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**FAUSTIAN MOTIVES
IN *WE*: A NOVEL BY YEVGENY ZAMYATIN**

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The 1920s–1930s witnessed a period of dystopias blooming. It became a very popular literary genre because the Faustian projects of transforming the world had already been implemented (the October Revolution in Russia and the creation of the USSR, the revolution in Germany, which resulted in the creation of the Weimar Republic and later fascism coming to power, imposing the threat of World War II in 1930). Utopia was becoming a reality and this reality was intimidating. In a particular sense, the dystopia of this period reflected the existing reality “here” and “now” rather than made a disappointing futurological forecast. Speaking about the peculiarities of dystopia in the 20th century, V. Makanin stated that “the fears about future may be the matter, but it is the present in a condensed form. This is real. This is not horror, but reality. This is the reality seen” [Маканин 1996]. As V. Gudkova notes, “by the early 1930s the idea of the Great Utopia had become the precise draft” [Гудкова 2008: 13]. It became clear that the world transformation entails a human nature transformation which turned out to be much more terrifying. The transformed space subjugated a man

and dictated its will, and this inevitably caused a conflict of “natural” and “civilized”, human and Faustian, understood as a confrontation between the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

We: A Novel (1921), written by Yevgeny Zamyatin, interprets the Faustian theme within a conflict of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which could be observed at three levels. The first, *psychological*, level reveals the problem of self-identification of the Faustian consciousness embodied in the images of main characters, D-503 and I-330. D-503 is a talented mathematician, the builder of the Integral who represents the collective Faustian consciousness, whose efforts contributed to the formation of the “United State” of reason in due time. Once having already transformed the world, it strives for transforming the other civilizations:

A thousand years ago your heroic ancestors subjected the whole earth to the power of the United State. A still more glorious task is before you, – the integration of the indefinite equation of the Cosmos by the use of the glass, electric, fire-breathing Integral. Your mission is to subjugate to the grateful yoke of reason the unknown beings who live on other planets, and who are perhaps still in the primitive state of freedom. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically faultless happiness, our duty will be to force them to be happy [Zamyatin 1924: 3].

This “grateful yoke of reason” is the Apollonian principle which Nietzsche interpreted as “that measured limitation, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that philosophical calmness of the sculptor-god” [Nietzsche 1910: 25], the genius of statehood.

I-330 is a revolutionary, whose image inherits the romantic rebel character’s features. Her goal is to fight for freedom against the “kingdom of reason”, which was turned into an emasculated faceless world of leveling, hidden behind the city glass walls where every minute of a citizen is strictly regulated by the State and the Well-Doer:

Every morning with six-wheeled precision, at the same hour, at the same minute, we wake up, millions of us at once. At the very same hour millions like one we begin our work, and millions like one, we finish it. [...] at the same second we all go out to walk [...] and then to bed [Zamyatin 1924: 10].

The United State even controls the intimate life of a person who receives a surrogate instead of love, happiness with pink checks. In this sense, I-330 dream is a new transformation of the already transformed world by combining the “United State” and “The World Beyond the Green Wall”, embodying the unpredictable forces of nature, a world filled with bright colors and intoxicating scents. There is a place whose inhabitants are lovely, cheerful “wild” people who like free natural existence with no regulatory constraints.

At the beginning of the novel D-503 is selflessly devoted to the ideology of the Well-Doer, but, being in love with I-330, he experiences a painful split and tries to identify himself either with the advocates of the United State or with the representatives

of “wild” natural world and the revolutionary organization “Mephi”. Thanks to communication with I-330, D-503 revises his philosophical and ideological views, and, according to T. Davydova, it is D-503 elaborately evolving from a machine-like “number” into a tragic hero, thus, deliberately rejecting the Apollonian, entropic element for the sake of gaining individuality, love and freedom [Давыдова 2004: 138], in other words, the Dionysian principle. At the same time the internal mental doubts of D-503 could be endowed with the features of “Russian Faust”, called by the scholars as “Hamletism”, with its inherent uncertainty, duality, reflection [Якушева 1991: 169].

