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THE PLURAL SELF: ZAMJATIN'S *WE* AND THE LOGIC OF SYNECDOCHE

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Evgenij Zamjatin's most famous work begins with an implicit paradox: his biting satire of utopian collectivism is entitled "We" ("My"), and yet the first word of the novel proper is the title's antithesis: "I" ("Ja"). The precarious relationship of the individual "I" to the collective "we" is so striking that even the narrator, D-503, whose perceptions of his own dilemma are limited by his initial blind faith in the One State, is painfully aware of it. One might easily conclude that the "I/We" dichotomy is either a simple vehicle for Zamjatin's anti-collectivist stance, or an extended parody of the collectivist pretensions of proletarian writers.¹ I would argue, however, that Zamjatin's inquiry into the nature of the self is far more subtle: in *We*, Zamjatin reveals the problem of selfhood to be a problem of language. The entire novel can be seen as a challenge to the linguistic and philosophical assumptions on which D-503's initial "state-sanctioned" conception of the self is based: the logic of synecdoche and the possibility of "wholeness" or "integration." When forced to explain to his imaginary readers the nature of his relationship to the One State, D-503 repeatedly asserts that his "I" has value only when it is a synecdoche for "we": an "I" that protests its independence is no more viable than a severed finger.² D-503's predilection for synecdoche is apparent throughout his journal, and can be seen as a natural outgrowth of both the novel's subject matter and the mathematician narrator's unplanned detour into the *terra incognita* of poetic language. But the prevalence of synecdoche, which can be considered to include not only such striking images as D-503's self-description as a germ or phagocyte within the larger body of the One State, but also his persistent translation of human events into formulas involving fractions, must be considered in the larger context of the One State's ideology.³

In his *Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke extends synecdoche beyond its standard dictionary definition ("part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified. . . . , cause for effect, effect for cause" [Burke 507–508]) to the realm of philosophy: Burke

identifies the “‘noblest synecdoche,’ the perfect paradigm for all lesser usages” in metaphysical models that assert the “identity of ‘microcosm’ and ‘macrocosm’.” Such doctrines, which treat the individual as “the replica of the universe, and vice versa,” are the “ideal synecdoche, since microcosm is related to macrocosm as part to whole, and either the whole can represent the part or the part can represent the whole.” Burke also finds a similar synecdochic pattern in “all theories of political representation, where some part of the social body . . . is held to be ‘representative’ of the society as a whole” (508). The political ramifications of synecdoche are easily exploited in the totalitarian context, and, as Burke’s definition suggests, this exploitation works on more than one level: both the leadership of society by a fuhrer or a “conscious vanguard” and the individual’s societal role as “cog in the wheel” or “worker bee in the hive” rely on synecdoche. In the context of the novel, the logic of synecdoche holds a dual appeal for Zamjatin’s narrator: not only does it elucidate the hierarchy of the collective over the individual, but it is also quite seductive for a mathematician who continually (and unmathematically) attempts to prove, rather than disprove, by example.

D-503’s identity crisis, which involves the discovery of an apparently distinct and separate self of which he had been previously unaware, arises when the introspection required by writing leads him to follow the ideology of synecdoche to its logical conclusions. The fundamentally hierarchical One State employs synecdoche to create a model in which the microcosm of the individual not only represents but is subsumed by the collective. But, as Burke notes, synecdoche implies “an integral relationship, a relationship of convertibility, between . . . two terms” (508). When D-503 becomes conscious of himself as a “self”, he unwittingly seizes upon the “identity of ‘microcosm’ with ‘macrocosm’ ” implied by his synecdochic connection to the One State and creates an identity that, like the “we” of the One State, is plural. The “I” discovered by D-503 can never be an indivisible integer, but is instead subjected to endless fractioning and fragmentation. Like the “we” of the One State, D-503’s “I” must function not only as a whole, but as the sum of its parts.

Certainly, one is tempted when analyzing Zamjatin’s novel to look at *We* as the narrator himself envisions his story: the conflict between D-503, the loyal State cipher and D-503, the passionate and irrational rebel.⁴ Yet to focus on this struggle, so reminiscent of a medieval morality play, is to examine the problem of which D-503 is most conscious; in effect, by following D-503’s lead, we take on the role of the implied reader whom he addresses throughout the text. Rather than viewing the novel in terms of a split into two discrete personae, we must instead analyze the two radically different states of consciousness through which the narrative is filtered. By mediating the action through a consciousness that continually swings from dissociation (multiple selves) to solipsism (one self creating and encompass-

ing all others), Zamjatin calls the very possibility of the stable self into question. Though these two mental states are superficially antithetical, the difference between the breakdown of the unitary self into its component parts (dissociation) and the insistence that any Other is only an extension of one's own subjectivity (solipsism) is, for Zamjatin, merely a matter of perspective. Each case recapitulates the One State's model of the synecdochic self, in which a monolithic voice arises from the combination of constituent parts. Both cases can be represented by an integer that is the sum of a set of fractions. Yet just as I-330, the mouthpiece for Zamjatin's ideas on entropy and revolution, asserts that there is "no final integer", and therefore no permanent social revolution, the oscillation between solipsism and dissociation suggests that there is no final, essential "Self", and that the very idea of the whole, undivided integer (and the concomitant ideology of integration so essential to the One State) is illusory.⁵ There is no "Self" in this text, nor can there be; instead, there are only parts that pretend to speak for an illusory whole.

