo avevano con sé anche la loro cipolla. "Questa è cresciuta con Grossman in sottofondo" mi hanno spiegato. "Uno dei due lavorava e l'altro leggeva qualche pagina". Quel giorno, carta e inchiostro fattisi cipolla hanno riempito insieme a un po' di pomodoro alcuni barattoli di sugo. Anzi, di "sugo di Grossman", come ho scritto sull'etichetta. Li ho fatti durare più che ho potuto, come potete immaginare.

E come potete immaginare, in questo caso mantenere l'equilibrio non è stato facilissimo.

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