Unlike the duality of D-503, being “acquired”, the dualism of I-330 is set by the author. It has a synthetic nature and simultaneously inherits the features of Faust and Mephistopheles, whose images are interpreted by Zamyatin in terms of modernist traditions. On the one hand, the image of I-330 embodies the Faustian idea about human revolutionary aspirations, a rebellion against any stagnation, even against “blissful peace”:

There is no last revolution, their number is infinite [...] only differences (only differences!), in temperature, only thermic contrasts make for life? And if all over the world there are evenly warm or evenly cold bodies, they must be pushed off! ... in order to get flame, explosions! And we shall push! [Zamyatin 1924: 116].

On the other hand, Zamyatin’s idea is fueled by a demonic principle, the revolutionary organization is called Mephi, and its striving for endless rebellion echoes Goethe’s Mephistopheles (“We’re the folk, you see, who achieve great things: / The signs are tumult, force, and what nonsense brings!” [Goethe 2003: 456]), who is sent by the Lord to wake a sleepy and lazy person up. In this regard, V. Chalikova notes that “Zamyatin is fastidious about trite vulgar demonism. The diabolical in his texts belongs to a scientific category, being a non-Euclidean, energetic principle which is necessary for general harmony and controlled by a higher principle” [Чаликова 1992: 182]. But there is no God in the world of the novel, so there is no one to control the demonic principle: “Satan full-bloodedly and uncontrollably reigns there, behind the walls of a glass cage, but there is no one to stop him. Sometimes the character feels a powerless shadow of the overthrown, abolished and unnecessary God of the ancients, but it lacks the tender author’s nostalgia the other images of the old world have... This is an analogue of the tyrant Well-Doer, his archaic prototype” [Чаликова 1992: 183]. Instead, the divine function of mankind salvation is carried out by the devil principle, which depicts Satan as an evil force doing good. It could be evidenced by the portrait given to Mephistopheles by Zamyatin: “Mephistopheles is the world greatest skeptic as well as the greatest sentimentalist and idealist. He destroys every achievement, every today with all his devil poisons... since he secretly believes in the power of a man to become perfect and divine” [cit. ex: Давыдова 2004: 140]. The image of I-330 perfectly fits the characteristics, because she is ready to scrap everything and get rid of the opponents for the sake of mankind salvation. It is important to emphasize that the Mephistophelean principle in Zamyatin’s

interpretation is an analogue of the Dionysian one. In this regard, the scholars noted that the I-330 synthetic image “is associated with Dionysus in the mutually exclusive interpretations given by Nietzsche and V. Ivanova. If Friedrich Nietzsche connected this pagan god with the Antichrist, V. Ivanova claimed that the Dionysian religion preceded Christianity. Zamyatin’s character has the features of a “wild demon” in the ancient sense (Nietzsche) and Mephistopheles” [Давыдова 2004: 139]. Tempting D-503 with the forbidden pleasures of the Dionysian World Beyond the Green Wall, I-330 makes him take part in the revolution. But unlike D-503, who sees no point in blind rebellion, she dies trying to get freedom, accepting the martyr’s death.

The second level of the Apollonian and the Dionysian conflict could be called as *spatial*, being the clash and confrontation of two worlds, the United State and the World behind the Green Wall, as the eternal opposition of civilization and nature. The United State civilization, the Apollonian principle in the novel, is embodied in the image of a glass city, an artificial space created by a man, lacking wildlife (“Man ceased to be a wild animal the day he built the first wall” [Zamiatin 1924: 63]. Chalikova notes that the United State shapes a new way of life into a single-line urban form. Under a despotic yoke, this form is also compressed and a monster appears [Чаликова 1992: 191]. Zamyatin’s novel depicts a city as an ordered sterile world, free from suffering, despair, illness and “the insanity of thoughts” as well as love, joy, fun, in other words, everything dealing with the chaotic-irrational sphere of human feelings and emotions. They exist only behind the green wall and no longer pose a threat to the strict regulation of being, figuratively embodied in the “square harmony” of urban space:

Clean of that lower world [...] The impeccably straight streets, the glistening glass of the pavement, the divine parallelpipeds of the transparent dwellings, the square harmony of the grayish-blue rows of Numbers. And it seemed to me that not past generations, but I myself, had won a victory over the old god and the old life, that I myself had created all this. I felt like a tower: I was afraid to move my elbow, lest the walls, the cupola and the machines should fall to pieces [Zamiatin 1924: 98, 4–5].