As many critics have observed, D-503's status as an anonymous member of the monolithic collective is challenged the moment he puts pen to paper.⁶ By calling on its citizens to portray the glory of the One State for the sake of the less-enlightened denizens of far-off worlds, the proclamation in the *State Gazette* compels the narrator to become aware of his synecdochic relationship to the State. D-503 cannot write about his position within the collective "we" without adopting a rhetorical stance that is, at least formally, outside of its confines. Unlike the anonymous voice of the *State Gazette*, which never uses the first person singular, D-503 cannot speak for the One State *as* the One State; he can only speak as a part on behalf of the whole. Any perceptions provided by D-503 can only paint a portrait of the One State from within: when D-503 looks in the mirror, he sees D-503, rather than the entire One State.

Though this paradox would appear to be simply formal, it provides the immediate impetus for the oscillation between dissociation and solipsism as the novel proceeds. Indeed, the journal's initial entry, in which the "we"-centered discourse of the *State Gazette* sets the "I" of D-503's narrative in sharp relief, gives the first indication of the connection between language and D-503's mental state. The first time D-503 refers to himself as "I", he appears to "know his place": he asserts that he is not writing, but copying ("Ja prosto spisyvaju"). Moreover, the words he quotes were not "written" but "printed" ("napečatano"): the monolithic discourse of the One State betrays no origins.⁷ But after D-503 has fulfilled his duty and copied this lengthy excerpt, he turns his attention to himself: "Ja pišu eto—i čuvstvujū: u menja gorjat ščeki" (10). D-503's second sentence begins, like his first, with the word "ja," but the self-deprecation of the first sentence is replaced by self-consciousness. Tellingly, his verb "pišu," which describes his activity,

prompts another verb “čuvstvuju,” which calls attention to the writing “ja” as a thinking, feeling subject. His awareness of himself as a writer becomes an awareness of himself as a physical body: the words of the *State Gazette*, which command him to write, inevitably direct his attention inward.

This sudden self-consciousness finds an appropriate metaphor in Entry 11: his growing reflexivity on paper is “mirrored” by his dismay upon looking at his reflection closely for the first time. Just as D-503 will eventually express shock that such strange and irrational words spring forth from his pen, so too does he fail to identify completely with the “outsider” he sees in the mirror. Before he began writing, D-503 presumably had at least a rudimentary sense of correspondence between his “I” as linguistic subject and the physical body of the number D-503. By Entry 11, however, this connection has broken down. D-503’s examination of himself in the mirror “for the first time in [his] life” (“pervyj raz v žizni”) leads to a rejection of his image: “s izumleniem vižu sebja, kak kogo-to ‘ego’.” As he gazes in the mirror, D-503 grows certain that the man in the mirror is “an outsider, alien to me, I have met him for the first time in my life. And I am real, and I am not him” (“postoronij, čužoj mne, ja vstretilsja s nim pervyj raz v žizni. A ja nastojaščij, ja—ne—on,” 43). D-503’s experience with the mirror is essentially schizoid, reinforcing the sense that the D-503 who looks in the mirror is not the same D-503 who looks back.

Even more striking is the fact that D-503 switches allegiances from the spectator to the man in the mirror without even seeming to be aware that he has done so; initially, D-503 describes the man in the mirror as the “I that is he” (“Vot ja-on”), and proceeds to describe this man as though he were a third person. But when he looks into the mirror image’s eyes in an attempt to figure out what hides behind them “there” (“tam”), suddenly the narrator’s “I” now refers to man in the mirror:

И из «там» (это «там» одновременно и здесь, и бесконечно далеко)—из «там» я гляжу на себя—на него, и твердо знаю: он. . . .—постороний, чужой мне, А я, настоящий, я—не—он . . . (43)

By the time this passage is finished, D-503 is literally no longer himself, for the “I” that narrates the journal has aligned itself with the image that is initially rejected as an exterior “him.” This transition is not only easily lost on the reader, but has apparently escaped the attention of the narrator as well: what appears to be a straightforward rejection of an alien self at the end of the paragraph is actually a denial of the subject who was narrating when the paragraph began. Nonetheless, the narrator continues as though no such change has taken place.

Once again, the pronomial confusion sparked by the mirror scene can be viewed as a more explicit textualization of the alienation inherent in the writing process. The subject’s casual abandonment of the speculative

D-503 for the man in the mirror resembles one of D-503's narrative strategies that is as subtle as it is pervasive: the identification of the narrating I with both the subject of recollected events ("At that moment I sensed my Guardian Angel behind my back" [47]) as well as with the D-503 who sits at his desk and writes about what has occurred. Though the gap between the two D-503's might appear purely formal, in the case of a narrator who constantly regrets the feelings he experienced only moments ago, the ability to casually re-create a previous (and antithetical) state of mind entails still more dissociation. The man who looks in the mirror (here, D-503 as writer) is obliged to merge his "I" with that of the D-503 whose image he examines (that is, the "hero" of the events recalled, as it were, "in tranquility"). When recalling emotions of which he is now ashamed, the narrator does not take advantage of the passing of time to distance himself from his past experience; on the contrary, the regretful "I" who writes the journal entries quite effortlessly re-creates the alien "I" who experienced the events he describes. Each retelling of the past obliges D-503 to become his "other self" all over again. Just as the narrative "I" unconsciously switches sides as D-503 looks in the mirror, so too does the narrator unwittingly become the "alien I" that is the focus of his description; in each case, subject and object switch roles without knowing it. The mirror scene shows why one cannot accept D-503's own characterization of his dilemma as a split between two warring selves: D-503 is only capable of describing those aspects of the problem of which he is aware. When he reflects on his dilemma, he cannot help but oversimplify it.

The mirror scene, however, is a rare moment when D-503 can observe his other "self" as though they were completely separate entities; usually he envisions his dissociation in terms of a container whose hidden contents are forcing their way to the surface. Thus in the very first entry D-503 resorts to a peculiar comparison: his feelings resemble those of a woman who first feels the pulse of a "small, blind little person" within her ("ešče krošičnogo, slepogo človečka"). The result is a double consciousness: "Èto ja i odnovenno—neja" (11). Andrew Barratt has connected this "small, blind little person" with D-503's imaginative or irrational self; this passage, then, provides a preview of the conflict that will develop between the two D-503's ("The First Entry" 108). While this argument is persuasive, we must nonetheless examine the structure of the imagery as well as its content. In the space of one short entry, D-503 shifts between two metaphors of self: first he is only a small unit encompassed by a larger group ("Ja, D-503, stroitel' Integrala,—ja tol'ko odin iz matematikov Edinogo Gosudarstva," 10), then he himself is the containing entity. Both metaphors are based on the body as an organizing principle: in each case, the body is the container of constituent elements. The body of the One State is sketched only later in the narrative, such as in D-503's description of the

masses as a “million-headed body” (“millionogolovoe telo,” 83) in Entry 22 or a “million-armed body” (“millionorukoe telo”) in Entry 3 (16). Here, it is alluded to only when D-503 declares his willingness to tear out part of himself and lay it “at the feet” (“k nogam”) of the One State, an admittedly conventional figure of speech that, were it not for subsequent developments, would hardly merit our attention. But the similarities of the two “bodies” show that D-503, though soon to become a past master at metaphor, can only create a sense of individual self through analogy to the larger, more familiar “Self” of the One State. The smaller “self” (or “body”) of D-503 becomes a miniature replica of the macrocosmic “body” of the society at large. Thus when the narrator’s “self” dissociates into smaller “selves”, D-503 ironically resembles the State in its hypostasis of the collective “body politic”; when D-503 imagines that even the external world is a subset of his own consciousness, he mimics the hegemonic aspirations of the authoritarian “we.”

Both D-503’s dissociation and his solipsism are parodies of the rational equations he uses to describe the number’s relation to the One State. They put the lie to the supposed infallibility of mathematics: if the same formula (the whole = the sum of its parts) can be used to describe both extremes of D-503’s consciousness, then something has been left out of the equation. When he plays apologist for the regime, however, D-503 cannot bring himself to abandon the elegant logic of the part’s mathematical relationship to the whole (the logic of synecdoche). By using mathematics, D-503 casually dismisses the loss of ten “numbers” during an accident on the launch pad: “Desjat’ numerov—eto edva li odna stomillionnaja čast’ massy Edinogo Gosudarstva” (71).⁸ As he develops his skills as a writer, however, D-503 turns to deceptively simple metaphors to encode and to demonstrate this basic formula. Thus in Entry 20 he uses the metaphor of a scale:

И вот—две чашки весов: на одной—грамм, на другой—тонна, на одной—«я», на другой—«Мы», Единое государство. Не ясно ли: допускать, что у «я» могут быть какие-то «права» по отношению к Государству, и допускать, что грамм может уравновесить тонну—это совершенно одно и то же. Отсюда—распределение: тонне—права, грамму—обязанности; и естественный путь от ничтожества к величию: забыть, что ты—грамм и почувствовать себя миллионной долей тонны . . . (75)

D-503’s reasoning is, here as elsewhere, pure sophistry, dependent on the choice of a convincing metaphor rather than a well-developed argument. But the very mathematics that underlies D-503’s justification of the One State is also nothing more than an aptly-chosen metaphor, an attempt to transform the novel from story to story problem. The underlying assumption that mathematics has some bearing on the relationship between the individual and the collective is never tested through rational proof. Like most stories, it requires the willing suspension of disbelief: it can only be accepted on faith. Thus D-503 is closer to the essence of his beliefs when, after

launching in to a comparison of the "million-headed" body of the One State to the joyous existence of molecules and atoms, he deliberately simplifies his explanations for his "primitive" readers in Entry 22: "My"—ot Boga, a "Ja"—ot d'javola" (83).