This space regulate rationally the very essence of the personality, having suppressed the human principle and turning into a “number” dissolved into a single whole: “We are a united, powerful organism” where “We” is from God, “I” from the devil” [Zamiatin 1924: 83]. In this sense, according to Charles Collins, the city in the novel is “a model of consciousness oppressed by the almost absolute power of the rational” [Чаликова 1992: 185]. However, the same page, depicting the glass city, shows a contrasting description of the city from the past centuries, which D-503 finds an absurd anachronism:

I remembered (apparently through an association by contrast) a picture in the museum, a picture of an avenue of the twentieth century, a thundering many-colored confusion of men, wheels, animals, bill-boards, trees, colors, and birds.... They say all this once actually existed! It seemed to me so incredible, so absurd, that I lost control of myself and laughed aloud [Zamiatin 1924: 5].

The image of the old city, once a pillar of civilization, suddenly turns out to be a violent, wild world of nature, visible through the glass walls of the city belonging to a new civilization:

The yellow walls with patches of red brick were watching me through their square spectacles, windows, – watching me open the squeaky doors of a barn, look into corners, nooks and hidden places... A gate in the fence and a lonely spot. The monument of the Two Hundred Years' War. From the ground naked, stone ribs were sticking out. The yellow jaws of the wall. An ancient oven with a chimney like a ship petrified forever among red-brick waves. [...] And the trees! Like candles rising into the very sky, or like spiders which squatted upon the earth, supported by their clumsy paws, or like mute green fountains. And all this was moving, jumping, rustling. Under my feet some strange little ball was crawling... I stood as though rooted to the ground. I was unable to take a step because under my foot there was not an even plane, but (imagine!), something disgustingly soft, yielding, living, springy, green! [Zamyatin 1924: 83, 102].

The image of the “green world” in the novel is shown as the embodiment of the Dionysian element, as a harmonious union of nature and a man.

It should be noted that Zamyatin, interpreting the Apollonian and the Dionysian, leaves behind the canon introduced by Nietzsche, who identified the Apollonian as the individual principle and the Dionysian as the one destroying the Apollonian principle of individuation. According to Zamyatin, the individuality of the Apollonian is collective, in other words, the individuality of the WE is opposed to the individuality of the I, the representatives of the “green world” have. D-503 acutely felt it at the moment of Dionysian ecstasy: “There was something strange and intoxicating in it all. I felt myself above everybody; I was, – I, – a separate world; I ceased to be the usual item; I became unity” [Zamyatin 1924: 104]. In this sense, the conflict of the Apollonian and the Dionysian is a clash of two worlds, the United State and the World behind the Green Wall, the opposition of the collective and the individual, unified and single, natural and urban consciousness, which ultimately becomes the essence of the conflict between the human and Faustian principles. Those principles are antagonistically different in the novel and belong to two opposite worlds, alien to each other. The only way to unite them is to destroy the green wall with the help of a revolution, I-330 and the Mefi members are aimed at: “the day has come for us to destroy that Wall and all other walls, so that the green wind may blow all over the earth, from end to end” [Zamyatin 1924: 103].

Interpreting the Apollonian and Dionysian conflict in the novel it is possible to trace Zamyatin's idea that both principles existing separately are limited and inconsistent (according to T. Davydova, the Apollonian principle only seems to give happiness, or well-being, while the Dionysian is associated with freedom, bound up with tragedy [Давыдова 2004: 138]), and at the same time they are incompatible in the artistic space of the novel, the revolution is doomed. But its image contains the writer's dream of a free person in harmony who has the rational and the emotional going hand in hand: “Who are they? (“Forest” people) The half we have lost. H₂ and O, two halves; but in order to get water, H₂O, creeks, seas, waterfalls, storms, it is necessary that

those two halves be united” [Zamiatin 1924: 109]. V. Chalikova points out that here we have the utopian features prevailing over the dystopian ones, which, in its turn, results in a “dialogue of genres” [Чаликова 1992: 168].