That D-503's conception of the part's relation to the whole might be faulty is underscored by the mistakes he makes in the mathematical calculations in which he, one of the State's most valuable mathematicians, should presumably be proficient. In his excellent study of the use of mathematics in Zamjatin's novel, Leighton Brett Cooke shows that the One State and its supporters are "mathematically naive and often ignorant" (151). When D-503 calculates the chances of his being assigned to the very auditorium I-330 tells him to find, he divides the number of auditoriums (1500) by the total population of the One State (10,000,000), and determines that the chances were 3 in 20,000 (18). As Cooke points out, however, this equation is incorrectly formulated: rather than dividing the number of auditoriums by the population, D-503 should have divided 1 (D-503's auditorium) by 1500 (the total number of auditoriums in the One State) (156). Cooke uses this mistake as one of many examples of the State's mathematical weakness; for the purposes of the present study, however, the significance is not that D-503 has committed a mathematical error. Rather, it is the nature of the error that is revealing: he substitutes the entire population of the One State for himself. He has confused the whole with the part.

Thus D-503, who initially celebrates minute anonymity within the collective body of the One State, cannot maintain a stable sense of his relationship to the greater whole. D-503's ideological lapses are mirrored by a linguistic "slippage" that is fundamentally connected with identity: D-503's confused sense of his "I" is abetted by the constant redefinition of the term "we." Like all pronouns, both terms are inherently ambiguous "shifters" whose referent depends entirely on context. When referring to himself and the State, O-90, or I-330, he has no choice but to use the same word: "we." Only rarely does D-503 explicitly distinguish the collective "we" from the merely plural "we": "my vse" and "my vdvoem." His first romantic encounter with I-330 (Entry 10) resembles a rite of passage in reverse, in which D-503 leaves the larger, social sphere for incorporation within a smaller, intimate "nation of two." He has already passed the first test by neglecting to report I-330 to the authorities; now he is in a liminal state: "Ja byl otrezan ot mira—vdvoem c nej" (40). His choice of words reinforces his exclusion from the One State's "body politic" by prefiguring his later formulation of individualism as a severed finger ("ja otrezan" "čelovečeskij palec, otrezannyi ot ruki," 68). At the same time, it introduces the opposition between "my vse" and "my vdvoem."

D-503 cannot remain on his own, "cut off", for long, however. In his affair with I-330, he manages to submerge himself just as thoroughly (but

just as ambiguously) as he has within the collective self of the One State. When he joins with I-330, however, it is not to form a new, metaphorical “body;” rather, both he and I-330 are repeatedly described as vessels for a common essence that flows back and forth between them. In a transparent reversal of standard sexual imagery, their first kiss is described as an opening of D-503’s body: “v menja vlit glotok žgučego jada.” The resulting intoxication turns D-503 into glass (“Ja stal stekljannym”) allowing him to see the two different “I” ’s within him (42). On the surface, it would seem that the pregnancy metaphor of Entry One has come to fruition in Entry 10: the “other” D-503 has come out of its shell, which has now cracked and begun to break (“skorlupa treščala, vot sejčas razletitsja v kuski,” 42). This initial encounter, however, proves to be only a tease. When D-503 consummates his passion in Entry 13, the boundaries between Self and Other are completely broken, with curious results. Just the touch of her shoulder causes him to realize that “we are one, it flows into me from her” (“my odno, iz nee perelivaetsja v menja”). As they walk, he repeats his identification with I-330 in a phrase that parodies the earlier marching of the entire state in Entry Two: “My šli dvoe—odno.” Now he envisions the two of them (who are, we recall, one) as contained within the womb of the world, which is itself an “immense woman” (50). Thus far his identification with I-330 (and subsequent submergence within yet another containing entity) does nothing to suppress D-503’s ego; far from it, he becomes convinced that “it’s all for me: the sun, the fog, the pink, the gold—for me . . .” (“vse—dlja menja: sol’nce, tuman, rozovoe, zolotoe—dlja menja . . .,” 51). D-503’s relationship with I-330 is one of constant submergence and aggrandizement, as is his relation with the world of the One State: when they finally make love, he is “poured into her” (“ja vlijsja v nee”), and the rest of the world disappears: “ne bylo Edinogo Gosudarstva, ne bylo menja.” This total loss of self is transformed at the moment of climax to an identification of himself with the universe: “ja—vselennaja” (52).

D-503 is most comfortable and secure when he can inscribe himself within just such an enclosing (and sheltering) entity: though being part of I-330 or part of the One State does not prove a lasting solution to his pre-operative identity crisis, his acceptance of his own role as a constituent element provides him with a temporary illusion of wholeness. Once again, this is a trick of perspective: as a part of the larger group, D-503 might seem minute and insignificant, but his relative smallness makes him appear indivisible. D-503 is himself aware that he is more likely to experience fragmentation when he is alone: “Мне было жутко остаться с самим собой—или вернее, с этим новым, чужим мне, у кого только будто по странной случайности был мой номер—Д-503” (33). Salvation from both loneliness and fragmentation is offered by the fish-like Ju, who expresses her willingness to abandon the children entrusted to her by the State and stay

with D-503, who is "also a child" ("Vy—tože ditja"). Significantly in a novel where maternity is repeatedly identified with enclosure (Entry 1; O-90's focus on her pregnant womb), the motherly Ju is capable of temporarily restoring D-503 to wholeness: "[она] быстро обклеила всего меня улыбками—по кусочку на каждую из моих трещин—и я почувствовал себя приятно, крепко связанным," 79).⁹ D-503, whose realization of metaphors is at times almost Majakovskijan, manages to elaborate the image of his "breakdown" to the extent that he imagines the possibility that someone might metaphorically put the pieces of D-503 back together.

The unstable nature of D-503's sense of self is the inevitable by-product of an unending process which, like the struggle between entropy and energy described by I-330, never results in a final synthesis. Both D-503's solipsism and his dissociation are the apparent results of his growing awareness of himself as an author. As Juriј Štriedter observes, D-503's attempt to communicate with other worlds necessitates the imagination of the "linguistic consciousness" of his intended readers, the discovery of "the possibility of the 'words of others'" (187). Cooke comes to similar conclusions, emphasizing the importance of "confession, self-reflection and much digression" to D-503's "chosen genre," as well as the "continual estrangement" from his accustomed world view that this genre requires ("The Manuscript" 372, 374). D-503's obligation to imagine an addressee he cannot possibly know is an act of supreme imagination that cannot leave him unchanged.

Though Štriedter looks to Baxtin's conception of the novelistic genre's inherent dialogism to explain D-503's identity crisis, we must still remember that D-503 only realizes he is writing a novel as his writing progresses; initially, he sees his work only as a journal. D-503 turns to this form only because his mathematician's pen "is incapable of creating the music of assonance and rhyme ("Moe privyčnoe k cifram pero ne v silax sozdat' muzyki assonansov i rifm," 10). Though D-503 laments that his journal has begun to resemble an adventure novel (68), the gap between his intention and his result can also be viewed in terms of poetry: instead of producing the outward-looking "odes" commanded by the One State, D-503 produces extended lyric poetry in prose. D-503's use of the lyric mode is paradoxically consistent with his goal of describing his (and the State's) life to an unknown audience. His task is reminiscent of Osip Mandel'stam's description of the relationship between the lyric poet and his readers in his 1913 essay "On the Addressee" («O sobesednike»): for Mandel'stam, the poet is like a swimmer who seals a description of his fate in a bottle and tosses it into the sea. Though the swimmer cannot address his letter to a concrete individual, the letter nonetheless has an intended reader: "Pis'mo, zapečatannoe v butylke, adresovano tomy, kto najdet ee. Našel ja. Značit, ja i est' tainstvennyj adresat," 17). Here one

recalls D-503's frustration as he tries to imagine his reader: "Kto vas znaet, gde vy i kto," 21) For the work to have any power, the implied reader must always be distant and unknown, but there must nonetheless be an addressee: "Net liriki bez dialoga" (Mandel'stam 21). In an earlier article on Francois Villon, Mandel'stam elaborates on the demands his art puts on the poet: "Liričeskij poet po prirode svoej,—dvupoloe syščesto, sposobnoe k besčislennym rasščepenijam vo imja vnutrennego dialoga" (5). Baxtin's approach to the novel as a polyphonic genre draws our attention to the multi-voicedness of Zamjatin's text, but Mandel'stam's discussion of the interior dialogue and the unknown addressee is particularly well-suited for an examination of D-503's experience of this multi-voicedness as it encroaches on his work.¹⁰ Like the lyric, the journal is a genre that demands both self-reflection and the creation of an imaginary, usually individual reader; here we should recall the common adolescent practice of naming one's journal as if it were a person (such as Anne Frank's "Kitty" or Zlata Filipović's "Mimi"). Even when no name is given to a journal, the internal dialogue inherent in the genre reveals itself when the writer addresses himself in the second person, as does D-503 in Entry 34: "Voz'mi sebja v ruki, D-503," 121).

Though D-503 usually addresses his readers as if they were completely exterior to him, the boundary between them and the narrator is remarkably fluid. D-503 and the readers do not so much share personality traits as pass them back and forth. If D-503's creation of his readers initially entails the imagination of himself as something alien, these readers then serve as the perfect receptacles for any subsequent incongruities in D-503's own personality. Thus he begins to project all unsettling aspects of his own existence onto his readers, who are by definition alien and savage: "I ne vo mne iks (ètogo ne možet byt')—prосто ja bojus', što kakoj-niby'd' iks ostanetsja v vas, nevedomye moi čitateli" (22).