It should be noted that the Apollonian and the Dionysian conflict, as an opposition of civilization and nature, can have a broader interpretation which further would be developed in the play *Attila* and the novel *Scourge of God*. The scholars discovered a projection of two cultures being opposed, the West and the East, in the conflict of the novel. Referring to the critical articles written by Ye. Zamyatin and his possible preface to the novel, F. Vinokurov notes that Zamyatin intended to develop the theme of “the struggle of new “barbarians” against the old degenerating Roman civilization which has reached the limit of development, having founded the society on the grounds of slavery” [Винокуров 2010]. Zamyatin emphasized the tendency of the intensive cultural development of the East in the preface to the novel *We* and later in the notes to a new historical work (1928). Relatively soon this tendency would overturn the stiff Western civilization: “We live in stormy days. An echo is still rolling, dying down, through Russia, a dry and sultry wind is blowing from the East to the West, where cast iron clouds are growing and soon they will crash down on their heads, the waters will violently rush and wash away the old houses and states”; “the West and the East. The Western culture, having reached the heights, where it already turns into an airless space, and a new, violent, wild force coming from the East, through our Scythian steppes” [Винокуров 2010]. According to the scholars, these records made by Zamyatin include the artistic and aesthetic embodiment of Spengler’s thought about the intensive development of the East Siberian culture, which is believed to be the future, as well as the views of A. Blok and N. Berdyaev, following Spengler’s ideas, set forth in the works *The Collapse of Humanism* and *The will to live and the will to culture* [Давыдова 1997: 99]¹. Although the scholars mention these provisions mainly in connection with *Attila* and *Scourge of God*, the historical works of Ye. Zamyatin (which is quite fair, since these works contain the most vivid and thorough interpretation), it still seems that the idea of opposed cultures of the West and the East was set in the novel *We*. In addition to its dystopian content, Zamyatin’s work acquires the features of an allegory novel.

The dream of a free human personality in harmony stipulates the third – *philosophical* – level of the Apollonian and the Dionysian conflict, which Zamyatin interpreted through the theory of entropy, being the balanced thermal energy distribution. The scholars have noted that Zamyatin was acquainted with the original

¹ Thus, A. Blok noted that “the barbarian mass [...] eventually flooded the civilization [...], swept the Roman Empire”; when “the civilized people were beaten out and lost their cultural integrity [...] the culture is preserved by the unconscious barbarian masses [Блок 1963: 98, 99, 111]; Berdyaev’s article substantiates the idea of the powerful Russian barbaric element, which the West civilization dreams about and which provides the Russian consciousness with the ability “to understand the crisis of culture and the tragedy of historical fate more acutely and deeply than the more prosperous people of the West. The Russian soul may have preserved a great ability of revealing the will to the miraculous religious transformation of life” [Бердяев 1990: 174].

theory of entropy introduced by Julius von Mayer and its culturological interpretation in *The Decline of the West* by Oswald Spengler, which was read even before its being translated into Russian [Давыдова 2004: 129]. Following Spengler's idea that the Western culture apocalypse is stipulated by wading creative spiritual energy, Zamyatin compares a revolution with the cosmic laws in his article "On Literature, Revolution and Entropy": "The law of revolution is not social, but immeasurably more cosmic, universal... similar to the law of energy conservation, degeneration of energy (entropy)". Meanwhile, he argued that "dogmatization in science, religion, social life, in art is the entropy of thought" [cit. ex: Давыдова 2004: 131]. So, Zamyatin's philosophy perceives entropy as a synonym to decay, stagnation and, as a result, degradation and death, only eternal activity of energy can be salvation here. In this regard, the collision of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in the novel *We* is projected onto the opposition of the entropic and energetic principles. Hence we get the idea of an eternal, endless revolution as energy setting entropy off and breaking the long Universe dormancy. However, it should be noted that Zamyatin praises the idea of an eternal revolution under certain conditions. Firstly, we are talking about the revolution in its romantic understanding as a free rebellion. Eternal and infinite revolution, justified by Zamyatin, is appealing, first of all, as an aimless permanent cosmic process, the guarantee of the continuous development of mankind, because achieving any goal is entropic stagnation. According to Zamyatin, the revolution is a form of reflection of "the enormous fantastic spirit of our era, which destroyed everyday life in order to raise questions of being" [Винокуров 2010]. Secondly, the concept of an endless revolution does not imply its final victory, and this is essential. Consequently, it does not mean any results. Despite its infinity, it is a here-and-now process. In this sense, Zamyatin's image of a revolution lacking any future projection was depicted carefully. And the question here is not only the one that Zamyatin "did not think in "eras", but "in moments", as V. Chalikova rightly notes [Чаликова 1992: 161], but also the writer had a clear understanding that the good intentions of the revolution are bound up with violence and bloodshed. Several years before writing the novel *We* Zamyatin said that "Christ, practically victorious, is the Grand Inquisitor" [Давыдова 2004: 141].