As D-503 insists on a growing identification between himself and his unknown readers, he subjects them to the very fragmentation from which he is suffering, and which was both the cause and result of the readers' "existence." In his appeals for understanding, he asks his readers to imagine that they, too, are experiencing dissociation (Entries 5 and 16). By Entry 20, the narrator has divided his readers into opposing camps whose differences correspond to the split D-503 perceives within himself:

Вы, ураниты,—суровые и черные, как древние испанцы, мудро умевшие сжигать на кострах,—вы молчите, мне кажется, вы—со мною. Но я слышу: розовые венереяне—что-то там о пытках, казнях, о возврате к варварским временам. Дорогие мои, мне жаль вас—вы не способны философски-математически мыслить. (76)

Though this division by planet obliges D-503 to paint a more elaborate picture of his unseen readers, it nevertheless creates a near-total identifica-

tion of the readers with the narrator. If all of his readers understood him, they would resemble only that aspect of D-503 that happens to have the upper hand at the moment. By imagining opposition on the part of a portion of his readers, D-503 implies that the Venusians would support the "hairy man" who is struggling for primacy in the narrator's consciousness. Thus each side of D-503 can claim the solidarity of one faction of the readership; each side has the comfort of knowing that it forms yet another "we" with some of the readers.

If the creation of the "readers" is an intrinsic part of D-503's growing dissociation, his opposing trend toward solipsism can be seen as an attempt to incorporate other members of the One State within himself, often with the help of his imaginary audience. On a number of occasions D-503 expresses grief at the thought that he has been cast out of the million-armed body of the State. By experimenting with solipsism, D-503 is essentially toying with the possibility of re-establishing this lost comradeship, but on his own terms. In effect, he recapitulates the mission of the Integral by trying to "integrate" those around him into his aggrandized "I"; having unintentionally cut himself off from the enclosing presence of the One State's "we", he attempts to take on the State's monologizing role for himself. D-503's first moment of solipsism comes, appropriately enough, right after his first entry in the journal. In the initial entry, the process of writing had obliged him to look inward, to the point where he actually imagined another human being contained within him. In the second entry, D-503's extended praise of the glories of "our" regimented existence suddenly gives way to self-consciousness:

. . . будто не целые поколения, а я—именно я—победил старого Бога и старую жизнь, именно я создал все это, и я как башня, я боюсь двинуть локтем, чтобы не посыпались осколки стен, куполов, машин . . . (13)

The first part of his statement could be rationalized away as merely an example of D-503's synecdochic logic gone haywire: as a part of the whole, D-503 can feel individual pride for a collective victory. But D-503's identification of himself as the creator, as well as his Majakovskijan portrayal of an enormous, towering body, cannot be explained in terms of his zeal for the One State. Instead, D-503's solipsism reveals itself to be a product of the act of writing. The above citation is made in the context of D-503's "estranged" perception as a chronicler for an unknown audience. His brief sensation of godliness is preceded by the statement that on this day (the day after he started his journal), he saw his world "as though I were seeing it just then for the first time in my life" ("kak budto tol'ko vot sejčas pervyj raz v žizni," 12).

On other occasions when D-503 affirms what T. R. N. Edwards has called "an almost Berkeleian sense of himself . . . as the creator of the

reality he records" (73), he entertains the idea by juxtaposing his fellow numbers (who presumably have an existence exterior to D-503) with his imaginary readers (who presumably do not). Curiously, it is the readers who emerge as the more "real" of the two groups. D-503 asserts the fictionality of his fellow numbers and the reality of his readers when he feels that the other characters do not recognize his importance. Offended that the old woman who keeps watch at the Ancient House assumes that he must have come looking for I-330, D-503 writes in Entry 21:

И что за странная манера—считать меня только чьей-то тенью. А может быть, сами вы все—мой тени. Разве я не населил вами эти страницы—еще недавно четырехугольные белые пустыни. Без меня разве бы увидели вас все те, кого я поведу за собой по узким тропинкам строк? (77)

The premise of D-503's logic is that the readers are *a priori* real, and that inclusion in the text of the journal is the essential criterion for reality.¹¹ When one examines Zamiatin's novel as metafiction, D-503's statement is absolutely correct: none of the novel's characters would be known to us, the readers, if D-503 had not written about them in his journal. Since their status is derivative of D-503's own narrative existence, one can, indeed, call the other characters his "shadows." The novel, however, is a psychological narrative at the same time that it is metafictional; as D-503 puts it, the journal is a "seismograph" that sketches the curve of "even the most insignificant of [his] brain's waverings" ("даже самых незначительных мозговых колебаний," 22). In *We*, the metafictional aspects of the narrative are inevitably the expression of a solipsistic consciousness.

D-503's solipsism both leads to and results from Zamiatin's most incisive critique of traditional notions of the subject: the fetishizing of the self in the object of D-503's physical text. The journal becomes both the physical embodiment of D-503's psyche and the "objective" source of knowledge to which D-503 turns in order to validate any given information or hypothesis. The text's dual function as representation of both absolute truth and D-503's subjective impressions is inherently self-referential and solipsistic: for D-503, the notes he writes eventually usurp the State's role as unquestionable authority. The entry that most clearly establishes the text's role is also, perhaps not coincidentally, the one in which Zamiatin's ideas on entropy and energy are explained to D-503 by I-330: both Zamiatin's philosophy of infinite revolutions and the problem of the self-referential text are integral parts of the novel's inquiry into the problem of identity. Painfully aware of his authorial role, D-503 begins Entry 28 with yet another address to his readers, to whom he acknowledges his "duty" (100). But when he describes his discussion with I-330, his relationship to the text is that of a reader rather than author. When D-503 calls the rebels' plans to overthrow the State "madness" ("безумие"), I-330 counters with D-503's own words:

—«Надо нам всем сойти с ума—как можно скорее сойти с ума». Это говорил кто-то вчера. Ты помнишь? Там . . .

Да, это у меня записано. И следовательно, это было на самом деле. (102)

I-330 unintentionally appeals to D-503's vanity not once, but twice: she cites his own words to dismiss his argument, and this in turn causes D-503 to compare her citation with the text of his journal in order to confirm its truth. Now the text, which he earlier characterized as a "seismograph" of his brain's activity, has become an unimpeachable source.

For D-503, author of the journal, to become D-503, reader of the journal, involves yet another dissociation: the representation of D-503's own consciousness is treated as though it were the work of another. This split is, of course, made complete after D-503 undergoes the Operation. After providing a brief description of the weather (i.e., objective reality), D-503's first written words after the Operation constitute a denial of authorship: "Neuželi ja, D-503, napisal èti dvesti dvadsat' stranic?" (142). Yet before the Operation, D-503 repeatedly considered the journal either an extension or the essence of himself: in an earlier entry D-503 cannot bring himself to burn the manuscript, which he calls "this torturous—and perhaps dearest—piece of myself" ("ètot mučitel'nyj—i možet byt' samyj dorogoj mne—kusok samogo sebja," 104). Structurally, D-503's identification with his manuscript is a variation on his earlier obsession with the individual's synecdochic relation to the State: where D-503 had earlier been merely a limb or a cell in the body of the One State, now his journal is a piece of D-503's consciousness. Here we have the complete identification of macrocosm with microcosm: D-503 decides that he has invested his entire self into the manuscript. In Entry 33, D-503 takes (premature) leave of his readers, to whom he has "shown [his] entire self" ("pokazal vsego sebja," 120).¹² When he decides to kill Ju in Entry 35, he rolls up his manuscript into a tube and stuffs it into a pipe, turning his journal into a murder weapon: *pusť ona pročtet vsego menja—go poslegnej bukvy»* (127).

As might be expected in such a self-referential work, D-503's confusion about the status of his writing is prefigured by a story he re-tells in his manuscript: the story of the savage and the barometer. In Entry Four, a speaker summarizes a story that had been recently discovered during an archeological dig. The tale is about a savage who notices that every time a barometer points to the word "rain," rain does, indeed, fall; the savage, having deduced that the barometer is the cause of the rain, later drains out enough mercury so that the barometer will once again show rain. Zsuzsa Hetényi considers the speaker's interpretation of the story a metaphor of revolution (273); yet when examined in the light of D-503's own confusion about representation and reality, the story of the savage and the barometer seems to have more to do with D-503 than with any historical models. Like

the savage, D-503 confuses cause and effect: having started to write in order to represent reality, he eventually views his manuscript as the source of existence rather than merely its depiction. Both the savage and D-503 are deceived by synecdoche: they confuse the symbol with the object that it represents, the effect with the cause. Significantly, after D-503 has completely distorted the connection between his manuscript and his world in Entry 28 by citing his text as proof, he notices in the following entry that the barometer reading does not correspond with the actual weather: the barometer has dropped, but there is still no wind (106).

Only after the Operation does the problem appear to be resolved, and yet the solution is no less parodic than D-503's earlier attempts at self-construction. The new D-503 starts his entry with, appropriately enough, a report on the barometer reading, which now, apparently, is in perfect sync with the actual weather. He now rejects the subjective impressions recorded in the previous 39 entries: what once comprised his entire inner life ("all of me") no longer has any connection to D-503. The hierarchy of "My" over "ja" has returned with a vengeance, as shown by the novel's penultimate sentence: "Bol'she: ja uveren—my pobedim" (143). What better word could have been chosen to show the supremacy of the collective at the end of the novel than *pobedit'*, a verb whose lack of a first person singular form leaves no room for the possibility of an individual victory? If Zamjatin's novel draws any conclusion at all about the nature of the self, it is the existentialist notion that "existence precedes essence." Here we must recall the aphorism casually pronounced by I-330 in Entry 28: "Čelovek—kak roman; do samoj poslednej stranicy ne znaeš", čem končitsja" (101). Ironically, even the stabilization of D-503's personality mimics the creation of the society in which he lives: the One State was made possible only by excluding unacceptable elements behind the Green Wall. D-503 finally becomes a stable, integrated self only after the excision of those parts of himself that caused his self-consciousness to develop.