Interpreting the theme of an endless revolution as a guarantee of the continuous development of mankind from the point of philosophy made the Faustian idea interesting, which used to be interpreted in terms of romantic traditions as a dream of transforming the world. It allowed Zamyatin setting the novel problematics as the Faustian one, considering a number of ideas – an never-ending revolution, a protest against human mechanization, a struggle against any form of conservatism, etc. [Давыдова 2004: 131]. However, unlike the writer's opinion, modern scholars are inclined to study the novel *We* as an "anti-Faustian" work, considering the protest against the enslavement of man by an industrial civilization in it rather than against a specific political system [Чаликова 1992: 173–174]. According to the artistic logic of the novel, the United State was created as a result of the last and final world revolution, being the victory of the Faustian spirit, and appeared as an event behind the plot

which provided the basis for the conflict of the novel. Besides, the scholars point out Zamyatin's bitter dispute about Goethe's philosophy of evolution [Давыдова 2004]. In this case, despite the existing discrepancies, it is difficult to doubt both the author's standpoint, being a revolutionary in the past, a person contributing to the changes in Russia, and the one of modern researchers, with "excessive vision" capable of giving more unbiased assessment of the cultural and historical situation in the first half of the 20th century, the century when utopias were realized.

We believe it is not important whether Zamyatin protested against the totalitarian system, emerging in Russia, or against the harmful influence of utmost forms of civilization on humans. What is needed to be considered is, first of all, the writer's reflections on the essence of the revolutionary idea, mostly, about infeasibility of revolution coming to the end, since political (social) and industrial slavery are the results of struggle for freedom. The freedom gained turns into slavery in one form or another, and this is the source of infinite permanent revolutions. The problem is that people forget about implementation entailing the transformation of a person, while cherishing the dreams of transforming the world (creating a perfect world). The ideal people should inhabit an ideal world. Any revolution, re-creating the world, establishes new laws, values, and rules for everyone, but not each and every can or wants to comply with them. Therefore, to achieve full compliance it is necessary to change both the world and human nature, having destroyed it to the ground. Destruction is brightly described in the novel, since there are the "numbers" with atrophied feelings and lost fantasy, not people, who can feel comfortable in the United State, nevertheless, even the "numbers" have those capable of raising rebellion, and it proves the fact that it is impossible to change human nature. Literature abounds with projects of a perfect world, but the question about "a perfect person model" remains open. As a result, there is a discrepancy, the image of a perfect world order is superimposed on an "archaic" person who "does not meet the high standards of beautiful future". Thus, the conflict between the Faustian and the human remains unsettled, the parties involved will never reconcile. The only way to avoid conflict is to return to one of the basic principles of the romantic worldview, the ideal being unattainable. Utopia must remain utopia.

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Summary

Faustian Motives in “We: A Novel” by Yevgeny Zamyatin

The article studies the interpretation of the Faustian theme in the novel “We” by Yevgeny Zamyatin. The conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian is considered as a mode of the Faustian theme. The features of its development are analyzed at three levels, they are psychological, spatial and philosophical. The interaction of psychological, spatial and philosophical levels makes it possible to implement a number of ideas in the novel, such as a never-ending revolution, a protest against authoritarianism and the enslavement of man by civilization, the impossibility of changing human nature.

Key words: Faustian theme, Faustian culture, idea of the world transformation, dystopia, the Apollonian, the Dionysian