NOTES

- 1 "We" was the pronoun of choice for the poets of the "Proletarian Culture" and "Smithy" movements. For a discussion of Zamjatin as a response to proletarian poetics, see Carden, Dolgoplov, Doronchenkov, Etkin, Heller ("La Prose" 219; "Zamjatin" 147–155), and Lewis and Weber.
- 2 Evgenij Zamjatin. *My: roman, povesti, rasskazy, p'esy, ctai' i vaspominanija*. Comp. E. B. Skorosplevova Kišinev: Lit. artistike, 1989. s. 68. All references to the text use this edition. All translations are my own.
- 3 Neither synecdoche nor the fragmentation of the self are limited to the novel *We*. Readers of his short story "The Cave" ("Peščera") (1922) will recall that the protagonist is torn between his "old" self and his "caveman" self (325); Zamjatin's "In the Boondocks" ("Na

kuličkax") prominently features the motif of "human pieces" ("čeloveč'i kusočki"). It is in the novel *We*, however, that Zamjatin explores these themes most thoroughly.

- 4 Such interpretations are most often found in studies that treat *We* in the context of other "dystopian" or "anti-utopian" novels. See, for example, Beauchamp (93), Richards (222–223), Sicher (386), and Warrick (70–71). Often such interpretations are expressed in the language of humanism: Alexandra Aldridge, noting D-503's "frantic search for identity" (70), cites Robert Elliott's assertion that D-503 is "struggling to become human" (Aldridge 71). Robert Louis Jackson finds that the "tragedy" of D-503's story is that "the conflict of two 'I's', of reason and instinct is never resolved in a new synthesis" (154). Margaret Mikesella and Jon Suggs state that "only through acknowledging this buried self can D-503 achieve autonomy" (92). For a decidedly anti-humanist view on this aspect of Zamjatin, see Mary Ellen Brooks' Maoist reading of Zamjatin and Solzhenitsyn.

Gary Rosenshield, refuting the idea that D-503 "oscillates from one personality extreme to the other," or that there is a "regular progression the course of the novel from the old to the new self," finds that the novel presents "a personality the warring sides of which are engaged in an uninterrupted struggle for supremacy" (55). Most recent criticism, however, rejects a straightforward division in D-503's psyche. Barratt notes that the "conflict within D between his 'old' and 'new' self," the "growth of D's artistic spirit" is "more apparent than real" ("Revolution" 367–358). Using Jung as his point of departure, Collins sees the entire novel as a representation of the disparate aspects of D-503's psyche (71). Though his analysis is quite sophisticated, it still relies on an agonistic model in which the "eventual victory of the true Self" is, if not the outcome of the novel, at least a possibility (78). The most complex approach to the problem of the self in *We* deals with issues of authorship, and is developed by Beehler, Cooke ("Manuscript"), Csicsery-Ronay, Edwards, Morson, and Rosenshield, and Štriedter. Their contributions are examined below.
- 5 In his close reading of the first entry of *We*, Andrew Barratt identifies the "vocabulary of integration" as an essential component of the State's ideology ("First Entry" 103). Michael Beehler offers an excellent critique of Zamjatin's rhetoric, charging that Zamjatin's "dialectics relies upon the figure of the integer, the whole, unambiguous, countable entity that can be rigorously distinguished from other equally clear and well-defined entities" (54). Though he uses this observation to analyze the problem of the individual and the status of writing, Beehler's focus on the totalitarian desire to purge both the text and the state of superfluous "noise" does not lead him to question the ontological status of the self in Zamjatin's novel.
- 6 See, for example, Jurij Štriedter: ". . . D-503 has to communicate his message to other worlds . . . For this purpose he has to imagine their 'linguistic consciousness.' Thus, discovering the possibility of the 'words of others,' he discovers, gradually and slowly, his own 'word.' "
- 7 Štriedter sees the novel as the narrator's "polemical dialogue" with the "authoritarian, unique, and absolute word" of the "Unique State" (188). In his Bakhtinian reading, Štriedter claims that the novel demonstrates "how, in an established totalitarian Unique State, the individual can rediscover himself through his linguistic consciousness and how the plurality or polyphony of reality can be rediscovered and become manifest . . . through the creation of the novel" (189).
- 8 It is perhaps no accident that D-503's cold calculations contain, as Leighton Brett Cooke has discovered, a mathematical error: he is off by two decimal points, and thus underestimates the value of the ten men ("Ancient and Modern Mathematics" 156).
- 9 This is the third time D-503 refers to Ju's smiles as a "bandage" ("plastyr' ") that can cover his wounds; the other two occasions are in Entries 18 and 19 (69, 71).
- 10 For a comparison of Mandel'stam theory of dialogue with that of Baxtin, see Boym (118–119, 125–126).

- 11 Long before this passage, D-503 has already characterized reality as a text. In Entry 3, he tells his readers, "perhaps you have read the great book of history only up to the page our ancestors had reached 900 years ago" ("может быть вы великую книгу цивилизации дочитали лишь до той страницы, что и наши предки лет 900 назад" 15). Cooke notes several instances of D-503's use of textual imagery to describe the world ("Manuscript" 377–378).
- 12 D-503's propensity to identify himself with the written word extends even beyond his own manuscript. When Ju hands him a letter he assumes to be from I-330, D-503 is "completely projected onto the envelope" ("я весь целиком спроектирован был на дрожащий в моих руках конверт," 69).

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